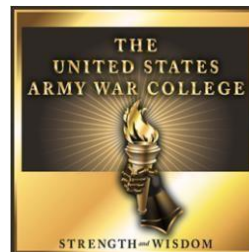


Synergy-Mindedness: The Airman's Joint Task Force Leadership Dilemma

by

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United States Army War College
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In today's complex joint operational environment, American Airmen appear to be absent from commanding "combat-oriented" Joint Task Forces (JTFs). In the future, when considering general officers for command of combat JTFs, the domain background of potential commanders should matter less than their ability to effectively lead, conceptualize, and execute joint combat operations. Thus, American Airmen's "Air-Mindedness" may need broadening in order to more effectively integrate and lead joint forces at the JTF level. While "Air-Mindedness" will always be a critical element of the joint fight, "Synergy-Mindedness" is increasingly important to the success of JTFs operating in high intensity combat environments.

Synergy-Mindedness: The Airman's Joint Task Force Leadership Dilemma

In today's joint operational environment, leaders must effectively and efficiently integrate and fuse knowledge of operations in the land, sea, air, space, and cyberspace domains. At the Joint Task Force level, leaders are faced with adaptive, committed enemies seeking to attack American interests and blunt American military power. In this increasingly integrated and complex operational environment, we note that American Airmen appear to be absent from commanding "combat-oriented" Joint Task Forces (JTFs). Arguably, the key operational requirement for any "combat-oriented" JTF is the level of "synergy" – a dynamic state in which combined action is favored over individual component actions – achieved by the joint force. In today's JTF combat environment, synergy that infuses differing functional and geographic perspectives has the potential to enhance complex planning and execution functions of combined arms teams. JTF "synergy" is created when the joint force's individual Service capabilities are considered through the complimentary and reinforcing effects of multiple operational domains and the JTF commander's key responsibility is to "tailor available forces for the mission at hand, selecting those that most effectively and efficiently ensure success."¹ A JTF commander must have the capability to design a campaign plan that effectively and efficiently utilizes available forces to achieve required objectives. We analyze why Airmen are so rarely selected for command of combined arms, combat oriented JTFs and recommend a new conceptual approach for Airmen to pursue when selected to lead future Joint Task Forces: "Synergy-Mindedness".

Origins of "Air-Mindedness"

In an effort to defend the air domain's contribution to the joint team, Airmen legitimately profess a necessity to articulate and advocate the idea of "Air-Mindedness".

The term, first coined by General Henry “Hap” Arnold, Commander of Army Air Forces during World War II, conveys that, “The perspective of Airmen is necessarily different; it reflects a unique appreciation of airpower’s potential, as well as the threats and survival imperatives unique to Airmen. The study of airpower leads to a particular expertise and a distinctive point of view.”² Air Force Doctrine Document 1 states,

Airmen normally think of airpower and the application of force from a functional rather than geographical perspective. Airmen typically classify targets by the effect their destruction would have on the adversary instead of where the targets are physically located. This approach normally leads to more inclusive and comprehensive perspectives that favor strategic solutions over tactical ones.³

Problem Statement & Recommendation

The question is, is “Air-Mindedness” a detriment to leading joint operational commands? This paper makes the claim that there is nothing inherently deficient with the air domain that precludes its leadership in the joint task force arena. However, the Air Force must prepare its leaders for command of joint combined arms operations and must show a propensity to provide command and control capabilities for JTF operations. While future joint operations may rely heavily on airpower to achieve military objectives, Airmen’s “Air-Mindedness” may need to be broadened at times, to more effectively integrate and lead joint forces at the JTF level. As a guiding principle, this paper recommends that the Air Force focus less on the idea of “Air-Mindedness” and instead adopt a broader, “Synergy-Mindedness” attitude. While “Air-Mindedness” will always be at the heart of being an Airman, Air Force Senior Officer thinking should increasingly focus on “Synergy-Mindedness”, especially when operating in the joint environment and/or as the commander of a Joint Task Force.

The Air Power Debate

In today's joint operational environment, where land, sea, air, space and cyber forces are increasingly integrated, with no single domain solely dominating the battle space, one would assume that Airmen would not be excluded from command consideration. Unfortunately, the long-standing "airpower debate" over campaign design, institutional control, and allocation of air assets within a theater of war continues to influence Secretary of Defense (SECDEF) and Combatant Commander (CCDR) JTF leadership selection decisions. An Airman's belief in airpower's ability to operate and achieve objectives independently of other service forces is consistent and self-reinforcing. This belief is also integral to airpower's separation from Army control. Sister-service perceptions combined with the self-perception of Airmen often frames Air Force thinking in the joint environment. Thus, Soldiers and Airmen often approach joint campaign planning and execution from markedly different perspectives.

Air Force doctrine envisions airpower as capable of achieving tactical, operational, and strategic objectives independently while ground force doctrine normally views airpower as an "enabler" providing support for the "primary" ground effort. Thus, friction often exists between the services at the most basic levels of operational thought. The Joint Task Force environment provides an interesting venue for this debate to take place. An Airman's belief that the air domain is capable of being used independently of ground forces to achieve JTF objectives often finds itself at odds with leadership from other "ground-centric" services who view airpower simply as a "supporting element" of the joint force.

According to Joint Pub 1 (JP-1), supporting forces "aid, protect, complement, or sustain another force in accordance with a directive requiring such action."⁴ A simpler

definition found in JP-1 states that a supporting unit's function is to simply, "help another unit in battle".⁵ This identification as a "supporting force" in the JTF environment often shapes the Air Force's own identity, thought processes, and self-perceptions when involved in planning and executing combined arms operations. Airmen feel they are often relegated to a supporting role by ground oriented commanders who design campaigns which relegate airpower to battlefield preparation, close air support, interdiction, intelligence, and aerial resupply missions, primarily in support of ground-centric combat operations. "Air-Mindedness" prompts Airmen to argue against this "marginalization" of their combat capabilities and pursue operational designs that allow airpower to operate independently of ground forces. Hence, Airmen have evolved a belief system where they consistently need to be "Air-Minded" and tout the idea that airpower is capable of achieving objectives independently of other service capabilities. While there is no official definition of "Air-Mindedness", for our purposes here, "Air-Mindedness" can best be defined as, "the lens through which Airmen perceive warfare and view the battle space,"⁶ the orientation an Airman has to frame and solve problems through an airpower-based standard.

"Air-Mindedness" also pervades Air Force doctrinal thinking regarding command and control where Air-mindedness manifests itself in a number of ways. For example, the Air Force's primary command and control (C2) element, the Combined Air Operations Center (CAOC), operates in support of a single operational domain (air), and reinforces "Air-Mindedness" within the institutional Air Force. Air Force intellectual and leadership development efforts are primarily aligned with developing leaders for a single operational and highly technical domain (air). While "Air-Minded" C2 and

operational expertise are necessary for all air operations, additional capabilities, skills, and expertise are required in the joint environment, especially at the two and three-star JTF command level.

The Joint Operational Environment

Current U.S. defense strategic guidance points to a future where mass formations are less optimal and rapid, adaptable military engagement will be critical elements of success. The “Capstone Concept for Joint Operations: Joint Force 2020 (CCJO)” provides a guidance framework for future force structure and “describes the future operating environment, advances new concepts for joint operations, and suggests attributes that will define the future force.”⁷ The CCJO places a premium on mission command, initiative across domains, global agility, partnering, flexibility, cross-domain synergy, discriminate operations, and flexible, low-signature, small-footprint capabilities while decreasing emphases on massed formations.⁸

The CCJO also makes the case for a significant paradigm shift in conceptual frameworks for the leadership of joint operations. Globally Integrated Operations as a concept envisions a much more integrated Joint Force which will “form, evolve, dissolve, and reform in different arrangements in time and space with significantly greater fluidity that today’s Joint Force.”⁹ With airpower as a critical component of the joint fight as envisioned in the CCJO, the Air Force must both advocate for future JTF command responsibilities and better prepare its leaders to exercise command not just of air assets and personnel, but also of integrated ground and naval forces.

This requirement to be integrated is recognized by the Air Force and is addressed in the recently released U.S. Air Force (USAF) strategy document, “America’s Air Force: A Call to the Future”. The vision document highlights the need to

“Strengthen the joint and interagency team” by building upon recent lessons-learned in joint-combat operations and postulates that, “...in the 21st Century, Airmen will be the most appropriate choice to lead many joint operations.”¹⁰ The Air Force logic behind the statement centers on the Air Force’s belief that the air and space domains will have “increased strategic impact” during future operations.¹¹ Irrespective of service parochialism and domain specific beliefs, with joint and service doctrine increasingly focused on the effect and pace of operations, and less inclined to focus on “large footprint” forces to achieve objectives, JTF leadership, regardless of service affiliation, must be prepared to design and execute campaigns which achieve objectives with appropriately scaled and globally integrated forces.

The JTF Operational Construct

JP-1 defines a JTF as, “a joint force that is constituted and so designated by SECDEF, a COCOM (sic), a Subordinate Unified Commander, or an existing JTF Commander.” A JTF may be established on a geographic area or functional basis when the mission has a specific limited objective...¹² Thus, a JTF can be established for a wide-range of missions at the tactical, operational, or strategic level of war. When the decision is made to stand-up a JTF, a concurrent decision is made by the relevant command authority to appoint a commander who is well versed in the key operational concepts expected to be utilized by the Joint Task Force. While selecting a leader well versed in the expected operational domain(s) is important, JTF leadership, no matter the service affiliation, will require both a diverse operational staff and diverse operational forces in order to accomplish the mission. Whether a Soldier, Sailor, Marine, or Airman leads the joint fight, they will have to rely on the expertise of others in today’s complex operational environment.

The Unified Command Plan (UCP) directs all Geographic and Functional Combatant Commands to have the capability to “designate and establish the readiness requirements of assigned Service headquarters to be JTF-capable headquarters.”¹³ Conceptually, this requirement is not service specific and takes into account the inherently joint makeup of CCDR staffs. However, in practice multiple Services will normally be tasked to provide the personnel necessary to man a JTF headquarters and the reality is that for combined-arms operations, only the Army and Marine Corps are readily capable of providing the robust core elements of a JTF headquarters through an Army Corps or Division Staff, a Marine Air Ground Task Force (MAGTF), or Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF) headquarters. Though select Numbered Air Force staffs are designated to provide JTF HQ core elements, the Air Force’s primary command and control element is the Combined Air Operations Center (CAOC). The CAOC is designed exclusively for the command and control of forces operating exclusively within the air domain under the operational control of the Joint Forces Air Component Commander (JFACC).

Origins of the Airpower Debate: Interwar Years

The origins of today’s debate regarding the role of airpower in the joint operational environment can be traced back to the early “fight” over the control of airpower that raged within the United States Army between World War I and World War II. In his seminal work, *A Short History of Airpower*, James L Stokesbury states, “Until air forces could find a viable reason for their existence, they were going to remain stepchildren of the older services. Tactical airpower left them still in a supporting role, and true independence would come only when airpower was seen as capable of dominating naval and military forces, not simply of supporting them on a tactical level.”¹⁴

Thus, core beliefs regarding today's "Air-Mindedness" can be traced all the way back to America's airpower pioneers in the first half of the twentieth century.

Following World War I the questions regarding who should control airpower and how airpower should best be employed created a chasm within the United States Army, as Airmen sought to wrest control of the air arm from "ground oriented" leadership of the more "traditional" Army branches. Perhaps no Airman created more controversy and ill will between Soldiers and Airmen during the interwar years than Brig. Gen. William "Billy" Mitchell, United States Army. Mitchell, an articulate and well-connected officer with experience commanding aviation units in France during World War I, stepped onto the stage as airpower's most visible and passionate advocate. Though Mitchell had expected to return from World War I and take command of the Air Service, Maj. Gen. Charles, T. Menoher, an infantry officer with no aviation experience, was instead selected to lead the Air Service in 1919. Mitchell was selected to serve as his principle assistant. The selection of Menoher as Air Service Chief sent the message to Airmen that the aviation service would remain subordinate to ground forces and Soldiers would continue to command Airmen.¹⁵

As debate raged within the United States War Department and Congress regarding the efficacy of an independent air arm, Mitchell continued to espouse a vision for American airpower operating independently of ground or naval forces. Following his controversial bombing test, targeting and sinking the battleship *Ostfriesland*, Mitchell took his case to the public with a series of speeches and periodical articles advocating for an independent wartime air force.¹⁶ Having demonstrated that an airplane could sink a battleship, Mitchell now turned his argument to ground forces stating, "If we are

required to act against an enemy on land, we may so smash up his means of production, supply, and transportation by bombardment that there is great probability that armies will never come into contact on the field of battle.”¹⁷ The Air Service’s fundamental belief in the primacy of strategic bombing and independent air operations had begun to take hold. Independent air operations seemed to be the key to escape from Army control over air forces. This fundamental belief remained at odds with Army policy and doctrine. Menoher eventually resigned from his post as Chief of the Air Service in 1921. His replacement, Maj. Gen Mason M. Patrick, who served as Pershing’s chief of aviation in France during World War I, was also not enamored with Mitchell’s ideas and testified against him in the on-going debate over an independent air force.¹⁸ The controversy continued throughout the interwar years and eventually led to Mitchell’s court martial for, “conduct prejudicial to good order and military discipline.”¹⁹

Origins of the Air Power Debate: World War II to Present

Air power advocates continued to carry the banner for independence as World War II approached. However, when the Army Chief of Staff, General MacArthur pronounced that, “So far as tactical and strategic doctrine is concerned, there exists two great fields of Air Force employment; one fully demonstrated and proved, the other conjectural”, the debate over the primary role of air power in the next war was effectively closed.²⁰ In other words, during the interwar years, tactical air power was recognized and appreciated by the Army but strategic air power as an operational concept had yet to prove its worth. Interestingly, General MacArthur as Supreme Commander Southwest Pacific Area (SWPA) and his Air Chief General George Kinney, would conceptualize and execute arguably the most synergistic combined-arms operations of World War II . Their operational concepts blended independent and supporting air operations that

included strategic and tactical combat aviation combined with air mobility to achieve remarkable levels of success as an air-ground team. Their synergistic operations in and around New Guinea and the Bismarck Sea rapidly achieved results in a theater of war defined by vast distances, a formidably enemy, and a combat force that was considered a lower priority for limited Allied resources. MacArthur as SWPA Commander conceded that as Army Chief of Staff he, “had not had much faith in the airplane’s wartime utility, but I am doing everything I can to make amends.”²¹ According to MacArthur, “The outstanding military lesson of this campaign was the continuous, calculated application of airpower rather than dilatory and costly island-to-island advance that some have assumed to be necessary in [this] theater...”²² As SWPA Commander, he blended air and ground power synergistically to generate results that would have been impossible with a single domain. MacArthur, an old distinguished soldier, understood implicitly what mattered most was results, not operational domain. .

Interestingly, this debate appears to have affected leadership selection decisions in some levels of warfighting, but not in others. In Combatant Commands, leadership selection parity between the services has remained remarkably consistent, while at lower levels of warfighting, and specifically at the Joint Task Force level, the disparity remains remarkable with only one Airman commanding a “potential” combined-arms, “combat-oriented” JTF in the last 25 years (JTF-510): USAF Brigadier General Donald Wurster, who was then serving as the Commander of Special Operations Command, Pacific at Camp H. M. Smith, Hawaii, Philippines (OEF-P) commanded JTF-510 from January to July of 2002.²³ JTF-510, was quickly re-designated Joint Special Operations Task Force Philippines (JSOTF-P) in July of 2002, as its primary mission evolved into

executing unconventional-warfare and anti-terrorism activities in the Philippines. JSOTF-P is also tasked to advise and assist the Armed Forces of the Philippines in internal defense and development”²⁴ Wurster’s position as PACOM’s Special Operations Commander, made him the obvious choice for command of JTF-510 operations. However, high-intensity, joint-combat operations never became an operational requirement for JTF-510.

Though the airpower debate remains a source of friction between the services, the issue should not be allowed to cloud thinking regarding the command of joint task forces. In 21st Century combined arms campaigns, air and land power operating synergistically, have the capability to rapidly overwhelm an adversary. As demonstrated repeatedly during U.S. operations over the last 25 years, airpower may be tasked to operate in support of ground forces, may be supported by ground forces, or may be tasked to operate independently. Whether a Soldier, Sailor, Airmen, or Marine is chosen to lead the joint operation, they must be able to conceptualize what each domain (land, sea, air, space, cyber) brings collectively to the joint fight. This is the essence of “Synergy-Mindedness”. The history of inter-service rivalry and “bad blood” from the past should not be allowed to influence decisions regarding the selection of future JTF commanders. Each Service’s officers should be considered for command based upon the strategy, the expected operational environment and the capability of individual officers to meld complex operational forces into a coherent team.

Air Power Integration in the CENTCOM AOR

“Air-Mindedness” along with the other Service’s domain centric thinking may also be impacting CCDRs and contributing to their hesitancy to advocate for or select Airmen to command joint operations with their Areas of Responsibility (AORs). This perception

is perhaps best highlighted in the United States Central Command (USCENTCOM) AOR where Army and Marine Corps Generals are traditionally selected to serve as Geographic Combatant Commanders. CENTCOM is also where the vast majority of American combat operations have occurred over the past 25 years. The reality is that Combatant Commanders in the CENTCOM AOR have chosen not to select Airmen to command combined-arms, combat-oriented JTFs. The question remains, why?

Airpower is integral to joint operations inside the CENTCOM AOR and fixed-wing airpower in theater is normally centrally controlled thru the Combined Air Operations Center (CAOC). The Joint Forces Air Component Commander (JFACC), normally an Air Force Lieutenant General who is also often dual-hatted as the Commander Air Force Forces (COMAFFOR), commands the CAOC. The CAOC construct aligns with basic Air Force doctrine on the centralized control of airpower within a theater of operations. Airmen who aspire to and are identified for higher levels of command within the Air Force often serve as the CENTCOM JFACC. This position could be considered the most “combat-oriented” Air Force 3-star billet currently available and service as the JFACC often leads to increased responsibility and the potential for future promotion to 4-star rank. The JFACC definitely exhibits “Air-Mindedness” and serves as the CCDR’s lead for air operations throughout the theater. As such, JFACCs may be charged with providing air support to multiple JTF’s and a myriad of other operations simultaneously across the AOR while Army and Marine Corps officers are typically selected for JTF’s tasked to operate in more defined geographic and/or specific mission oriented operations. These JTF operations are then allocated “support” from JFACC-controlled air assets.

The current operational and command construct in CENTCOM reinforces the idea of “Air-Mindedness” to all those involved in the AOR’s joint combat operations. From the CCDR’s perspective, he already has an “Air-Minded” JFACC to assist in the design and execution of joint combat operations within the theater. Would placing an Airman in command of a theater combined-arms JTF create a situation where the “Air-Mindedness” of two operational commanders (JTF Commander & JFACC) within his theater of operations result in poor decisions or “domain-centric” thought in the execution of JTF combat operations? Conceptually this should not be a consideration as “land-domain oriented” commanders have often served at both the JTF and Joint Forces Land Component Commander (JFLCC) level within the CENTCOM AOR.

“Air-Mindedness” may be generating a perception in the other services that Airmen will fail to emphasize and/or effectively incorporate ground domain capabilities into the design and execution of joint combat operations. Airmen who profess to think in a “functional rather than geographical perspective” and “favor strategic solutions over tactical ones” may need to alter their conceptual approach to operational design if assigned to command a JTF charged with executing a specific mission tasking within a defined AOR. Each domain and/or component in a JTF brings capabilities to the fight. However, the key to successfully integrating these capabilities is not domain-specific, but is instead the ability to apply “Synergy-Mindedness” that symbiotically integrates joint force capabilities. A “Synergy-Minded” Commander, be they Air Force, Army, Navy, or Marine, must be able to fully integrate joint force capabilities, often in an extremely hostile operational environment. The domain background of the JTF Commander

matters less than the Commander's cognitive ability to blend air, ground, sea, space, and cyberspace capabilities into a highly synergistic, effective joint operational team.

Moving forward, the individual services including the USAF, must increasingly focus on developing senior leaders capable of planning and executing operational campaigns which effectively leverage all combat domains in order to achieve synergy and improve the overall effectiveness of joint operations. As an example of the challenges moving forward towards "Synergy-Mindedness", as recently as 2009, a RAND study sponsored by the USAF Deputy, Chief of Staff for Operations, Plans, and Requirements, analyzed the Air Force's capability to effectively field, "JTF headquarters, commanders and staffs."²⁵ The recommendations of the study focused on developing Air Force capabilities to source leaders and staffs for JTF headquarters, improving joint command and control capabilities, better identifying missions suitable for Air Force command responsibility, and exercising Air Force commanders and staffs in the joint operational environment.²⁶ This study concluded, "Operations that might lend themselves to command by an Airman might include those that are dominated by the use of land-based aircraft or those that take place over long distances".²⁷ The study perpetuates "Air-Mindedness" by calling for Air Force personnel to not be considered for operations in which the predominance of forces are supplied by the Army, Marines Corps, or Navy."²⁸ This conclusion misses an opportunity for true conceptual change to service-oriented thinking. By focusing on developing "domain agnostic" commanders who focus on creating operational synergy irrespective of individual domains, and/or geographic area boundaries, the Air Force has an opportunity to advocate for the Service assuming a lead role in increasingly synergistic joint combat operations. The

RAND study misses the mark demanded by joint combat operations in the 21st Century and professed in the Joint Chiefs of Staff authored Capstone Concept for Joint Operations: Joint Force 2020.²⁹ Instead, Air Force senior leaders must be prepared to lead “blended” ground and air operations where the “supported” and “supporting” domains can rapidly change simply based upon the effectiveness, availability, lethality, and suitability of combat resources available to the JTF.

Envisioning “Synergy-Mindedness”

A “Synergy-Minded” approach to JTF combat operations might best be illustrated by considering a hypothetical combat scenario against a “near peer” adversary, in the not too distant future: 15 January 2025, HQ Joint Task Force Iron Hand, Ali al Salem AB, Kuwait - USAF Lt Gen Thomas Marshall, recently appointed as the JTF Commander of Operation “Iron Hand”, is faced with daunting odds. Far away, the Christmas Day South China Sea crisis has now gone “kinetic” and America is hard-pressed to provide combat forces for his “2nd Front” operation in the CENTCOM AOR. With the Iranian 16th Armored and 28th Mechanized Infantry Divisions along with elements of the 21st & 64th Infantry Divisions along and the 65th Special Operations Brigade on the ground and in control of the southern Iraqi oil fields, the Iranian order of battle includes over 30,000 highly trained combat troops. Additionally, the Iranian Air Force effectively supported the recent ground operations. All Iraqi resistance south of An Nasiriya was quickly dispatched and precision air strikes against Kuwait caught and destroyed the vast majority of Kuwaiti air assets while they were still on the ground. Iranian forces now appear to be reconstituting for a drive into Kuwait. General Marshall’s JTF is heavily outnumbered.

JTF Iron Hand includes the recently arrived Global Response Force (GRF), comprised of an Airborne Infantry Brigade from the 82 Airborne Division. The 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU), recently afloat in the Arabian Sea has also been “chopped” to the JTF. All told, Marshall can count on approximately 7,500 Soldiers and Marines to comprise his ground force. Ground fire support capabilities include less than a dozen Army and Marine M1 Abrams main battle tanks, a company of assault amphibious vehicles (AAV)-P7s & light armored assault vehicles (LAV)-25, a STRYKER infantry company, a handful of M-2 Bradley’s, and artillery including 155MM howitzers, and High-Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems (HIMARS). Air assets include one F-16CJ squadron, two squadrons of A-10s, one squadron of F-35s, one company of AH-1 Apache assault helicopters, 10 C-130Js, 15 KC-46s tankers along with 8 Marine F-35s, six Super Cobras, and 4 VC-22s. A small number of special mission aircraft are also allocated for JTF operations. Additionally, Marshall can count USSTRATCOM space, cyber, intelligence, and global strike capabilities, along with limited support from heavily tasked special operations capabilities sourced from USSOCOM. US 5th Fleet Naval assets will also provide critical support to his outnumbered and outgunned JTF.

With American forces stretched thin, General Marshall has to fight with the Joint Task Force capabilities he’s got. He is forced to confront the Iranian’s “Direct Approach” offensive designed to first close with and destroy Iraqi forces, then quickly reconstitute and drive against his forces inside Kuwait before additional American and/or Allied fire-power can be brought to bear. General Marshall quickly recognizes that only a “Synergy-Minded” approach can adequately fuse all available Joint Functions (Command & Control, Fires, Movement & Maneuver, Protection, Sustainment, and

Intelligence) into an operational plan capable of defeating the aggressive Iranian forces. Only, by efficiently infusing all joint warfighting functions in a “domain agnostic” planning process focused on synergistic operations can Marshall hope to achieve an operational advantage over Iranian forces.

Marshall simply does not have the advantages of superior mass and firepower long enjoyed by his predecessors during previous fights in the CENTCOM AOR. He therefore must continue to work to achieve operational results greater than the sum of his JTF’s individual capabilities. Marshall has to elevate his view from individual service and domain-centric capabilities. By first conceptually and then operationally integrating all available JTF capabilities into his concept of operations, Marshall and his JTF can most efficiently and effectively achieve the desired operational end state. In his new position as JTF Commander, Marshall quickly transitions from being an “Air-Minded” leader and instead focuses on possessing “Synergy-Mindedness” as he leads JTF Iron Hand. It doesn’t matter which Service or what domain is killing the “bad guys”. What does matter is achieving operational effectiveness and protecting America’s blood and treasure. He makes no a priori assumptions about capability to use.

The context determines everything. Leveraging real-time information gleaned from persistent ISR provided by space, cyber, ground, and air breathing assets, Marshall and his Joint Staff produce an operations plan that fully integrates joint fires from all available domains. Diversified intelligence and command & control capabilities provide JTF Iron Hand “real-time” battlefield awareness allowing the JTF to find, fix, destroy, and assess Iranian combat capabilities as the enemy force moves south towards Kuwait. Combining the long-range HIMARS precision strikes with sea-launched

cruise missiles to attrite Iranian combat forces and destroy C2 nodes & capabilities as they move south induces “fog and friction” to Iranian operations. JTF reach-back to strategic lift capabilities combined with the JTF’s organic tactical maneuver elements enables Iron Hand’s highly mobile joint-attack force to unexpectedly position on the vulnerable flank of the Iranians. Then, spear-headed by the JTF’s short-range, organic air power combined with B-1, B-2, and B-52 aircraft leveraging persistent ISR for targeting, the JTF hits the exposed right flank of the Iranian vanguard. Iron Hand ground forces quickly make contact with enemy forces and smash into the increasingly disorganized Iranian combat force. Lead by the JTF’s available M-1’s, M-2’s, and LAV’s with supporting precision joint fires from the 155-mm howitzers and all available air assets, the Iranian 16th & 28th Divisions bear the brunt of American combat firepower. Marshall’s plan also integrates available Kuwaiti ground forces to serve as a blocking force positioned near the Kuwaiti border. Does General Marshall’s “Synergy-Minded” JTF have the capability to achieve success? This is going to be a closely run affair...

Conclusion

If an Airman is in-fact selected to lead this future JTF, he or she must insure the JTF’s planning and execution efforts are informed by a keen understanding of available force capabilities, the operational environment, and the adversary.³⁰ The Commander must be able to quickly access and integrate each service’s capabilities in a complex, ambiguous, and rapidly evolving operational environment. As stated in the Capstone Concept for Joint Operations, Commanders must be prepared to lead, “globally integrated operations...that seize, retain, and exploit the initiative in time and across domains.”³¹ Additionally, future operations must be prepared to achieve global agility through the effective integration of forces and capabilities from outside of the “owning”

Combatant Commander's area of responsibility. Space, cyber, global strike, special operations and strategic airlift are just a few of the myriad capabilities not "owned" by the Combatant Commander, but which are operationally available to the JTF. Geographic or functional "stovepipes" within the JTF's conceptual and operational environments have the potential to reduce the overall effectiveness of the operation and cost the nation blood and treasure that did not have to be spent. Though "Air-Mindedness" will continue to inform key elements of campaign design and execution, "Synergy-Mindedness" is arguably more necessary for future campaign success.

"Air-Mindedness" is engrained in every Airman. It provides the Airman with both pride in his or her service and a unique perspective on what the air domain brings to the fight. It will always be at the heart of being an Airman. However, as Airmen become senior leaders, tasked with leading joint combat operations at the JTF level, "Synergy-Mindedness" becomes critical to the success of joint combat operations. While Airmen have been conspicuously absent from command of joint combat-oriented JTFs over the past 25 years, the ever evolving nature of modern combat increasingly calls for combat leaders, regardless of operational or service background, who can conceptualize, integrate, and successfully employ joint forces. Airmen should not be excluded from command of these demanding leadership positions. When called, Airmen will answer, but we must be prepared to bring a "Synergy-Mindedness" to the joint fight.

Endnotes

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¹⁹ Ibid., 99.

²⁰ Ibid., 149.

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²⁵ Michael Spirtas, Thomas-Durell Young, and S. Rebecca Zimmerman, *What it Takes: Air Force Command of Joint Operations* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2009), XIII.

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