

The Aerial Pursuit of National Objectives:  
Operation Linebacker II, Operation Deliberate Force,  
and Operation Allied Force

A Monograph

by

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## Abstract

The Aerial Pursuit of National Objectives: Operation Linebacker II, Operation Deliberate Force, and Operation Allied Force, by Maj Christopher Coleman, US Air Force, 55 pages.

This monograph examines how the United States and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization employed air power to obtain national objectives in Operation Linebacker II, Operation Deliberate Force, and Operation Allied Force. Operation Linebacker II took place from 18-29 December 1972. It was the only maximum effort bombing campaign of the Vietnam War that targeted the heartland of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, ultimately compelling the negotiations that ended the conflict. Operation Deliberate Force, the final operation of the Balkans Air Campaign, was a seventeen-day effort that sought to undermine the military capability of the Bosnian Serb Army and led to the 1995 Dayton Accords. Operation Allied Force was a seventy-eight-day air campaign in 1999 that successfully sustained offensive operations against Serbian forces led by president Slobodan Milošević and impelled their removal from Kosovo. This monograph primarily uses Dr. Mark Clodfelter's *Framework for Evaluating Air Power Effectiveness* as a means to evaluate these campaigns and test the hypothesis that an air campaign positively impacts national objectives when it effectively targets an enemy's military vulnerabilities in which it has no equal means of response. These case studies demonstrate air power's ability to obtain or positively contribute to the achievement of national objectives when used as the predominate or sole means of combat power. Findings indicate that while effective targeting was crucial to these campaigns, there were other factors of equal or greater importance. Although each case study provides unique insights to the effective use of air power in pursuit of national objectives, common themes for all three include the evolution of national objectives to match military capability, the isolation of the adversary from its perceived allies, and a type of war waged by the adversary conducive to targeting or exploitation by air power.

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## Acronyms

BSA	Bosnian Serb Army
C2	Command and Control
CAS	Close Air Support
CAOC	Combined Air Operations Center
DRV	Democratic Republic of Vietnam
ECM	Electronic Countermeasures
FRY	Federal Republic of Yugoslavia
IADS	Integrated Air Defense Systems
JFACC	Joint Force Air Component Commander
JP	Joint Publication
KLA	Kosovo Liberation Army
NSAM	National Security Action Memorandum
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
OAF	Operation Allied Force
ODF	Operation Deliberate Force
POL	Petroleum, Oil, and Lubricant
SAC	Strategic Air Command
SACEUR	Supreme Allied Commander Europe
SAM	Surface to Air Missile
SEAD	Suppression of Enemy Air Defenses
UN	United Nations
UNPROFOR	United Nations Protection Force
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
USAF	United States Air Force

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## Introduction

Air power is the most difficult of military force to measure or even express in precise terms.

—Winston Churchill, *The Gathering Storm*

Operation Linebacker II, Operation Deliberate Force, and Operation Allied Force were air campaigns designed to rapidly bring their respective conflicts to a close. Operation Linebacker II, which took place from 18-29 December 1972, was the only maximum effort bombing campaign of the Vietnam War. The campaign targeted the heartland of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV), ultimately compelling the negotiations that ended the conflict.<sup>1</sup> Operation Deliberate Force, the final operation of the Balkans Air Campaign, was a seventeen-day effort that sought to undermine the military capability of the Bosnian Serb Army and led to the 1995 Dayton Accords.<sup>2</sup> Operation Allied Force was a seventy-eight-day air campaign in 1999 that successfully sustained offensive operations against Serbian president Slobodan Milošević and impelled the removal of Serbian forces from Kosovo. Military historian Daniel Haulman describes the operation as, “the first air campaign that produced victory without the use of ground forces.”<sup>3</sup> While varying levels of ground operations preceded or supported each of these campaigns, air power was the primary means of combat power employed by the United States.

This monograph examines the specific employment of air power in each of these campaigns to assess how it affected success in achieving national objectives. Borrowing heavily from Robert Pape’s *Bombing to Win*, this monograph hypothesizes when an air campaign effectively targets an enemy’s military vulnerabilities in which it has no equal means of response, it positively impacts national objectives by making continued military action imprudent. This hypothesis acknowledges that targeting

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<sup>1</sup> Marshall L. Michael III, *The Eleven Days of Christmas: America’s Last Vietnam Battle* (New York: Encounter Books, 2002), 209-19.

<sup>2</sup> Benjamin S. Lambeth, “American and NATO Airpower Applied: From Deny Flight to Inherent Resolve,” in *Airpower Applied: U.S., NATO, and Israeli Combat Experience*, ed. John Andreas Olsen (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2017), 130-34.

<sup>3</sup> Daniel L. Haulman, “The U.S. Air Force in the Air War Over Serbia, 1999,” *Air Power History* 62, no. 2 (Summer 2015): 8.

may diverge from original campaign objectives in order to leverage the decisive but devastating effects of air power.<sup>4</sup>

To evaluate this hypothesis, this monograph uses the case study framework and the methodology outlined by air power historian and theorist Dr. Mark Clodfelter. In his article, “Airpower Versus Asymmetric Enemies: A Framework for Evaluating Effectiveness” Clodfelter provides a catalogue of variables and associated questions to apply to historical and potential uses of air power to determine its effectiveness. These criteria are further discussed in chapter one of this monograph; however, this monograph primarily considers his variables: (1) the nature of national objectives; (2) the nature of the enemy; (3) the type of war waged by the enemy; and (4) the magnitude of US or allied military controls.<sup>5</sup> It also applies supplemental campaign evaluation criteria from the 1994 *Joint Force Air Component Commander (JFACC) Primer* and the 2014 *Joint Publication 3-30: Command and Control of Joint Air Operations*.

The campaigns addressed above provide a lens for discussion regarding the historical implementation of air power as the primary means of combat power in a conflict to further national objectives. Chapter one provides a brief overview of relevant theory and doctrine and describes in detail Clodfelter’s methodology for air power analysis. Chapters two, three, and four contain the case studies. Each case study considers Clodfelter’s variables, augmented by criteria from the *JFACC Primer* and *JP 3-30*. These chapters break down and address variables as evolving components, as they often change or adapt as the conflict endures. Chapter five, the conclusion, provides the composite analysis. This chapter links the results of the air campaigns to the national objectives to identify major themes or elements found that consistently impact the achievement of national objectives.

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<sup>4</sup> Robert Pape, *Bombing to Win: Air Power and Coercion in War* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996), 1-2.

<sup>5</sup> Mark Clodfelter, “Airpower Versus Asymmetric Enemies: A Framework for Evaluating Effectiveness,” *Air and Space Power Journal* 16, no. 3 (Fall 2002): 42-45.

## Chapter I: Air Power Theory, Doctrine, and Methodology

At the conclusion of World War I, the burgeoning practice of aerial warfare was met with both skepticism and conviction. Early air power theorists such as Giulio Douhet and William “Billy” Mitchell embodied this conviction, contending that air power would evolve as the primary military means to achieve national objectives in an armed conflict.<sup>6</sup> Their views, shaped by rapid technological and operational advances in flight during the Great War and the subsequent interwar years, envisioned an independent air force with complete freedom of action and the ability to hold any target at risk. Air power would ultimately claim victory in conflict without assistance from armies or navies. Douhet asserted, “To conquer the command of the air means victory; to be beaten in the air means defeat and acceptance of whatever terms the enemy may be pleased to impose,” implying a capability to target and destroy an enemy’s resolve to fight.<sup>7</sup> While the technology evolved to provide the capabilities envisioned by Douhet and Mitchell, current doctrine and theory reflect that the successful application of air power to facilitate national objectives is far more complicated than their respective theories espoused.

United States Air Force (USAF) and Joint Doctrine provide crucial insights into the application of air power. *USAF Volume I Basic Doctrine* states, “Airmen can apply military power against an enemy’s entire array of diplomatic, informational, military, and economic instruments of power...The Air Force can rapidly provide national leadership and joint commanders a wide range of military options for meeting national objectives and protecting national interests.”<sup>8</sup> A vignette found in *Joint Publication 3-30* echoes this assertion but also denotes key air power concepts such as mass and unity of command:

This flexibility makes it possible to employ the whole weight of the available air power against selected areas in turn; such concentrated use of the air striking force is a battle winning factor of the first importance. Control of available air power must be centralized and command must be

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<sup>6</sup> Johnny R. Jones, *William “Billy” Mitchell’s Air Power* (Maxwell AFB: Airpower Research Institute, 1997), xi-xii.

<sup>7</sup> Giulio Douhet, *The Command of The Air*, trans. Dino Ferrari (Washington, DC: Air Force History and Museums Program, 1998), 28.

<sup>8</sup> Curtis E. LeMay Center for Doctrine Development and Education, “The Foundations of Airpower” in *Volume I, Basic Doctrine* (Maxwell AFB: Air University, 2015), 1, accessed August 8, 2018, [https://www.doctrine.af.mil/Portals/61/documents/Volume\\_1/V1-D22-Foundations-of-Airpower.pdf](https://www.doctrine.af.mil/Portals/61/documents/Volume_1/V1-D22-Foundations-of-Airpower.pdf).

exercised through the air force commander if this inherent flexibility and ability to deliver a decisive blow are to be fully exploited.<sup>9</sup>

The *JFACC Primer* reflects similar guidance regarding the unity of command, “Unity of effort through centralized control of theater air assets is the most effective way to employ air power. The Joint Force Air Component Commander (JFACC) provides a Joint Force Commander the means to exploit the capabilities of air power in a theater air campaign.”<sup>10</sup> Overall, it is apparent that while air power has the ability to impact the achievement of national objectives, the mere existence of a dominant air force is not enough.

Clodfelter provides a valuable framework to evaluate air power effectiveness in his article “Airpower Versus Asymmetric Enemies: A Framework for Evaluating Effectiveness.” This framework goes beyond the above doctrinal criteria to determine the balance between what he describes as *negative* and *positive* air power objectives. In this article he defines negative objectives as those that limit the application of air power and military force; whereas positive objectives enable it. However, in order to achieve national objectives a balance between the two must exist. Clodfelter describes this balance and resultant theory as, “While some critics might equate the notion of negative objectives to constraints, to do so would be a mistake...such objectives have more significance than that. In fact, they have the same importance as positive goals. Failure to secure *either* the positive *or* the negative goals results in defeat; victory requires that *both* must be obtained.”<sup>11</sup> He also notes, “Ultimately, that is how airpower’s effectiveness must be measured—in terms of *how well it supports the positive goals without jeopardizing the negative goals.*”<sup>12</sup> This framework is the foundation of the methodology for this monograph.

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<sup>9</sup> US Department of Defense, Joint Staff, *Joint Publication (JP) 3-30, Command and Control of Joint Air Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2014), I-2.

<sup>10</sup> Deputy Chief of Staff, Plans and Operations, *JFACC Primer* (Washington, DC: Headquarters, United States Air Force, 1994), 6.

<sup>11</sup> Clodfelter, “Airpower Versus Asymmetric Enemies,” 42.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.

Clodfelter's framework describes five key variables that aid in determining the effectiveness of air power in achieving national objectives: (1) the nature of political objectives; (2) the nature of the enemy; (3) the type of war waged by the enemy; (4) the magnitude of US or allied military controls; and (5) the nature of the combat environment. While Clodfelter specifies that no specific formula determines the critical variable in a specific campaign, he assumes that if most variables support the application of air power its effectiveness is likely. If they oppose its application, it will likely not advance national objectives.<sup>13</sup> Each case study in this monograph considers a series of questions to determine the level of support or opposition, listed below in table 1. Clodfelter's framework provides the majority of these questions, but additional criteria originate from the *JFACC Primer* and *JP 3-30* regarding unity of command and acceptable level of risk to forces and mission. Finally, while understanding and appreciating Clodfelter's warning regarding relegating negative air power objectives to limitations and positive air power objectives to enablers, this monograph adapts his terminology of *negative objectives* to *air power constraints* and *positive objectives* to the *positive application of air power*. This is done to avoid confusion with the actual national or military objectives that the air campaigns sought to accomplish.

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<sup>13</sup> Clodfelter, "Airpower Versus Asymmetric Enemies," 42-45.

**Table 1. Clodfelter’s Adapted Framework for Evaluating Air Power Effectiveness**

Nature of the Political Objectives	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Are the positive goals achievable through military force?</li> <li>2. How committed is the leadership that is applying air power to achieve the positive goals?</li> <li>3. Can leadership attain the positive goals without denying negative objectives? How do the negative objectives limit air power’s ability to achieve the positive goals?</li> </ol>
Nature of the Enemy	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What is the nature of his military establishment?</li> <li>2. Is the enemy population unified, and where is the bulk of the populace located?</li> <li>3. What type of government or central leadership apparatus does the enemy have? Are its leaders supported by the populace?</li> <li>4. Is the enemy self-sufficient or does it depend on outside support? What allies does the enemy have?</li> </ol>
Type of War Waged by the Enemy	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Is the conflict a conventional war to seize and hold territory or an unconventional guerrilla struggle?</li> <li>2. What military capabilities does the enemy possess?</li> <li>3. Is the conflict a war of movement or a stagnant fight from fixed positions? How often does fighting occur?</li> </ol>
Magnitude of Military Controls	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Is there unity of command?</li> <li>2. What are the administrative arrangements for controlling air power, and do those conflict with operational control? What are the rules of engagement?</li> <li>3. What is the acceptable level of risk for air assets? Are they the same for all air forces?</li> <li>4. What are the personal beliefs of commanders regarding how best to employ air power?</li> </ol>
Nature of the Combat Environment	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What is the climate, weather, and terrain in the hostile area and how might they affect air power employment?</li> <li>2. Are adequate bases available? What type of support is required?</li> <li>3. What are the distances involved in applying air power and can those distances be overcome?</li> </ol>

Source: Mark Clodfelter, “Airpower Versus Asymmetric Enemies: A Framework for Evaluating Effectiveness,” *Air and Space Power Journal* 16, no. 3 (Fall 2002).

## Chapter II: Operation Linebacker II

The thing I remember most is the gigantic secondaries. It was beautiful, terrifying, and awe-inspiring...It was absolutely amazing to see meaningful targets get wiped out with overwhelming force. Why couldn't this have been done years before and thus avoided the needless pain and suffering?

—Colonel Edward T. Rock, Operation Linebacker II

On 2 August 1964 the US naval destroyer Maddox was approximately twenty-five miles from the North Vietnamese coast when three Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) torpedo boats attacked. This engagement resulted in zero US losses, but President Lyndon B. Johnson increased US naval forces in the area as a future deterrent to such attacks. Additionally, he authorized US naval forces to engage and destroy any hostile forces that attacked in international waters. Two days later, the Maddox reported a second attack.<sup>14</sup> The United States responded with Operation Pierce Arrow, conducted on the evening of 5 August. Sixty-four carrier launched aircraft struck targets linked to the Gulf of Tonkin attack, including four DRV patrol boat bases and a supporting petroleum, oil, and lubricant (POL) depot.<sup>15</sup> The attack, though limited in scope, was a US milestone. Pierce Arrow initiated airstrikes within the borders of North Vietnam and demonstrated the growing resolve of the United States to bring conventional air forces into the war to end growing DRV aggression. The growing political instability of South Vietnam also fueled this resolve.

The instability of South Vietnam's regime, led by head of state Nguyễn Khánh, undercut the ability of the Army of the Republic of Vietnam to assume any of the responsibilities assigned to it.

Historian Guenter Lewy wrote:

By the summer of 1964 the U.S. had 21,000 military personnel in Vietnam and the earlier withdrawal plans had been shelved. On 20 June Deputy Commander Gen. William C. Westmoreland became commander of the United States Military Assistance Command... and favored some new vigorous American military commitment such as air strikes against Laos or North Vietnam in order to put new confidence into the South Vietnamese leadership. Premier

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<sup>14</sup> Guenter Lewy, *American in Vietnam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 51-52.

<sup>15</sup> G. Vern Blasdel and John A. Oudine, eds., "Vietnam Summary: Navy on Guard in the Pacific," *All Hands: The Bureau of Naval Personnel Career Publication*, September 1964, 5.

Khanh himself argued strongly for the bombing of the North, and the JCS, too, kept up the pressure for an early beginning of such a bombing campaign.<sup>16</sup>

As a result of the Gulf of Tonkin incident and recognizing South Vietnam's increasing deterioration, the US Congress passed the Southeast Asia Resolution on 10 August. This resolution granted President Johnson the authorization to "take all necessary measures to repel any armed attack against the forces of the United States and to prevent further aggression... as the President determines, to take all necessary steps, including the use of armed force, to assist any member or protocol state of the Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty."<sup>17</sup> A significant contribution to those *necessary steps* was a series of escalatory air campaigns against targets within North Vietnam that started under President Johnson with Operation Flaming Dart and concluded under President Richard Nixon with Operation Linebacker II. Despite the newfound willingness to strike the DRV heartland, a multitude of US imposed constraints limited the success of initial airstrikes against North Vietnam.

## Synopsis of Air Operations, 1965-1972

Operation Flaming Dart began on 8 February 1965 in retaliation to a series of DRV and Viet Cong attacks on US installations and South Vietnamese villages. Lasting approximately two weeks, a total of 148 attack sorties struck a series of targets in the southern portion of North Vietnam including DRV bases near Dong Hoi as well as Viet Cong training, logistics, and communications facilities near the demilitarized zone.<sup>18</sup> These attacks, while succinct and accurate, were mainly a means to demonstrate US resolve in the face of growing Viet Cong aggression. Given the short timeframe, target sets, and distance of targets from DRV leadership the airstrikes were, by design, constrained. These constraints were largely due to political concerns centered around a desire to limit escalation and discourage Soviet and Chinese

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<sup>16</sup> Lewy, *American in Vietnam*, 50.

<sup>17</sup> Southeast Asia Resolution, H.J. Res. 1145, 88th Cong., 2nd sess., *Public Law 88-408* (August 10, 1964).

<sup>18</sup> H. L. Miller, *History of Task Force 77: 2 September 1964 – 17 March 1965* (San Francisco: US Navy Carrier Division Three, 1965), 30-39, accessed March 1, 2019, <https://www.vietnam.ttu.edu/reports/images.php?img=/images/1683/168300010993.pdf>.

intervention.<sup>19</sup> However, continued DRV aggression spurred the Johnson administration to increase the intensity of attacks. Operation Flaming Dart transitioned into the subsequent air campaign, Operation Rolling Thunder.

Operation Rolling Thunder was a four-phase campaign that took place from 1965-1968. Each phase sought to gradually escalate pressure against the DRV, demonstrate US resolve, and compel the DRV to cease resupplying forces in South Vietnam. Phases one and two took place from 1965 to 1967 and focused primarily on military targets. It progressed from fixed targets spread throughout North Vietnam to aerial interdiction of DRV forces and supplies flowing south, with airstrikes advancing north as a means of escalation. Phase three commenced in spring of 1967 and targeted DRV infrastructure including industrial and transportation targets in Hanoi and Haiphong. Missions during phases one through three struck 237 of 242 military nominated targets, and by 1967 the Johnson administration authorized the majority of North Vietnam for interdiction operations. This included rail lines between China and Hanoi as well as Hanoi and Haiphong.

Despite these accomplishments, negative public opinion and resulting political pressure drove changes to the campaign. Phase four resulted in a de-escalation of airstrikes near Hanoi and Haiphong. Bombing operations retrograded south, eventually resulting in an interdiction campaign focused on DRV forces near the southern border of North Vietnam in 1968.<sup>20</sup> Military historian Richard Hallion captured Operation Rolling Thunder's reputation well when noting that it, "mixed illusion and delusion, being neither comprehensive nor coherent...In place of a centralized joint service and combined forces planning cell...there was the White House."<sup>21</sup> However, issues well beyond micromanagement and disjointed targeting led to the campaign's overall failure, further discussed in the following two sections.

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<sup>19</sup> Mark Clodfelter, *The Limits of Airpower: The American Bombing of North Vietnam* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), 58-59.

<sup>20</sup> Pape, *Bombing to Win*, 174-84.

<sup>21</sup> Richard P. Hallion, "America as a Military Aerospace Nation," in *Airpower Applied: U.S., NATO, and Israeli Combat Experience*, ed. John Andreas Olsen (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2017), 53-54.

Operation Linebacker took place from 10 May to 23 October 1972. Initially resembling phases two and three of Operation Rolling Thunder in regard to targeting priorities, a number of constraints to air power were now no longer present. This operation focused on the interdiction of DRV forces and supplies flowing into South Vietnam as well as North Vietnamese infrastructure. In a desire to conclude the conflict, Nixon authorized the targeting of previously restricted bridges, seaports, rail yards, and power and POL facilities. USAF and Navy aircraft released 155,548 tons of bombs, reduced DRV overland imports from 160,000 to 30,000 tons a month, and virtually eliminated seaborne imports due to the mining of harbors. Additionally, the arrival of the laser guided bomb, F-111 fighter aircraft, and integration of B-52 strikes enabled precision and all-weather capabilities when required. However, B-52 operations were largely limited to just north of the South Vietnam border due to fear of domestic uproar regarding unnecessary escalation. As a result of Linebacker's success and the evolution of the DRV way of war, further discussed below, a draft peace agreement emerged. Unfortunately, North and South Vietnam disagreed on final terms, and Operation Linebacker II followed.<sup>22</sup>

Air power enthusiasts often cite Operation Linebacker II as a premier example of how the United States should employ air power writ large. As shown above, Linebacker II also serves as persistent hypothetical on how the air campaign against the Viet Cong and the DRV should have been conducted from its onset. Arguably, the results support this perception. Airstrikes initiated on 18 December 1972 pummeled North Vietnam with over fifteen thousand tons of ordnance released from heavy bombers over the course of eleven days. These strikes damaged or destroyed over one thousand military or dual use targets including multiple rail centers and associated rail lines, wholly disrupting rail traffic within ten miles of Hanoi. The campaign also reduced DRV power generating capacity as well as POL stores by twenty-five percent. Finally, these airstrikes spurred the DRV into diplomatic action that ultimately resulted in the 1973 Paris agreements, ending the US role in the war.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Clodfelter, *The Limits of Airpower*, 158-76.

<sup>23</sup> James R. McCarthy and George B. Allison, *Linebacker II: A View From the Rock* (Barksdale AFB: Air Force Global Strike Command Office of History & Museums, 2018), 173-75.

However, the resounding success of this air campaign was, in reality, the result of a multitude of factors that exceeded effective targeting. Elements ranging from the changing strategy of the DRV to Nixon's newfound willingness to accept additional risk was crucial to the operation's overall success. When compared to preceding air operations, the evolution of the DRV's military objectives unknowingly lessened air power constraints while Nixon facilitated the positive application of air power.

## The Evolution of US National Objectives

The evolution of policy from Johnson's administration to Nixon's was one of the key factors that enabled the positive application of air power to expedite the achievement of national objectives in the Vietnam War. In 1965 Johnson's objectives regarding Vietnam largely reflected guidance found in National Security Action Memorandum (NSAM) 288:

We seek an independent non-Communist South Vietnam. We do not require that it serve as a Western base or as a member of a Western alliance. South Vietnam must be free, however, to accept outside assistance as required to maintain its security. This assistance should be able to take the form not only of economic and social measures but also police and military help to root out and control insurgent elements... by means short of the unqualified use of U.S. combat forces. We are not acting against North Vietnam except by a modest "covert" program operated by South Vietnamese (and a few Chinese Nationalists) - a program so limited that it is unlikely to have any significant effect.<sup>24</sup>

Despite these ambitious goals, the concept of limited direct action against the DRV while hoping to establish an independent South Vietnam shaped the subsequent NSAM 328. Penned by National Security Advisor McGeorge Bundy, it directed, "the slowly ascending tempo of ROLLING THUNDER operations," an air campaign characterized by its ineffective and disjointed targeting of DRV and Viet Cong military capabilities.<sup>25</sup> The memorandum also cautioned against aggressive military actions, such as the aerial mining of North Vietnamese ports, despite recognized advantages, due to the fear that, "It would have major political complications, especially in relation to the Soviets."<sup>26</sup> As discussed above,

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<sup>24</sup> Vietnam Task Force, *Evolution of the War: US Programs in South Vietnam Nov 1963 - Apr 1965* (Washington, DC: Office of the Secretary of Defense, Declassified 2011): 47-48.

<sup>25</sup> McGeorge Bundy, *National Security Action Memorandum No. 328* (Washington, DC: The White House, 1965), 2.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

these concerns manifested themselves in Operations Flaming Dart and Rolling Thunder. The concern regarding Soviet intervention, and to an equal extent China, was not limited to Bundy.

President Johnson's staff, including Secretary of State Dean Rusk and Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara, believed that both the Soviet Union and China were consolidating their ties with Hanoi and would take, "measures to safeguard the security and strengthen the defense capability of the DRV."<sup>27</sup> Secretary Rusk voiced concerns of a potential nuclear exchange.<sup>28</sup> These concerns resulted in limitations that shaped military and diplomatic efforts well into 1968, making the achievement of national objectives via military force near impossible. However, less than five years later Nixon found himself in a different political environment, both international and domestic, which allowed a change in national objectives and reduced the constraints to the application of air power.

President Nixon assumed office in 1969 and implemented an evolving policy that fundamentally altered national objectives in Vietnam. Initial objectives focused on the Vietnamization Plan, which intended to transfer overall military responsibility to South Vietnam and enable a flexible withdrawal of US forces. These objectives hinged upon the DRV's willingness to negotiate and the perceived level of hostile military activity. In the same speech that outlined the Vietnamization Plan Nixon stated, "This withdrawal will be made from strength and not from weakness...If I conclude that increased enemy action jeopardizes our remaining forces in Vietnam, I shall not hesitate to take strong and effective measures to deal with that situation."<sup>29</sup> Nixon adhered to this promise in 1972 as a result of the DRV's negotiation tactics, which ranged from feigned ignorance to outright refusal and hostile military action.<sup>30</sup> His desire to end the conflict, ensure South Vietnam's security from Communist seizure, and continuing his promise

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<sup>27</sup> Vietnam Task Force, *Evolution of the War: The Rolling Thunder Program Begins* (Washington, DC: Office of the Secretary of Defense, Declassified 2011): 29-30.

<sup>28</sup> Clodfelter, *The Limits of Airpower*, 43.

<sup>29</sup> Richard Nixon, "The Great Silent Majority" (video of Presidential Address, November 3, 1969), accessed October 28, 2018, <https://www.nixonfoundation.org/1969/11/the-great-silent-majority/>.

<sup>30</sup> Richard Nixon, "Address to the Nation Making Public a Plan for Peace in Vietnam" (video of Presidential Address, January 25, 1972), accessed October 28, 2018, <https://www.nixonfoundation.org/1972/01/address-to-the-nation-making-public-a-plan-for-peace-in-vietnam/>.

to withdraw US forces resulted in the well-received reliance on air power. Policy that followed the 1969 speech authorized additional targets within North Vietnam, further enabling air power.<sup>31</sup> Additionally, the understanding of the international environment was dramatically different in 1972 than 1968 as result of increased tensions between the Soviet Union and China.

## The Evolution of the Enemy

China and the Soviet Union, the main deterrents of aggressive military action against the DRV during the Johnson administration, were now at odds with growing Chinese nuclear capabilities. Nixon was more than willing to exploit this divide. The Central Intelligence Agency published a report on 19 January 1971 that stated, “Moscow is concerned that these capabilities will eventually provide China with a credible deterrent force and that...Peking might feel free to pursue, more aggressive ground actions against Soviet territory.”<sup>32</sup> Nixon and his National Security Advisor, Henry Kissinger, undertook efforts to ensure this divide furthered US national objectives. Clodfelter notes that by splitting visits between the two countries, Nixon ensured that both the Soviet and Chinese, “goal of détente ultimately prevailed over their commitment to a Northern Victory...neither nation responded to Nixon’s application of air power in 1972.”<sup>33</sup> Nixon could now apply substantial air power against DRV targets without the external constraints on air power that faced the Johnson administration.

In addition to North Vietnam’s flagging allies and the changes in US national objectives, the DRV’s change in military strategy in 1968 altered both the nature and type of war. This furthered the successful application of air power. Pape notes that although Operation Rolling Thunder was a failure, it was conducted, “As the civilians intended, the structure of bombing presented an obvious pattern of escalation toward industrial targets...evidence strongly indicates that Rolling Thunder did create an

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<sup>31</sup> Clodfelter, *The Limits of Airpower*, 148-49.

<sup>32</sup> Office of National Estimates, *Sino-Soviet Relations and the Question of Hostilities* (Langley: Central Intelligence Agency, 1971): 6-7.

<sup>33</sup> Clodfelter, *The Limits of Airpower*, 150.

expectation of industrial damage in the minds of the North Vietnamese leaders.”<sup>34</sup> While limitations regarding targeting within Hanoi and Haiphong diluted desired effects, another key factor regarding the failure of the operation was the nature of the enemy and the type of war waged by the DRV. Prior to 1971 the DRV focused on regime survival and supporting Viet Cong guerilla efforts in South Vietnam. Operation Rolling Thunder, by design, never adequately threatened the DRV regime. Additionally, guerilla warfare was largely immune to aerial interdiction because of the minimal needs of guerilla forces to continue offensive operations.<sup>35</sup> However, Nixon’s commitment to the Vietnamization Plan steered the DRV to a conventional campaign.

Despite the failings of the 1968 Tet Offensive, which devastated the fighting capability of North Vietnam, the Vietnamization Plan drove the DRV focus to defeating South Vietnamese forces and capturing regional areas of influence. DRV efforts to discredit Vietnamization met with initial success, destroying three divisions, capturing two provincial capitals, and undermining South Vietnamese morale.<sup>36</sup> However, in doing so the DRV exposed themselves to air power. Clodfelter notes:

When it returned to open combat with the Easter Offensive at the end of March 1972, it attacked with a fury resembling the World War II German blitzkrieg...The fast-paced, conventional character of the offensive, with its heavy requirements for fuel and ordnance, made it ideal for air attack, and the now-vital logistical resupply lines and bridges running back through North Vietnam became prime targets that finally paid dividends.<sup>37</sup>

The DRV had inadvertently enabled the positive application of air power. Additionally, this effort drove Nixon to realize that only “the strongest action would have any effect in convincing Hanoi...this meant stepping up the bombing.”<sup>38</sup> Operation Linebacker, combined with mining and dedicated close air

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<sup>34</sup> Pape, *Bombing to Win*, 184.

<sup>35</sup> Clodfelter, *The Limits of Airpower*, 140-41.

<sup>36</sup> Pape, *Bombing to Win*, 195-97.

<sup>37</sup> Mark Clodfelter, “The Limits of Airpower or the Limits of Strategy: The Air Wars in Vietnam and Their Legacies,” *Joint Force Quarterly* no. 78 (3rd Quarter 2015): 116.

<sup>38</sup> Bernard Gwertzman, “Nixon Calls Order to Bomb Hanoi His Most Difficult Decision of War,” *New York Times*, May 3, 1978, accessed December 19, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/1978/05/03/archives/new-jersey-pages-nixon-calls-order-to-bomb-hanoi-his-most-difficult.html>.

support (CAS) in the south, severely degraded the DRV's ability to wage an offensive war.<sup>39</sup> Operation Linebacker II subsequently destroyed their will and compelled them to resume negotiations.

## The Air Campaign and Magnitude of Military Controls

While Operation Linebacker introduced the B-52 to concentrated large scale bombing operations in Vietnam, Operation Linebacker II undertook a series of firsts regarding air campaigns against the DRV. Linebacker II enabled the massing of air power within the DRV heartland by accepting a high level of risk in ways previously prohibited. These included (1) continuous night operations against targets within Hanoi and its periphery led by B-52s; (2) known lack of air superiority in the target areas; and (3) expected losses for B-52s ranging from three to six percent. Unfortunately, initial plans devised by Strategic Air Command (SAC) and implemented during the opening nights of the operation created additional risk.<sup>40</sup> The plans emphasized minimal maneuvering for aiming and aircraft deconfliction and used repetitive sequenced routing over the same target areas, a drastic change from previous missions, all but ensuring losses amongst B-52 aircraft (Figure 1). This was partially on account of rushed planning, as the time from order to execution took only four days.<sup>41</sup> However, President Nixon was aware of this risk and shifted more than half of the SAC fleet of B-52s to Guam and Thailand. He believed, "risking the B-52—a vital component of America's nuclear triad—in raids against targets in the well-defended Northern heartland would demonstrate just how serious his efforts were to end the war."<sup>42</sup> These risks proved

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<sup>39</sup> Clodfelter, *The Limits of Airpower*, 173.

<sup>40</sup> Lewy, *American in Vietnam*, 490-496. It is important to note that throughout Linebacker II planners meticulously attempted to avoid collateral damage, employing tactics that emphasized accuracy over obliteration. Nixon felt that indiscriminate raids might disrupt the Soviet and Chinese détente, and therefore SAC demanded routes and formations that minimized the chance of collateral damage. While President Nixon and SAC wanted Hanoi to be completely aware of the attacks, tactical restrictions considered civilian casualties. When compared to airstrikes earlier in 1972 which killed approximately thirteen thousand, this campaign caused far fewer casualties with a total of sixteen hundred dead.

<sup>41</sup> McCarthy and Allison, *Linebacker II: A View From the Rock*, 37-45.

<sup>42</sup> Clodfelter, "The Limits of Airpower or the Limits of Strategy," 119.

deadly as the DRV destroyed nine B-52s and seriously damaged five, roughly 10 percent of attacking force, over three nights of bombing.<sup>43</sup>

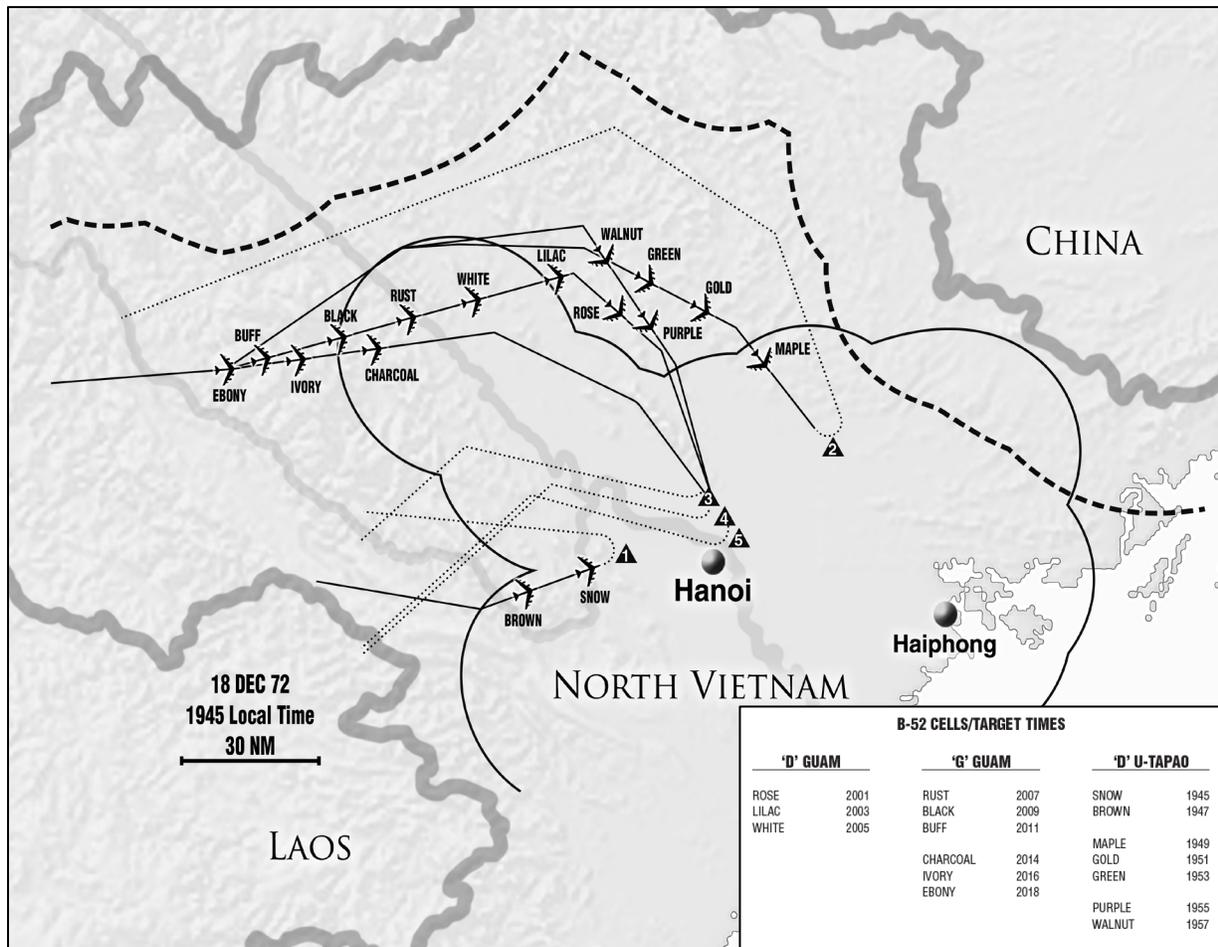


Figure 1. December 18th, 1972 Operation Linebacker II Restrictive Strike Routing. James R. McCarthy and George B. Allison, *Linebacker II: A View From the Rock* (Barksdale AFB: Air Force Global Strike Command Office of History & Museums, 2018), 40-41.

SAC's tight control of B-52 routing, target selection, and tactics prevented optimal support to bomber strikes and allowed the DRV air defenses to exploit US failings in planning and execution. Initially, the B-52's onboard electronic countermeasures (ECM) proved effective despite repetitive bomb runs and minimum maneuvering. The initial B-52 cells from U-Tapao struck their targets successfully and survived in their entirety. However, the DRV quickly took advantage of the tightly controlled repetitive routing to develop countertactics. They massed surface-to-air missiles (SAMs) where the B-52s turned off

<sup>43</sup> Michael III, *The Eleven Days of Christmas*, 162-63.

target. The steep post target turn reduced the downward focused ECM, and the DRV started firing their SAMs ballistically so they would be in an optimal location at radar lock during the turn.<sup>44</sup> Additionally, General John Vogt, Seventh Air Force Commander, remarked on several occasions his frustration with the delays in target information from SAC that prevented proper escort and suppression of enemy air defenses (SEAD). There was a very real concern that, “a heavy loss of B-52s—America’s mightiest warplane—would create the antithesis of the psychological impact that Nixon desired.”<sup>45</sup> As a result of all these considerations SAC ended the repetitive routing and Eighth Air Force took over tactical area planning. This change allowed for adaptable spacings between B-52 strike cells, timely coordination with Seventh Air Force, modified altitudes for cells in each wave, and significant changes in ECM tactics.<sup>46</sup> The results of these changes further enabled the positive application of air power and were evident on 26 December and throughout the remainder of the campaign.

One hundred and twenty B-52s struck targets in Hanoi and Haiphong from nine different directions in a fifteen-minute timespan on 26 December (Figure 2), losing only two bombers to SAMs.<sup>47</sup> The next day Nixon received word that the DRV was ready to resume negotiations. The President responded that negotiations would begin on 2 January, have a time limit attached, and that the DRV could not deliberate on agreements already made. The attacks continued despite the DRV’s willingness to negotiate. From the 27-29 December, 180 bombers struck targets surrounding Hanoi and Lang Dang, with Haiphong spared only due to a lack of appropriate targets. Only two bombers succumbed in these final days of the war.<sup>48</sup> On 28 December Hanoi accepted Nixon’s conditions, and ended Linebacker II. In eleven days, the DRV destroyed fifteen bombers, but in doing so exhausted their SAMs. Nixon achieved

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<sup>44</sup> Michael III, *The Eleven Days of Christmas*, 102-20.

<sup>45</sup> Clodfelter, *The Limits of Airpower*, 187-92.

<sup>46</sup> McCarthy and Allison, *Linebacker II: A View From the Rock*, 119-20.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 140-45.

<sup>48</sup> Clodfelter, *The Limits of Airpower*, 188-89.

his objectives on 27 January, with the signing of the Paris Peace Accord.<sup>49</sup> Nixon largely credited the USAF with the success stating, “The North Vietnamese have agreed to go back to the negotiating table on our terms. They can’t take bombing any longer. Our Air Force really did the job.”<sup>50</sup>

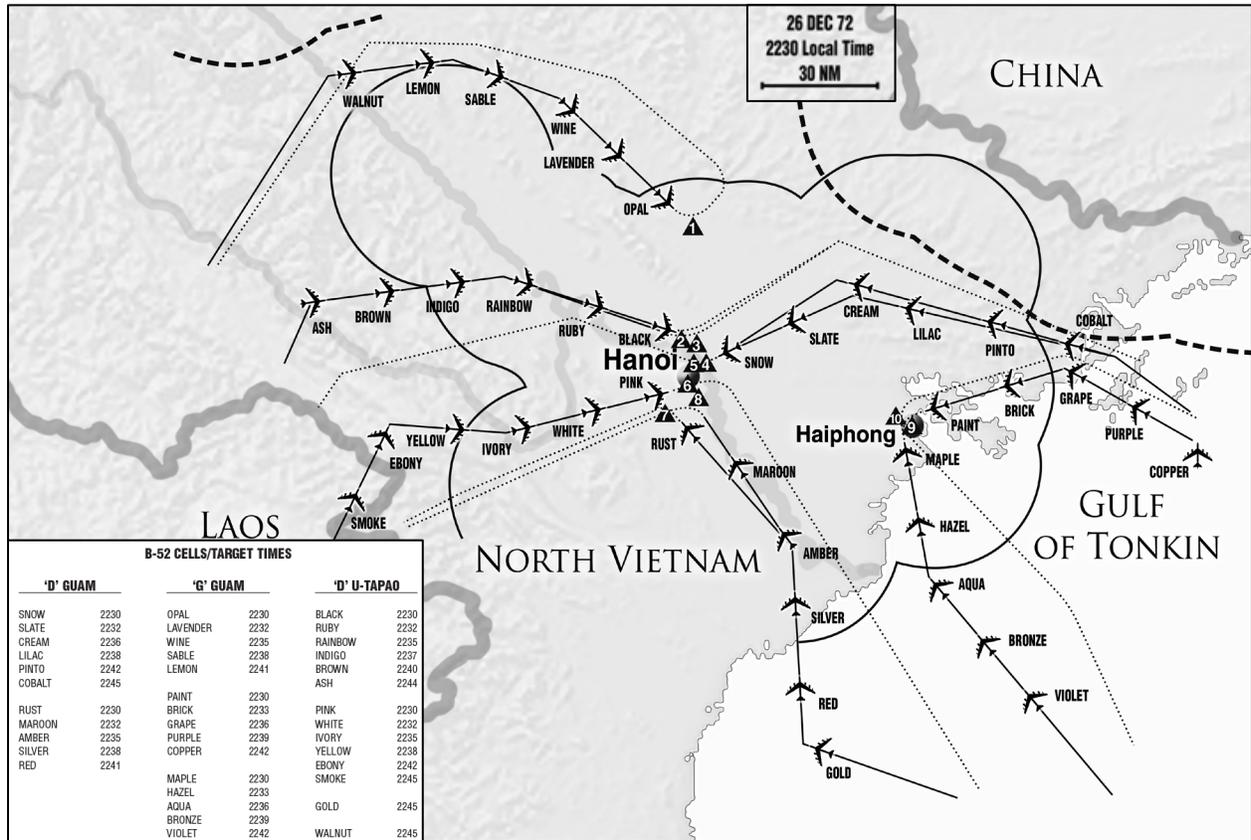


Figure 2. December 26th, 1972 Operation Linebacker II Multi-Axis Strike Routing. James R. McCarthy and George B. Allison, *Linebacker II: A View From the Rock* (Barksdale AFB: Air Force Global Strike Command Office of History & Museums, 2018), 122-23.

### Case Study Conclusion: Operation Linebacker II

Operation Linebacker II and the majority of Linebacker reinforce the hypothesis that air power positively impacts national objectives when an air campaign effectively targets an enemy’s military vulnerabilities in which it has no equal means of response. However, there are three variables from

<sup>49</sup> Michael III, *The Eleven Days of Christmas*, 209-19.

<sup>50</sup> Charles W. Colson, *Born Again* (Grand Rapids, MI: Chosen Books, 1976), 78.

Clodfelter's methodology that primarily prohibited this success prior to 1971. These are the nature of national objectives, nature of the enemy, and the type of war waged by the enemy.<sup>51</sup>

Nixon's Vietnamization Plan and changes in international politics were two factors that enabled the positive application of air power. The Vietnamization Plan called for a flexible withdrawal of US forces, but this withdrawal depended upon the DRV's willingness to negotiate and their level of hostile military activity. This provided Nixon with a justification to apply greater military force via air power to compel negotiations. It demonstrated resolve to South Vietnam while it simultaneously presented these actions to the US domestic audience as a response to the DRV's intractability. Additionally, new anxieties between Russia and China regarding emerging nuclear capabilities allowed Nixon to exploit this divide and mitigate the previous deterrent to aggressive US air campaigns. Each of these factors removed constraints that then allowed for aggressive targeting of DRV forces and infrastructure, vulnerabilities previously protected from attack.

The DRV exacerbated these vulnerabilities by shifting to a conventional ground campaign. Despite failings in previous conventional operations the DRV committed themselves to a type of warfare that focused on defeating South Vietnamese forces and capturing regional areas of influence in an effort to undermine the Vietnamization Plan. This drastic change from a guerilla campaign to conventional offensive action exposed a substantial vulnerability regarding supplies, troops, and POL flowing south that previously did not exist. This facilitated the positive application of air power, as interdiction campaigns now created significant results. Operation Linebacker II pushed those results even further, demonstrating the capabilities of the United States and the vulnerability of the DRV.

A secondary variable that constrained the success of Operation Linebacker II was the lack of a unified chain of command, which resulted in disjointed military controls and coordination. The ineffective interactions and absence of coherency amongst SAC, the 8th Air Force, the 7th Air Force, and United States Navy during Linebacker II resulted in a lack of, "a single responsible air commander, a

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<sup>51</sup> Clodfelter, "Airpower Versus Asymmetric Enemies," 42-45.

clear set of objectives, and a common concept of operations...operations of the separate components tended to work at cross-purposes and give respite to the enemy.”<sup>52</sup> This separation of planning, execution, and control resulted in aborted missions and unstruck targets. More importantly, it directly led to the loss of aircrews during the first three nights of the campaign. Fortunately, Linebacker II led to some permanent positive outcomes regarding the joint application of air power. Thus, the JFACC concept emerged where a single air commander directs planning, coordination, allocation, and tasking based on the joint force commander's apportionment decision.<sup>53</sup>

Linebacker II also specifically impacted USAF doctrine, combining the many lessons learned and observations into doctrine that largely remains today. This operation solidified perceptions that air power could independently achieve national objectives via strategic bombing operations.<sup>54</sup> The 1984 *Air Force Manual 1-1 Basic Doctrine* reflects this notion, “Aerospace forces have the power to penetrate to the heart of an enemy’s strength without first defeating defending forces in detail... Attacks against heartland targets can produce benefits beyond the proportion of effort expended and costs involved. For this reason, an air commander must seize every opportunity to execute heartland attacks.”<sup>55</sup> Clodfelter notes, “Many air chiefs looked at Linebacker II and the negotiated settlement as a cause-and-effect relationship...They thus viewed Linebacker II as a vindication of Air Force doctrine, and insisted that such an operation in the spring of 1965 would have ended the war then.”<sup>56</sup> Current doctrine conveys a similar message, “The Air Force uses air, space, and cyberspace capabilities to create effects...that are ends unto themselves...airpower does not have to fight its way through enemy fighting mechanisms (fielded forces)

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<sup>52</sup> Deputy Chief of Staff, *JFACC Primer*, 5.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>54</sup> Mark Clodfelter, “Vietnam’s Impact on the Basic Doctrine of the USAF,” in *Air Power History: Turning Points from Kitty Hawk to Kosovo*, ed. Sebastian Cox and Peter Gray (Portland: Frank Cass Publishers, 2002), 304.

<sup>55</sup> US Department of the Air Force, *Air Force Manual (AFM) 1-1, Basic Doctrine* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1984), 2.6-2.12.

<sup>56</sup> Mark Clodfelter, “Vietnam’s Impact on the Basic Doctrine of the USAF,” 306.

to affect the critical adversary systems defended by them, as other forms of military power often do.”<sup>57</sup> However, as shown above, the effectiveness of air power in achieving national objectives is not without costs.

The success of the violent but succinct Linebacker II campaign required a change in national objectives as well as the nature of the enemy to enable effective air power against adversary military vulnerabilities. As such, this case study did not disprove the hypothesis, but it did demonstrate that effective targeting is neither a given nor is it a guaranteed success. Operation Linebacker and Operation Rolling Thunder struck many of the same target sets, but only one was impactful. While the constraints that affected the Johnson administration never completely dissipated, changes in national objectives as well as the enemy and its allies created avenues for the positive application of air power that tipped the balance in favor of Operations such as Linebacker and Linebacker II. These campaigns then destroyed both the ability and will of the DRV to continue fighting, setting the stage for a diplomatic solution.

### Chapter III: Operation Deliberate Force

What's the point of having this superb military you're always talking about if we can't use it?

—Madeleine Albright, 1993 meeting with General Colin Powell

Bosnia-Herzegovina declared itself an independent nation in March 1992, breaking ties with Yugoslavia, and violence rapidly followed. Bosnian Serbs, backed by Serbia, demanded the withdrawal of this declaration. They backed this demand with force, forming the Bosnian Serb Army (BSA) in the summer of 1992. The BSA undertook a campaign of ethnic cleansing, reinforced by an aggressive military campaign, to seize and retain territory within Bosnia-Herzegovina in order to remain linked to Serbia and eliminate divergent influences.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Curtis E. LeMay Center for Doctrine Development and Education, “Airpower” in *Volume I, Basic Doctrine* (Maxwell AFB: Air University, 2015), 1, accessed August 8, 2018, [https://www.doctrine.af.mil/Portals/61/documents/Volume\\_1/V1-D21-Airpower.pdf](https://www.doctrine.af.mil/Portals/61/documents/Volume_1/V1-D21-Airpower.pdf).

<sup>58</sup> Robert C. Owen, “Operation Deliberate Force, 1995,” in *A History of Air Warfare*, ed. John A. Olsen (Washington, DC: Potomac Books Inc., 2010), 205.

As part of the international response the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) began limited air operations over Bosnia on 16 October 1992 with Operation Sky Monitor. This operation attempted to restrict flights that did not have United Nations (UN) approval. However, these efforts would not have any impact until April 1993 when UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 816 granted NATO the authority to intercept and engage violating aircraft.<sup>59</sup> This resolution established Operation Deny Flight and was further expanded in July 1993 to include providing CAS as necessary to protect the UN Protection Force (UNPROFOR). This resolution set the groundwork for Operation Deliberate Force (ODF) and the successful application of air power to facilitate national objectives.<sup>60</sup>

### Synopsis of Air Operations, 1992-1995

The initial role of NATO aircraft in the Bosnian War was limited by constraints to air power stemming from the desire to prevent the escalation of violence. NATO did not undertake direct lethal action until 28 February 1994 when USAF fighters intercepted and destroyed six Yugoslav attack aircraft returning from an attack on Bosnian government forces. Subsequent CAS strikes took place in early April, when UN troops came under fire during a BSA offensive against the newly designated safe area of Gorazde, Bosnia.<sup>61</sup> Still, strikes such as these were limited as Lambeth noted, “Over two years [1992-1994]...out of more than a hundred CAS ‘presence’ requests, only four authorized CAS attacks were conducted.”<sup>62</sup>

NATO aircraft continued limited strikes from April until September, attacking a BSA forces near Sarajevo that had fired upon UNPROFOR, bombing BSA ammunition storage sites in Pale, and striking

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<sup>59</sup> Karl Mueller, “The Demise of Yugoslavia and the Destruction of Bosnia: Strategic Causes, Effects, and Responses,” in *Deliberate Force: A Case Study in Effective Air Campaigning*, ed. Robert C. Owen (Maxwell AFB: Air University Press, 2000), 19.

<sup>60</sup> United Nations Security Council, Resolution 836, 3228th Meeting, June 4, 1993, 2, accessed November 26, 2018, <http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/doc/836>.

<sup>61</sup> Mueller, “The Demise of Yugoslavia and the Destruction of Bosnia,” 21.

<sup>62</sup> Lambeth, “American and NATO Airpower Applied,” 127.

BSA artillery near Gorazde. NATO did not escalate the attacks until 21 November 1995 when aircraft from four countries struck a Serb held airfield in Udbina, Croatia in response to Serbian airstrikes that had supported the BSA. Yet, even this attack was subject to constraints as it cratered the runway but spared the violating aircraft at the request of the UN. Additionally, as a result of NATO aircraft losses during this timeframe, Deny Flight operations were adjusted to keep aircraft further away from threat areas. NATO would not authorize proactive destruction of BSA integrated air defense systems (IADS) in fear of overall conflict escalation. These fears further increased the risk to air operations. This restrictive and piecemeal approach created numerous air power constraints and continued until the commencement of ODF.<sup>63</sup>

Air power writings on ODF habitually start with a streamlined narrative to quickly move into the undertaking and overall success of the air campaign. John A. Tirpak of *AIR FORCE Magazine* supplies a succinct example:

On Aug. 28, 1995, an artillery shell ripped through the stalls of an open market in Sarajevo, Bosnia, killing thirty-eight civilians and maiming or injuring eighty-five others. For the leaders of a joint United Nations–NATO force...it was seen as the last straw after a lengthy spree of deal-breaking attacks by the Bosnian Serbs. Joint Force leaders quickly moved to exercise their internationally granted authority to launch “disproportionate” retaliation.<sup>64</sup>

Prompt actions taken by NATO and sanctioned by the UN reinforce this interpretation. On 30 August at 0200 forty-three NATO aircraft struck BSA command-and-control (C2) facilities, air defense sites, and supporting radar and communication facilities. Within twenty-four hours NATO flew three hundred strike and support sorties, attacking twenty-three target areas. At the completion of the three-week operation NATO flew 3,515 total combat sorties, resulting in the destruction of fifty-six target sets and the severe degradation of BSA IADS. This narrative reinforces the impact of precision guided munitions in minimizing collateral damage, the short duration of the seventeen-day campaign, and the resulting Dayton Accords which effectively ended the conflict.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Mueller, “The Demise of Yugoslavia and the Destruction of Bosnia,” 19-22.

<sup>64</sup> John A. Tirpak, “Deliberate Force,” *AIR FORCE Magazine* (October 1997): 36.

<sup>65</sup> Lambeth, “American and NATO Airpower Applied,” 130-34.

While concise, this narrative oversimplifies the operating environment. The military escalation described above harkens back to Linebacker II. The complexities of changing UN, US, and NATO policies enabled a dramatic escalation in force when fueled by an aggressively evolving enemy. This force, when opposed by a type of warfare conducive to the positive application of air power, resulted in the success of the campaign.

## The Evolution of UN, US, and NATO Objectives

The international view on the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina shifted between a civil war and a war of external aggression throughout the conflict, complicating the task of negotiating a political settlement and initially leading to military constraints. Differences among national interests in the international community and the interpretation of the right to intervene in the domestic affairs of independent states further complicated the decision calculus and policy objectives of international powers.<sup>66</sup> Therefore, the international community focused on finding a primarily diplomatic solution to the conflict from 1992-1994. This was despite the fact that Bosnia-Herzegovina was recognized as an independent state in 1992 and granted UN membership. Thus, its territorial integrity was now violated by both Serbia and Croatia. Even as violence increased in the form of continued artillery strikes and ethnic cleansing by the BSA, the UN largely limited its response to threats of escalation and economic sanctions against Serbia. This balk at direct armed conflict also resulted in in the largest UN humanitarian aid mission in its history, executed by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and safeguarded by UNPROFOR.<sup>67</sup>

UNPROFOR transferred its headquarters to the Bosnian provincial capital of Sarajevo in the spring of 1992 to secure humanitarian airlift operations into its airport and deter the ongoing artillery

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<sup>66</sup> United Nations General Assembly, Resolution 2131, "Declaration on the Inadmissibility of Intervention in the Domestic Affairs of States and the Protection of Their Independence and Sovereignty," 1408th Plenary Meeting, December 21, 1965, 1, accessed November 26, 2018, <http://www.un-documents.net/a20r2131.htm>.

<sup>67</sup> Steven L. Burg and Paul S. Shoup, *The War in Bosnia-Herzegovina: Ethnic Conflict and International Intervention* (London: M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 2000), 190-206.

attacks by Serb forces in that area.<sup>68</sup> However, this decision placed the UNPROFOR center stage in the conflict. UNPROFOR performed both traditional peacekeeping functions, such as arranging cease-fire agreements and assisting in the delivery of humanitarian aid, as well as peace enforcement functions. UN security resolutions later called for a dramatic expansion of UNPROFOR's presence in Bosnia-Herzegovina. These measures tasked them with defending designated safe areas and coordinating with NATO air power against the BSA. This hindered UNPROFOR's position of neutrality and their ability to perform peacekeeping functions, while adding only limited combat power.<sup>69</sup> Additionally, while UN occupation of the Sarajevo airport enabled humanitarian aid, it also created a deterrent for more decisive involvement by NATO and the international community. The appearance that something was being done soothed public outcry.<sup>70</sup> This contributed to further constraints regarding the use of air power.

The decision to press forward with humanitarian relief efforts and economic sanctions while limiting the use of military force largely to UNPROFOR demonstrated the unwillingness of the United States to become further entangled in the conflict. Senior US officials, including President George H.W. Bush and Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney, believed the conflict was a civil war that did not demand military intervention. The US military believed that the use of force would inevitably lead to a large deployment of ground forces, with estimates ranging from thirty-five to ninety thousand troops.<sup>71</sup> The deaths of 241 US troops in October 1983 in Lebanon and an additional 18 in October 1993 in Somalia strongly reminded policy-makers about the risks of employing military force.<sup>72</sup> Hendrickson captures the tone well, "Senior US officials and Pentagon planners had no intention of becoming engaged in another

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<sup>68</sup> United Nations Security Council, Resolution 758, 3083rd Meeting, June 8, 1992, 1, accessed November 26, 2018, <http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/doc/758>.

<sup>69</sup> Mueller, "The Demise of Yugoslavia and the Destruction of Bosnia," 18-19.

<sup>70</sup> Peter Andreas, *Blue Helmets and Black Markets: The Business of Survival in the Siege of Sarajevo* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2008), 36-37.

<sup>71</sup> Burg and Shoup, *The War in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, 200-10.

<sup>72</sup> Dag Henriksen, *NATO's Gamble: Combining Diplomacy and Airpower in the Kosovo Crisis, 1998-1999* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2007), 74-80.

poorly planned operation risking combat casualties where clear national security interests were not at stake.”<sup>73</sup> However, a change in both the US political administration and recognition of the type of war waged by the BSA transformed the way the United States viewed the conflict.

The Clinton administration assumed office in January 1993 and initiated a new line of thinking regarding the use of force in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Vice President Al Gore, UN Ambassador Madeleine Albright, and Ambassador Richard Holbrooke all favored the use of air power to politically coerce the BSA, believing airpower had, “gone through a quantum change in precision and effectiveness...and Bosnia was a different war.”<sup>74</sup> However, departing Chairman of the Joint Chiefs General Colin Powell remained skeptical, cautioning, “Heavy bombing might convince them to give in, but would not compel them to give in....we should not commit military forces until we had a clear political objective.”<sup>75</sup>

The true turning point was the Srebrenica massacre in July 1995, which was quickly followed by the Markale marketplace massacre in August 1995. The Srebrenica massacre resulted in the deaths of close to eight thousand Bosnian Muslims and shocked the world, spurring Washington to guide NATO in a new direction. The United States was not alone in urging a robust response. The attitudes of the international community towards the BSA started changing before the Srebrenica massacre when UN peacekeepers were taken hostage in November 1994 and May 1995.<sup>76</sup> These hostage takings, along with the massacres, enabled a military response that far outweighed any previous action, setting the stage for the positive application of air power.

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<sup>73</sup> Ryan C. Hendrickson, “Crossing the Rubicon,” *NATO Review* (Autumn 2005) accessed December 2, 2018, <https://www.nato.int/docu/review/2005/Combating-Terrorism/Crossing-Rubicon/EN/index.htm>.

<sup>74</sup> Henriksen, *NATO's Gamble*, 77-81.

<sup>75</sup> Colin Powell and Joseph E. Persico, *My American Journey* (New York: Ballantine Publishing Group, 1995), 561.

<sup>76</sup> Hendrickson, “Crossing the Rubicon.”

## The Evolution of the Enemy

From the outset of the conflict the main aggressor, the BSA, opposed Bosnian independence and desired to remain a part of Yugoslavia. As this goal deteriorated, the BSA campaign of ethnic division escalated in violence with the continued aim of establishing a partition of between the Bosnian Croats, Serbs, and Muslims that strongly favored the Serbs. If this came to fruition the Bosnian Serbs anticipated control of nearly 70 percent of Bosnia.<sup>77</sup> Additionally, former president of Yugoslavia Slobodan Milošević exacerbated and exploited the internal divisions of the country for his own political and economic advantage. Milošević, an ethnic nationalist, foresaw the disintegration of Yugoslavia and placed like-minded Serbs in control of key Bosnian territories to ensure continued loyalty and access to the region.<sup>78</sup> This placement meant that the belligerents of war in Bosnia had neither the predisposition nor the experience to make compromises for the sake of peace.

This predisposition, along with a limited initial international response, emboldened the BSA's policy of ethnic division and the progression of ethnic cleansing to meet policy goals. Political scientists Steven Burg and Paul Shoup noted, "The danger of reducing the Muslims to a rump state populated by angry refugees expelled from Serb-held territory seemed to be of no import to Bosnian Serb leaders...[They] focused instead on gaining international recognition for their own state...and its eventual union with Serbia."<sup>79</sup> Additionally, the absence of a credible threat to BSA operations and the international response virtually eliminated any incentive for the Serbs to make diplomatic concessions that decreased their control over Bosnia.<sup>80</sup> The aim of Bosnian Serb ethnic cleansing was to maintain territory claimed during the conflict. While both the Bosnian Muslims and Croats participated in some form of forced relocation, the Bosnian Serb actions appear unmatched in their number and consistent

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<sup>77</sup> Burg and Shoup, *The War in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, 191-93.

<sup>78</sup> Owen, "Operation Deliberate Force, 1995," 204.

<sup>79</sup> Burg and Shoup, *The War in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, 193-94.

<sup>80</sup> Owen, "Operation Deliberate Force, 1995," 206.

devastation of the Muslim controlled areas they claimed. By 1995, Bosnian Serbs killed thousands of Muslims and forced at least seven hundred thousand from their homes. No matter what the final number was, the international community clearly took notice of the brutality of Serb cleansing operations and massacres. They demanded a response beyond the current humanitarian aid mission.<sup>81</sup> This further enabled the application of air power.

As a forerunner to ethnic cleansing, the BSA conducted successful offensive military operations throughout Bosnia-Herzegovina from 1992-1994. The BSA seized key terrain that isolated Sarajevo, surrounded both Bosnian Muslim and Croat forces, and maintained a corridor to Milošević's Serbia due to their overwhelming military advantage. The Yugoslav People's Army supported them with both manpower and equipment. Milošević also covertly stationed Bosnian-born Serb officers in Bosnia-Herzegovina, ensuring a professionally trained and loyal force was in place by January 1992.<sup>82</sup> Key elements of the eventual ODF target set, described by Lambeth, reinforces the professional nature of the BSA forces, "The target array also signified that threat was far more than the popular televised images of inexperienced rebels in a civil war. It was in fact a Soviet-style IADS consisting of radar and infrared guided SAMs and air defense artillery operated by former Yugoslav air defense specialists."<sup>83</sup> The BSA was largely successful in capturing their anticipated 70 percent of anticipated land gains, and the ethnic cleansing practices described above ensured minimal resistance once these areas were annexed.<sup>84</sup> Still, by the end of 1994 the BSA collided with a series of previously unmet complications and growing international unrest that exposed them to the positive application of air power, both physically and politically.

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<sup>81</sup> Burg and Shoup, *The War in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, 172-88.

<sup>82</sup> Andreas, *Blue Helmets and Black Markets*, 23.

<sup>83</sup> Lambeth, "American and NATO Airpower Applied," 130-31.

<sup>84</sup> Burg and Shoup, *The War in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, 185-88.

Despite the clear military victories, by December 1994 the BSA was more vulnerable than it appeared. Its forces were stretched thin with minimal reinforcements available. Military fronts were clearly identifiable and the BSA established fixed fighting positions, emboldened by the still limited UN and NATO response. This perceived strength would later empower NATO targeting and leave the BSA without a means to counter ODF air operations. Additionally, BSA leadership was then at odds with Serbia over Milošević's growing desire to end the conflict under terms which would forfeit large portions of the BSA's territorial gains.<sup>85</sup>

While ultimately a result of the continued violence in Bosnia-Herzegovina, the international community reinforced its approval for economic sanctions against Serbia in response to the highly publicized civilian massacres in both Sarajevo and Srebrenica in 1992 and 1995. In response, Milošević distanced himself from the BSA while at the same time trying to establish communications with the UN and United States. He desired to broker a deal that would lift sanctions against Serbia as a compromise for BSA land forfeiture and a Serbia backed cease-fire negotiations. This left the BSA feeling isolated and likely encouraged additional hostile action from the BSA to demonstrate their resolve. This would result in the oft cited *trigger* for ODF described above, the second shelling of the Markale Marketplace in August 1995.<sup>86</sup>

## The Evolution of Military Controls, ODF, and the Enemy Response

Prior to 1995, there were a plethora of political factors that manifested within the systems of military controls for NATO air operations in support of UNPROFOR. These manifestations resulted in compounding constraints, severely restricting the use of air power. This was partially due to the evolving nature of NATO's role in the conflict. As described above, NATO did not have the ability to kinetically support UNPROFOR until UNSCR 836, and up to that time NATO C2 was not designed to support

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<sup>85</sup> Robert C. Owen, "Summary," in *Deliberate Force: A Case Study in Effective Air Campaigning* ed. Robert C. Owen (Maxwell AFB: Air University Press, 2000), 495-98.

<sup>86</sup> Burg and Shoup, *The War in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, 164-69; 327-52.

combat operations. The dramatic change enabled by this UNSCR resulted in a complete restructure of air operations. This included coordination between UN and NATO command elements and redefined concepts of proportionality of force and military necessity, resulting in two significant developments. The first was the separation of potential targets into *option sets* that enabled military and political authorities to control targets as well as the escalation of force. The second was the *dual-key* system.<sup>87</sup>

The primary constraint regarding air power stemming directly from military controls was the initial *dual-key* system. This system, an attempt to ensure implementation of the UNSCR mandated, “close coordination,” between UN and NATO forces, resulted control measures that severely limited the effectiveness of air power.<sup>88</sup> The approval authority for strike and CAS missions on the NATO side was Commander of Allied Forces Southern Europe, but this was often delegated to the director of the Combined Air Operations Center (CAOC). However, on the UN side the approval authority was the secretary-general. Under this construct, if a UNPROFOR unit came under attack a support request would initially go through the air operations control center to Sarajevo for evaluation by the UNPROFOR commander. It then proceeded to the commander of United Nations Peacekeeping Forces in Zagreb. There, a crisis-action team evaluated the request. If the team considered the request legitimate, they forwarded the request to the UN secretary-general's special representative in Yugoslavia. Finally, the request went to New York for ultimate approval by the UN secretary-general.<sup>89</sup> Owen captures the flaws of this design:

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<sup>87</sup> Ronald M. Reed, “Chariots of Fire: Rules of Engagement in Operation Deliberate Force,” in *Deliberate Force: A Case Study in Effective Air Campaigning*, ed. Robert C. Owen (Maxwell AFB: Air University Press, 2000), 396-401. In addition to the above text, Reed describes Option-one targets as the first-strike phase which included militarily significant targets that visibly impeded or prevented the implementation of UNSCRs, such as specific artillery batteries participating in a siege. Option-two targets included direct and essential support items such as artillery and heavy weapons, supply points and munitions sites, C2 facilities, and BSA IADs components. Option-three targets expanded operations and included targets of strategic value outside the immediate areas under siege. This included target types discussed in option two but not located in the immediate area of the siege and military-related petroleum, oil, and lubricants. Each of these target sets were deemed a military necessity, but the prosecution of these targets remained tightly controlled throughout the conflict.

<sup>88</sup> United Nations Security Council, Resolution 836, 2.

<sup>89</sup> Reed, “Chariots of Fire,” 401-02.

These provisions required both NATO and the UN to approve an offensive strike, even in the heat of battle, when minutes could mean life or death. Worse, since the secretary general was the UN's approval authority...[this] process actually could, and on occasion did, take hours...in a demonstration of the clumsiness of the approval process, NATO aircraft were unable to attack a Serb artillery piece shelling Sarajevo [1994] because, by the time the UN secretary general's approval came, the gun had slipped under cover.<sup>90</sup>

These failures strengthened BSA resolve and led to dissension amongst NATO allies, resulting in numerous threats from partner nations to withdraw forces from the conflict.<sup>91</sup>

In August 1995, as a result of the increased violence against UNPROFOR and civilians in UN safe zones, the *dual-key* authorities changed. After the loss in Srebrenica, where NATO aircraft were airborne but not approved to strike, the UN key transferred to the UNPROFOR commander. The NATO key remained with Commander of Allied Forces Southern Europe.<sup>92</sup> This effectively put the keys in the hands of the respective theater commanders (Figure 3). While this did not reflect true unity of command as described in the *JFACC primer*, it did streamline the approval process and enabled the positive application of air power.<sup>93</sup> Additionally, supplementary liaisons from both NATO and UNPROFOR were embedded with their sister air operations center in 1994, further facilitating cross talk and information sharing.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Owen, "Operation Deliberate Force, 1995," 208.

<sup>91</sup> Burg and Shoup, *The War in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, 320.

<sup>92</sup> Hendrickson, "Crossing the Rubicon."

<sup>93</sup> Deputy Chief of Staff, *JFACC Primer*, 59.

<sup>94</sup> Mark J. Conversino, "Executing Deliberate Force, 30 August-14 September 1995," in *Deliberate Force: A Case Study in Effective Air Campaigning*, ed. Robert C. Owen (Maxwell AFB: Air University Press, 2000), 133.

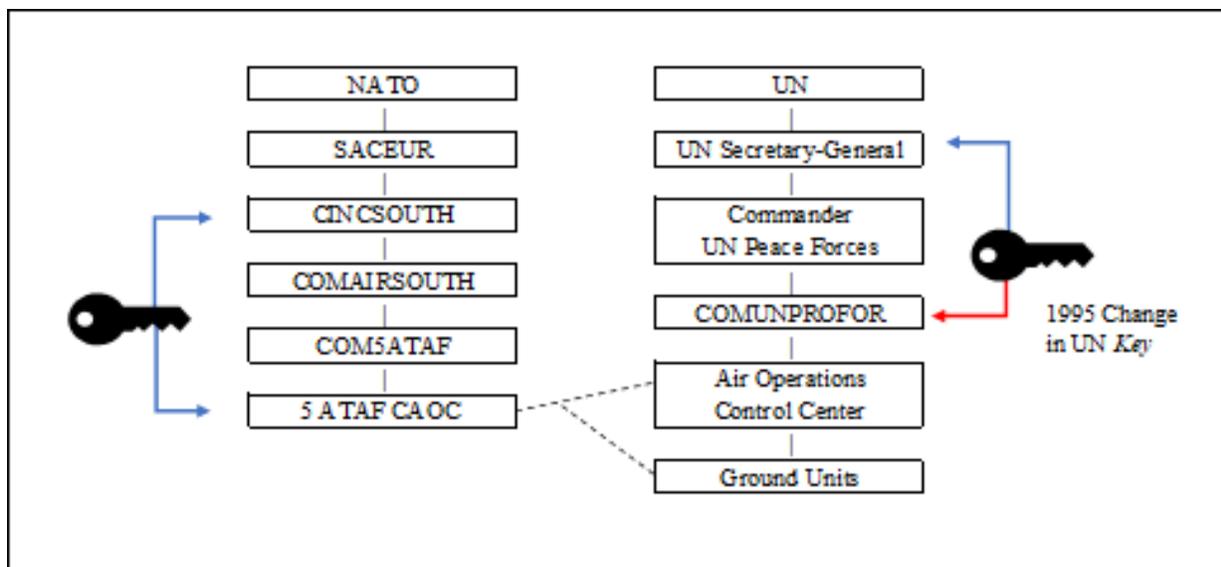


Figure 3. UN and NATO Dual-Key Chain of Command. Robert C. Owen, ed. *Deliberate Force: A Case Study in Effective Air Campaigning* (Maxwell AFB: Air University Press, 2000), 401.

Despite the fact that the piecemeal application of force and restrictive military controls constrained air operations from 1993 to early 1995, two factors resulted from these restrictions that facilitated the success of ODF. Planning operations that commenced in 1993 and resulted in the *options* described above provided important information used in ODF. First, the locations of significant BSA forces and supplies were known due to their largely unimpeded advance. These included positions of supply lines and storage, heavy weapons, and BSA IADS. This enabled precision targeting, knowledge of BSA threat and C2 systems, and the development of appropriate support packages that were integrated into ODF's concept of operations (Figure 4). This ensured NATO aircraft could mitigate independent BSA ground threats and strike key components of the IADS. Additionally, the amount of time between the limited air offensives, coupled with the continued threat of more severe airstrikes, allowed the build-up of NATO aircraft. This enabled the continued tempo and overall effectiveness once ODF commenced.<sup>95</sup> These effects of these factors demonstrated how initial restrictions on air power, when applied to changing objectives throughout the entire operation, can result in a positive outcome once policy is aligned with action.

<sup>95</sup> Owen, "Operation Deliberate Force, 1995," 212-13.



Figure 4. Operation Deliberate Force Concept of Operations. Robert C. Owen, ed. *Deliberate Force: A Case Study in Effective Air Campaigning* (Maxwell AFB: Air University Press, 2000), 308.

The above Synopsis section captures the kinetic events of ODF with a few noteworthy exceptions that aided in the operation's overall success, despite adding further restrictions to employment. Lieutenant General Michael Ryan, commander of Allied Air Forces Southern Europe, understood that a single incident of collateral damage could undermine or halt the campaign. He therefore personally selected all targets and aim points for attack.<sup>96</sup> Ryan and his staff also distributed target folders with weaponeering and special instructions. These required aircrews to visually identify targets, directed minimum maneuvering during strikes to maximize release platform stability, and required redundant support packages to ensure a low threshold of risk to mission and force during ODF. Tomahawk land-attack cruise missiles launched by the US Navy, initially designed to mitigate BSA IADS in heavily contested areas, reinforced the message that NATO was prepared to escalate its attacks as necessary to defeat the

<sup>96</sup> Conversino, "Executing Deliberate Force," 138.

BSA. The use of this technology stunned the BSA and projected a message that NATO was willing to go to great lengths to coerce the Serbs to accept the UN's terms for peace.<sup>97</sup> Ultimately, Ryan implemented additional air power constraints with the understanding that overall campaign objectives went beyond the destruction of enemy forces and included maintaining international support.

Following ODF, the BSA found it increasingly difficult to retain the terrain they had seized throughout the conflict. In addition to the successful airstrikes against IADS, logistic centers, and lines of communication the BSA also faced a ground offensive involving Croat and Muslim forces. The BSA felt surrounded, alone, and with few options other than negotiation as a result of these combined offensives and the perceived isolation from Serbia. ODF provided the leverage required for negotiations and the succeeding Dayton Peace Agreement, which established the governing framework for Bosnia-Herzegovina that still remains in place.<sup>98</sup>

### Case Study Conclusion: Operation Deliberate Force

As revealed above, there were multiple factors beyond the precise targeting of an enemy's military vulnerabilities that enabled the eventual success of air power in achieving national objectives. The initial US and international policy, checked by apprehension regarding conflict escalation, resulted in the ineffective and piecemeal employment of air power from 1992-1994. This employment rejected the doctrine of the time.<sup>99</sup> It also reinforced Clodfelter's assertion that policy is often the most important variable regarding the application of air power, and underscores his questions, "How committed is the leadership that is applying airpower to achieving the positive goals? How committed is its populace? Can

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<sup>97</sup> Owen, "Operation Deliberate Force, 1995," 214-21.

<sup>98</sup> Hendrickson, "Crossing the Rubicon."

<sup>99</sup> "Success in achieving objectives with aerospace power requires a proper balance between the principles of *mass* and *economy of force*. Concentrated firepower can overwhelm enemy defenses and secure an objective at the right time and place. Because of their characteristics and capabilities, aerospace forces possess the ability to concentrate enormous decisive striking power upon selected targets when and where it is needed most." US Air Force, *AFM 1-1* (1984), 2.7.

leadership attain the positive goals without denying the negative objectives?”<sup>100</sup> From 1992-1994 it was clear that while well-defined policy goals were arguably never established, the commitment to the conflict was complicated by the humanitarian aid mission and the argument over the conflict’s definition. It took continuously brazen acts by the BSA to heighten awareness and motivate greater action.

The BSA’s largely unopposed ground offensive and subsequent ethnic cleansing from 1992 until early 1995 emboldened their actions but left them vulnerable to air operations. Inaction from the international community beyond limited enforcement of UN safe areas allowed the BSA to continue to take ground in Bosnia-Herzegovina and continue their campaign of ethnic cleansing. However, this same inaction later enabled NATO success. The BSA’s continued civilian massacres and UN hostage taking, emboldened by previous non-response, finally spurred international support for a military response on a previously unseen scale. The military success of the BSA left main lines of communication and logistics areas static, targetable, and unprepared for the resulting airstrikes. Therefore, the nature of the enemy was also a significant contributor to the success of ODF, and the initial constraints to air power regarding targeting the BSA assisted later success.

Interestingly, the lack of well-defined objectives was less of a constraint to the successful application of air power than the lack of a decision to employ it appropriately. Once the respective commanders turned their *dual-keys* in August of 1995, they were able to capitalize on years of preparation by NATO and an unknowingly vulnerable opponent. These variables facilitated the rapid reversal of constraints into the positive application of air power. While there was never a true unity of command, the delegation of the *dual-key* system to commanders close to the situation was fundamental to the success of ODF. Additionally, Ryan’s awareness of the fluid political situation and type of war waged by the BSA allowed him to place further constraints on air power that further enabled its positive application and advancement of national objectives. Finally, the use of cruise missiles in conjunction with precision airstrikes moderated the lethality of air power, ensured NATO survivability, and showed a previously

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<sup>100</sup> Clodfelter, “Airpower Versus Asymmetric Enemies,” 44.

unseen resolve to the enemy and the international community. ODF mitigated the constraints of policy and military controls to ensure a positive application of air power that directly enhanced national objectives and coerced the enemy into accepting UN terms.

Once again, this case study did not directly disprove the hypothesis, but it demonstrated that the capability to effectively target an enemy's military vulnerabilities does not immediately equal success. Even though targets did change based on BSA tactics, and the piecemeal airstrikes arguably targeted the BSA's vulnerabilities, it did so in a way that did not detract from their warfighting capability. The evolution of policy, spurred by an emboldened enemy that was unknowingly vulnerable, enabled a doctrinal application of airpower regarding mass and proportionality that then effectively targeted military vulnerabilities to enable a diplomatic solution.

## Chapter IV: Operation Allied Force

A village a day keeps NATO away.

—Remark from unnamed Serbian diplomat to NATO Secretary-General Javier Solana, 1998

In 1974 an aging Josip Broz Tito, President of Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, granted autonomous status to Kosovo in order to provide the ethnic Albanians of Yugoslavia greater representation. Security analyst Rebecca Grant noted that, "Kosovo was not a republic in the Yugoslav federation, like Serbia or Croatia, but it was recognized as a province within the sovereign structure."<sup>101</sup> Upon Tito's death in 1980 the Serbian populace of Kosovo, now the minority, saw an opportunity to restore ties with the Serb led Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) and take control of the province. In 1987 Slobodan Milošević, then head of the Serbian Communist Party, traveled to Kosovo to hear the complaints of the Serb populace.<sup>102</sup> Two years later FRY tanks surrounded the Kosovo assembly building

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<sup>101</sup> Rebecca Grant, *The Kosovo Campaign: Aerospace Power Made It Work* (Arlington: Air Force Association, 1999), 2.

<sup>102</sup> CNN London, "Milosevic: Accused Mastermind of Ethnic Cleansing," *CNN World*, March 30, 2001, accessed February 27, 2019, <http://edition.cnn.com/2001/WORLD/europe/03/30/milosevic.profile/>.

and forced a vote to revoke Kosovo's provincial status, oust Albanian officials, and replace key government positions with ethnic Serbs.<sup>103</sup>

By 1995 the status quo for ethnic Albanians continued to deteriorate, and the European Union essentially confirmed Milošević's authority over Kosovo with the formal recognition of the FRY. Facing a 70 percent unemployment rate, a number of Albanians recently returned from fighting the BSA in the Bosnia-Herzegovina conflict decided to join the emerging Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) to counter what they perceived as the same threat. In response, Milošević deployed FRY army units into Kosovo. These forces engaged the KLA near Kosovar Albanian towns, forcing approximately three hundred thousand ethnic Albanians to leave their homes. The FRY also declared the roads from Kosovo to Albania a *free-fire* zone in an effort to disrupt KLA supply lines, resulting in the deaths of three hundred civilians.<sup>104</sup> The UN subsequently passed UNSCR 1199, condemning, "indiscriminate use of force by Serbian security forces and the Yugoslav Army which have resulted in numerous civilian casualties...[and deciding] to consider further action and additional measures to maintain or restore peace and stability in the region."<sup>105</sup>

As a response to growing international pressure and the threat of NATO airstrikes, Milošević withdrew approximately four thousand FRY forces and special police from Kosovo in October 1998. This withdrawal temporarily appeased NATO, and the talk of airstrikes subsided.<sup>106</sup> Not more than two months later further civilian deaths occurred. The UN reported, "that the number of Yugoslav Army and Serbian special police units deployed in Kosovo may exceed agreed figures... the accord between President Milošević and United States Special Envoy Richard Holbrooke envisaged an amnesty, the

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<sup>103</sup> Grant, *The Kosovo Campaign*, 2.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 2-3.

<sup>105</sup> United Nations Security Council, Resolution 1199, 3930th Meeting, September 23, 1998, 2-5, accessed November 26, 2018, <http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/1199>.

<sup>106</sup> Grant, *The Kosovo Campaign*, 4.

present practice of the Serbian authorities contradicts it.”<sup>107</sup> This prompted diplomatic meetings in Rambouillet, France on 16 January 1999 between NATO, the FRY, and Kosovar Albanian representatives. During this meeting the Albanians agreed to a plan that required the disarmament of the KLA in exchange for the withdrawal of FRY forces and the deployment of a NATO peacekeeping presence in Kosovo. Milošević rebuffed this agreement, and NATO authorized the commencement of airstrikes on 22 March.<sup>108</sup>

Initially developed as a three-phase campaign to escalate pressure against Milošević, the expectations of Operation Allied Force (OAF) were extraordinary. Lieutenant General Short, the USAF commander in theater, was instructed that, “You’re only going to be allowed to bomb two, maybe three nights. That’s all Washington can stand. That’s all some members of the alliance can stand. That’s why you’ve only got ninety targets. This will be over in three nights.”<sup>109</sup> The desired use of air power as the exclusive military option, while influenced by the success of ODF and Operation Desert Storm, also acted as a constraint. It indicated the apprehension of both the US and its NATO allies.<sup>110</sup> Of the three case studies, OAF was the true balancing act of Clodfelter’s *negative* and *positive*.

## Synopsis of Air Operations

Phase I of OAF commenced on 24 March 1999 with primary missions dedicated to establishing air superiority over Kosovo, and secondary missions designed to demonstrate NATO’s reach. Attack and support aircraft from fourteen NATO countries participated in the opening strikes. The majority of Phase I missions targeted known SAM locations and airfields within Kosovo and Serbia as well as supporting

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<sup>107</sup> United Nations Secretary-General, Report of the Secretary-General Prepared Pursuant to Resolutions 1160 (1998), 1199 (1998) and 1203 (1998) of the Security Council, December 24, 1998, accessed November 26, 2018, <https://undocs.org/S/1998/1221>.

<sup>108</sup> Tony Mason, “Operation Allied Force, 1999,” in *A History of Air Warfare*, ed. John A. Olsen (Washington, DC: Potomac Books Inc., 2010), 228-29.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, 229.

<sup>110</sup> G. Scott Gorman, “Seeking Clocks in The Clouds: Nonlinearity and American Precision Air Power,” (PhD diss., John Hopkins University, 2006), 323.

radar, C2 sites, and airfields in Montenegro. NATO naval vessels fired Tomahawk land attack cruise missiles against targets near Kosovo's capital of Pristina, neutralizing the power grid and striking a FRY occupied military airfield in neighboring Batajnica.<sup>111</sup> During the first three nights NATO forces struck over forty target areas. They met minimal FRY resistance from ground-based defenses but encountered numerous airborne threats. Lambeth notes, "At least a dozen MiG-29s sought to engage attacking NATO aircraft that first night...Two MiG-29s were downed by USAF F-15s and one by a Dutch F-16...Only rarely did Serb fighters rise to challenge NATO aircraft after that."<sup>112</sup> Despite the relative success of these airstrikes it was evident that the campaign would last longer than originally predicted.

General Wesley Clark, Supreme Allied Commander in Europe (SACEUR), received authorization from NATO to commence Phase II of operations on 27 March. This expanded the campaign from a SEAD focus to interdiction of FRY forces in Kosovo. Desired targets increased from IADS to enemy lines of communication, storage and marshaling areas, and armor concentrations. However, difficulties in engaging fielded forces as a result of FRY tactics, strict rules of engagement, and adverse weather all constrained air power. This limited airstrikes to known military bases, supplies, and POL facilities.<sup>113</sup> Phase II lasted until 31 March and expanded the list of approved target sets to ninety-one. NATO also increased the number of aircraft apportioned to OAF and conducted approximately fifty strikes per night.<sup>114</sup> Despite these increases General Clark later noted, "We were still suffering from a shortage of approved targets...the only thing new in Phase II were eight bridges...Everything else had either been hit already or entailed too much risk of unintended damage."<sup>115</sup> Clark also stated, "The first night we didn't get a knockout blow on Serb air defense—it didn't come up. The second night, they also

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<sup>111</sup> Benjamin S. Lambeth, *NATO's Air War for Kosovo: A Strategic and Operational Assessment* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2001), 20.

<sup>112</sup> Lambeth, "American and NATO Airpower Applied," 144.

<sup>113</sup> Lambeth, *NATO's Air War for Kosovo*, 26-27.

<sup>114</sup> Robert H. Gregory Jr., *Clean Bombs and Dirty Wars: Air Power in Kosovo and Libya* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2015), 65.

<sup>115</sup> Wesley K. Clark, *Waging Modern War* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2001), 215-16.

didn't bring up the air defense, so we began to realize we had trouble...it was pretty clear by Sunday and Monday that we weren't going to get a knockout blow."<sup>116</sup> Prior to the completion of Phase II General Clark requested approval of Phase III target sets and the endorsement to expand the air campaign to dual-use targets within Yugoslavia.<sup>117</sup>

While Phase III never officially started, what would later be referred to as Phase II plus began on 1 April 1999. This allowed NATO air forces to circumvent reluctant NATO partners by authorizing strikes within Serbia on a case by case basis. This reassured the North Atlantic Council that due attention was given to the process while authorizing airstrikes on targets planned for Phase III.<sup>118</sup> Over the course of the next seventy days NATO's master target list grew from 169 to more than 970 target sets. In addition to military targets within Serbia, these operations also struck state run radio and television stations, national oil refineries, telecommunications, and five transformer yards of the FRY's power grid. These attacks cut off electricity to an estimated 70 percent of the country and were a direct message to Serbian political leadership and the civilian population (Figure 5). By May, NATO attacks against FRY infrastructure exhausted the economy and cost one hundred thousand Serbians their livelihood.<sup>119</sup> On 3 June, as a result of constant airstrikes within Serbia, the mounting disdain of the FRY populace, and increasing international pressure from NATO and Russia to accept a peace agreement, Milošević conceded. On 9 June a Serbian withdrawal began, overseen by a combined NATO and Russian peacekeeping force.<sup>120</sup> The seventy-eight-day NATO air campaign successfully sustained the offensive against Milošević, totaling 10,484 strike sorties and 27,520 support sorties.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> Henriksen, *NATO's Gamble*, 20.

<sup>117</sup> Mason, "Operation Allied Force, 1999," 236.

<sup>118</sup> Henriksen, *NATO's Gamble*, 25.

<sup>119</sup> Lambeth, *NATO's Air War for Kosovo*, 38-41.

<sup>120</sup> Mason, "Operation Allied Force, 1999," 243-44.

<sup>121</sup> Peter Gray, *Air Warfare: History, Theory, and Practice* (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2016), 116.

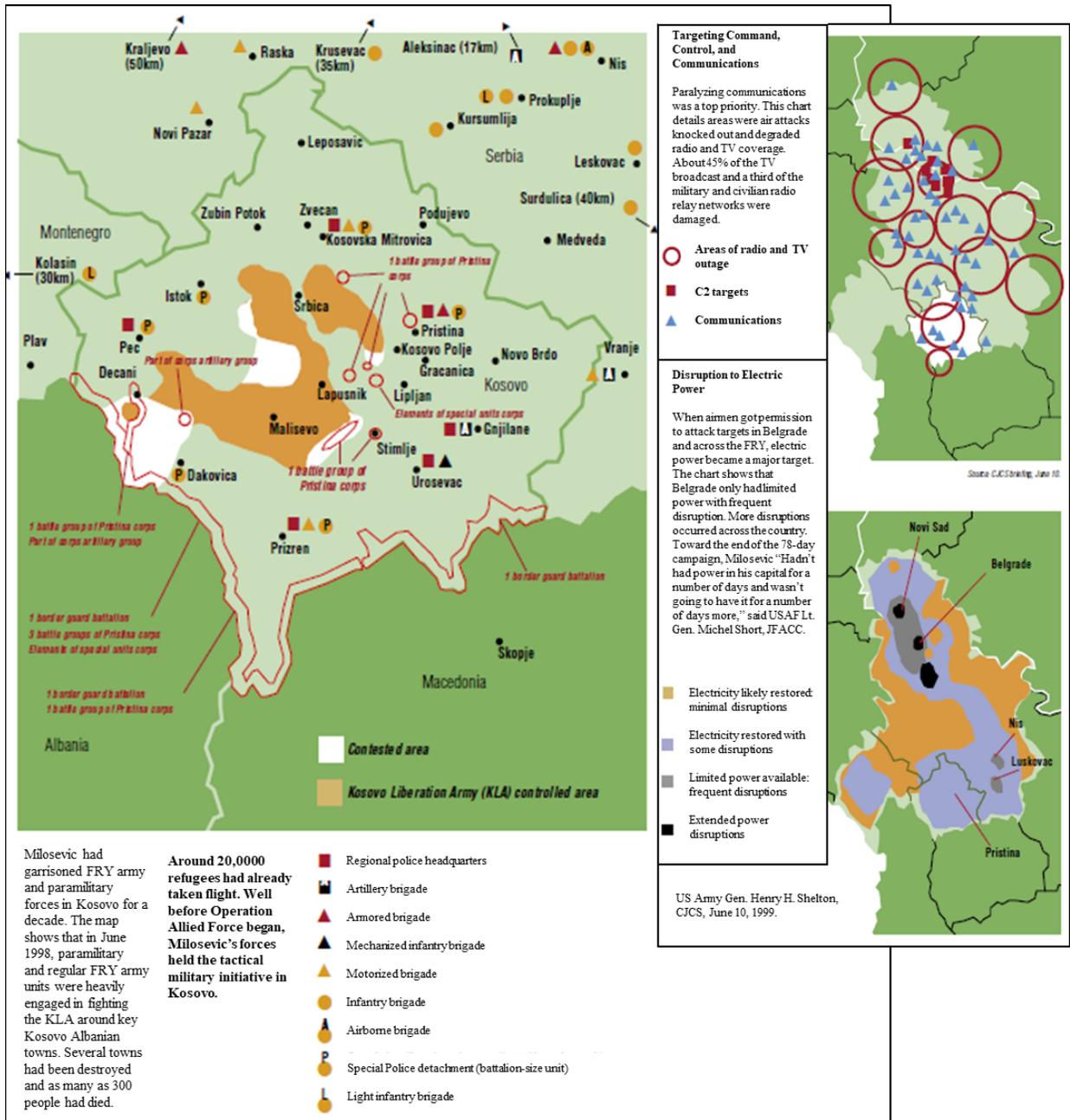


Figure 5. Initial Order of Battle in Kosovo and Strategic Strikes in Serbia. Rebecca Grant, *The Kosovo Campaign: Aerospace Power Made It Work* (Arlington: Air Force Association, 1999), 5-22. Reprint courtesy of the Air Force Association.

OAF was unlike Operation Linebacker II and ODF in many respects. The previous two air campaigns were evolutions of ineffective air and ground operations. The military failings in both Vietnam and Bosnia-Herzegovina resulted in enabling policies and changes to military controls. These changes provided options to military leaders in theater, and ultimately facilitated the positive application of air

power against an opponent that was unprepared for the drastic escalation of force. In contrast, the FRY learned a great deal from the Bosnia-Herzegovina conflict and prepared accordingly. Additionally, US and NATO leaders in 1999 envisioned OAF as a minimal risk and high reward option. They leaned on air power as the only military option due to its past successes and reservations within NATO regarding sustained ground operations. As a result, the national objectives and military controls were inescapably intertwined to a point where it was nearly impossible to distinguish between the two.

## The Nature of US and NATO Objectives and Resulting Military Controls

The day before airstrikes commenced NATO published the objectives of OAF, and one day later President Bill Clinton addressed the people of the United States. NATO's objectives focused on the international community and its role in averting further violence:

The political objectives were to (1) help achieve a peaceful solution to the crisis in Kosovo by contributing to the response of the international community and (2) halt the violence and support the completion of negotiations on an interim political solution. The corresponding NATO alliance military objectives of the air campaign were to (1) halt the violent attack being committed by the Yugoslav Army and security forces, (2) disrupt their ability to conduct future attacks against the population of Kosovo, and (3) support international efforts to secure Federal Republic of Yugoslavia agreement to an interim political settlement.<sup>122</sup>

Clinton's objectives largely echoed NATO but added explicit constraints to the use of US military power:

Today, we and our 18 NATO allies agreed to do what we said we would do, what we must do to restore the peace. Our mission is clear -- to *demonstrate the seriousness of NATO's purpose* so that the Serbian leaders understand the imperative of reversing course, to *deter an even bloodier offensive against innocent civilians in Kosovo* and, if necessary, to *seriously damage the Serbian military's capacity to harm the people of Kosovo*... If [Milošević] decides to accept the peace agreement and demilitarize Kosovo, NATO has agreed to help to implement it with a peacekeeping force...our troops should take part in that mission to keep the peace, but *I do not intend to put our troops in Kosovo to fight a war*.<sup>123</sup>

On the surface, these objectives seemed achievable through military force. US and NATO leadership appeared dedicated to the application of air power to achieve these ends. However, there were numerous

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<sup>122</sup> US General Accounting Office, *Kosovo Air Operations: Need to Maintain Alliance Cohesion Resulted in Doctrinal Departures* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 2001), 20.

<sup>123</sup> "Clinton Addresses Nation on Yugoslavia Strike," *CNN*, March 24, 1999, accessed September 1, 2018, <http://edition.cnn.com/ALLPOLITICS/stories/1999/03/25/clinton.transcript/>. Italics added for emphasis.

unstated constraints that would initially limit air power's ability to attain these objectives in addition to the overt exclusion of ground force integration.

An implicit US objective throughout OAF, which drove a number of air power constraints, was the maintenance of a political consensus for action in Kosovo amongst NATO members. This consensus was the primary reason that the US and NATO military leadership promised, and subsequently expected, a brief air campaign. It was what all the member states wanted to hear, and arguably led to the assumption that even a minimal effort would dissuade Milošević.<sup>124</sup> The United States also assumed the advances in precision targeting demonstrated in ODF would enable that expectation.<sup>125</sup> These assumptions then led to US and NATO further constraining air power, departing both from military doctrine and the lessons learned from Linebacker II and ODF. Political leaders controlled target approval, and approved target types varied by country due to fear of collateral damage and negative media coverage.<sup>126</sup> This provided military planners a list of only fifty approved targets when OAF commenced, and the time consuming requirement of political approval for target list expansion or restrike.<sup>127</sup> Additionally, the fear of loss of allied servicemembers in OAF, and its impact on the coalition's uncertain resolve, mandated a low acceptable level of risk to forces.

The low acceptable level of risk created two interconnected challenges to NATO forces that resulted in constraints to air power. First, this translated into a minimum altitude for NATO air forces of fifteen thousand feet in order to mitigate FRY SAMs and air defense artillery.<sup>128</sup> Though effective in keeping allied aircrews safe, this restriction increased the difficulty of positively identifying targets prior to strike. This was a crucial limitation in adverse weather or when the FRY employed deception

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<sup>124</sup> Lambeth, "American and NATO Airpower Applied," 144.

<sup>125</sup> US General Accounting Office, *Kosovo Air Operations*, 7-23.

<sup>126</sup> Clark, *Waging Modern War*, 202-24.

<sup>127</sup> Grant, *The Kosovo Campaign*, 8.

<sup>128</sup> Lambeth, "American and NATO Airpower Applied," 144.

tactics.<sup>129</sup> Unfortunately, US and NATO political leadership preemptively eliminated a primary means to alleviate these challenges of high-altitude employment due to the low risk requirement: the deployment of ground forces. The overt limitation of ground force integration strengthened the willingness of NATO partners to participate, but it also demonstrated the failure to synthesize the lessons of ODF. This failure is understandable as it was reinforced by Milošević in a meeting with US officials in 1995, “You must be pleased that NATO won this war...your bombs and missiles, your high technology that defeated us...We Serbs never had a chance against you.”<sup>130</sup> Yet, this fails to appreciate that although UNPROFOR troops maintained little internal combat power, their role as an intelligence collection and targeting capability for NATO air forces was crucial to ODF’s eventual success.<sup>131</sup> This appreciation materialized as Phase I and II stuttered, and Clark began to push for Phase III targets.

By May 1999 NATO began its adaptation to enable the positive application of air power. Clark took advantage of the now extended timeline, requesting and receiving additional air forces into theater. After nearly two months of sporadic targeting, NATO now had enough strike and support assets for twenty-four-hour coverage and to conduct both an interdiction and strategic bombing campaign. Additionally, Milošević’s continued brutality in Kosovo also empowered a more serious response. US and NATO political leadership authorized fixed targets of *unique strategic value* including: (1) national C2; (2) dual-use infrastructure such as bridges, POL production, and communication facilities; and (3) the Serbian power grid.<sup>132</sup> The results of these authorizations are covered above in the Synopsis section and shown in Figure 5. Although General Clark received a great deal of criticism for his emphasis on the interdiction campaign and resulting prioritization of FRY fielded forces in Kosovo, this emphasis was not without merit. First, these types of military targets were within his purview as SACEUR for approval, and

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<sup>129</sup> Mason, “Operation Allied Force, 1999,” 234-35.

<sup>130</sup> Clark, *Waging Modern War*, 67-68.

<sup>131</sup> Owen, “Operation Deliberate Force, 1995,” 212-13.

<sup>132</sup> Grant, *The Kosovo Campaign*, 9-20.

he likely felt it was better to provide forces *a target of value now* than awaiting approval for a *possible target later*. In fact, efforts to circumvent this process and add pending strategic targets to the list while they awaited political approval infuriated his staff when those targets required removal at the last minute.<sup>133</sup> Second, the authorization to strike targets in Serbia, especially those with the most military value in Belgrade, was a constant struggle with constantly changing processes.

NATO's *targeting by political consensus* also resulted in administrative controls that affected daily execution and prevented the envisioned phased process. Clark described, "The original plans presumed that SACEUR would have the authority to strike targets within overall categories specified by NATO political leaders, but Washington had introduced a target-by-target approval requirement...Allies became increasingly demanding too."<sup>134</sup> This resulted in daily approval and removal of targets from the master target list, and demands that airstrikes occur the day of target approval. This led to hurried mission planning, frequent starting and stopping of airstrikes, and the inability to establish discernable escalation outside of direct strikes against Serbian infrastructure.<sup>135</sup> Additionally, NATO political leadership constantly sought a pause to the strikes in hopes that Milošević would recognize a window for capitulation and allow NATO to not appear as the aggressor.<sup>136</sup> This targeting process and the erroneous belief that Milošević would immediately respond as he did in ODF allowed the FRY to lengthen their campaign of ethnic cleansing. It also allowed Milošević to disperse troops throughout areas in Kosovo in the first month of the campaign that constrained aerial targeting and engagement throughout the conflict.

## The Nature of the Enemy and Combat Environment

Lambeth accurately described the assumption that Milošević would respond in Kosovo as he did to ODF as a, "misjudgment of near-blunder proportions...NATO's leaders did not appreciate the historical

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<sup>133</sup> Lambeth, *NATO's Air War for Kosovo*, 122-81.

<sup>134</sup> Clark, *Waging Modern War*, 224.

<sup>135</sup> Lambeth, *NATO's Air War for Kosovo*, 180-82.

<sup>136</sup> Clark, *Waging Modern War*, 210.

and cultural importance of Kosovo to the Serbs and the consequent criticality of Kosovo to Milošević's continued political livelihood."<sup>137</sup> Unlike Bosnia-Herzegovina, which was internationally recognized as its own country, Kosovo was a part of the FRY. This was Milošević's country. Milošević persisted despite UN resolutions that directed the withdrawal of FRY troops, the establishment of a NATO and European observation force, and an end to the displacement of Kosovar Albanians.<sup>138</sup> While the FRY withdrew forces near Pristina, Grant estimated that in 1999 a massive contingent of Serbian troops either remained in Kosovo or were at the ready (Figure 5):

By the time Milosevic backed away from Rambouillet, his forces had battlefield dominance in Kosovo. The Yugoslav army reportedly numbered about 90,000 men, equipped with 630 tanks, 634 armored personnel carriers, and more than 800 howitzers. The Yugoslav 3rd Army was assigned to Kosovo operations, along with reinforcements from 1st and 2nd Armies. About 40,000 troops and 300 tanks crossed into Kosovo, spreading out in burned out villages and buildings abandoned by the refugees. Paramilitary security forces from the Interior Ministry were engaged in multiple areas across Kosovo.<sup>139</sup>

This dispersal of military forces in areas abandoned by refugees further constrained NATO's air power.

Learning from the BSA's mistakes in ODF, and appreciating the lack of ground-based threats, the FRY prioritized the survival of their air defense assets and ground forces over lethality. As Clark noted above, the FRY unpredictably did not engage NATO aircraft during the opening nights of the campaign and dispersed SAMs and associated radars through Kosovo and the FRY. This lack of radiation continued, preventing their targeting and ensuring they remained a threat throughout the campaign. Retired Commander of the Royal Air Force and historian Tony Mason noted, "SA-3 and SA-6 missile batteries were moved frequently...Greater use was made of decoy transmitters, and older radars were reinstated. Radars purchased from the United States in 1982 were supplemented by Soviet equipment with additional surveillance radars borrowed from the army and the navy."<sup>140</sup> Ground forces employed

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<sup>137</sup> Lambeth, *NATO's Air War for Kosovo*, 182.

<sup>138</sup> United Nations Security Council, Resolution 1203, 3937th Meeting, October 24, 1998, 2-3, accessed November 26, 2018, <http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/doc/1203>.

<sup>139</sup> Grant, *The Kosovo Campaign*, 9.

<sup>140</sup> Mason, "Operation Allied Force, 1999," 233.

similar tactics, using variety of denial and deception techniques such as: (1) dispersing units into small clusters, often no more than platoon sized; (2) building decoy artillery, trucks, and tanks; (3) deploying fighting vehicles in agricultural fields and painting them the same color as the crops; (4) deploying ADA in civilian areas where NATO airstrikes would all but guarantee civilian casualties; and (5) building a combination of real and mock tunnels and roads.<sup>141</sup> It was clear that Milošević was attempting to buy time in an effort to prevent a conclusive blow from NATO while continuing his efforts of ethnic cleansing. Still, as Lambeth noted, “Although the humanitarian crime of ethnic cleansing gave the Serbs an immediate tactical advantage, it also came at the long-term cost of virtually forcing NATO to stay the course.”<sup>142</sup>

Approximately one month into OAF, whether due to increasing NATO strikes or a perceived sense of immunity, Milošević increased the rate of ethnic cleansing. Part of this effort was a concentrated attack on the KLA and related insurgencies in predominately Albanian areas. However, this move emboldened NATO as now nearly six hundred thousand refugees were displaced as a result of these actions.<sup>143</sup> Both the US and NATO constraints adapted, and the US Secretary of Defense quickly changed the narrative, “We have always known that the campaign would be difficult and time consuming...NATO indeed intends to stay the course...Whatever General Clark feels he needs in order to carry out this campaign successfully, he will receive.”<sup>144</sup> As a result of the increased violence on civilians, Phase III target sets in Serbia were now accessible. Collateral damage still remained the chief concern for policy makers and aircrews.

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<sup>141</sup> Christopher E. Haave, “Enemy Action,” in *A-10s over Kosovo: The Victory of Airpower over a Fielded Army as Told by the Airmen Who Fought in Operation Allied Force*, eds. Christopher E. Haave and Phil M. Haun, (Maxwell AFB: Air University Press, 2003), 105-09.

<sup>142</sup> Lambeth, *NATO's Air War for Kosovo*, 26.

<sup>143</sup> Grant, *The Kosovo Campaign*, 9.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

Milošević made use of that concern, employing media in conjunction with obstacles provided by terrain and the humanitarian crisis in Kosovo to constrain NATO air forces and obfuscate his actions. While there is no doubt deception techniques constrained air power in Linebacker II and ODF, the restrictive rules of engagement and lack of ground force to accelerate positive identification of targets repeatedly impacted the use of air power in OAF. One story relayed by Mason exposed a perfect storm of FRY tactics and NATO limitations:

On April 14, a refugee convoy in western Kosovo was mistakenly struck by a USAF F-16 ...Eyewitness reports were conflicting, but several referred to the presence of Serbian troops and vehicles in the vicinity of the refugee convoy...The full NATO explanation, accompanied by cockpit imagery...revealed eight attacks before an OA-10 pilot, with binoculars, identified possible civilian vehicles among the convoy. The briefing also revealed the limited imagery available to the F-16 pilots on the monochrome four-and-a-half-inch screens in their cockpits...A single low-level pass over the convoy might have left no doubt...[but] such a pass would have been most hazardous for the pilot and noncompliant with command guidance on aircrew risk.<sup>145</sup>

The FRY then televised mistakes like this internationally to both shake NATO resolve and undermine the legitimacy of their actions, often taking the initiative due to the proximity of state-sponsored media deployed to the conflict.<sup>146</sup> Furthermore, actual NATO mistakes such as the bombing of the Chinese embassy by B-2s during Phase II plus added traction to FRY information operations.<sup>147</sup> However, by May 1999 Operation Horseshoe, the FRY state sponsored ethnic cleansing campaign, was common knowledge.<sup>148</sup> With Milošević facing allegations of war crimes the media battle now paralleled the conflict, and he was losing.

## Case Study Conclusion: Operation Allied Force

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<sup>145</sup> Mason, "Operation Allied Force, 1999," 238-39.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid., 239-40.

<sup>147</sup> Lambeth, *NATO's Air War for Kosovo*, 144.

<sup>148</sup> Tom Bowman and Mark Matthews, "Allies to begin planning ground action in Kosovo; Operation envisioned as just mopping up pockets of resistance; War in Yugoslavia," *The Baltimore Sun*, April 22, 1999, accessed March 12, 2019, <https://www.baltimoresun.com/news/bs-xpm-1999-04-22-9904220085-story.html>.

Given the information contained in this study it is easy to lose sight of the fact the OAF was successful, and a campaign conducted solely from the air achieved a decisive majority of stated national objectives. NATO air power (1) halted the violence and supported the completion of negotiations on an interim political solution; (2) halted the violent attacks committed by the FRY; (3) disrupted the FRY's ability to conduct future attacks against the population of Kosovo; and (4) supported international efforts to secure Federal Republic of Yugoslavia agreement to an interim political settlement. Additionally, it set the conditions for a peaceful solution to the crisis in Kosovo by contributing to the response of the international community.<sup>149</sup> It also demonstrated the seriousness of NATO's purpose so that Serbian leadership understood the imperative of reversing course. Where it arguably failed was in deterring an even bloodier offensive against innocent civilians in Kosovo, and *seriously damaging* the Serbian military's capacity to harm the people of Kosovo.<sup>150</sup> Given the unrealistic expectations of a three-day air campaign and the slow shedding or mitigation of constraints over seventy-eight days, violence irrefutably escalated against both Serbia and the Albanians within Kosovo. Despite its success, OAF was by no means an ideal illustration of the positive application of air power.

Similar conclusions result from this case study as those in ODF and Linebacker II; however, the nature of the enemy and his use of the combat environment, coupled with controls imposed by an unspoken national objective, created new constraints in OAF. Political concerns restricted targeting in OAF, echoing the build-up to both Linebacker II and ODF. Not only did this hamper the air campaign's ability to effectively strike the enemy's military vulnerabilities, it also provided time for the enemy to build resistances. This resulted in FRY dispersal and deception techniques that lasted throughout the campaign. What would have been easily identifiable on the ground as a decoy became problematic when

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<sup>149</sup> US General Accounting Office, *Kosovo Air Operations*, 20. Objectives reiterated from document for evaluation.

<sup>150</sup> "Clinton Addresses Nation on Yugoslavia Strike." Objectives reiterated from document for evaluation. Italics added for emphasis.

air power was restricted to a minimum altitude of fifteen thousand feet. These restrictions and deception efforts occasionally led to mistakes, and the proximity of FRY media allowed Milošević to capitalize.

Additionally, the FRY never had to plan for a ground threat due to statements by US and NATO political leaders at the onset of the campaign. This meant that the FRY rarely had to mass combat power and therefore could easily disperse troops and equipment amongst the civilian population of Kosovo, further degrading airborne targeting. Finally, by learning from the BSA's mistakes in ODF the FRY maintained a survivable SAM threat. Augmented by non-standard radar and decoy transmitters, the FRY deployed air defenses that required a substantial amount of support sorties to protect strikers. This kept NATO resources constantly occupied to ensure the politically mandated low level of risk, further constraining air power in the first month of the campaign.

Fortunately, NATO committed to the air campaign largely because it was the only agreeable military option. As the conflict endured Clark received additional assets to provide flexibility to his force and enable the positive application of air power. By the beginning of May he had the resources to conduct continuous strategic and interdiction efforts against the FRY. Additionally, the Serbians once again provoked their own defeat. International support for a continued military response grew due to their overtly increased violence against ethnic Albanians in Kosovo. This initiated the gradual but adequate release of Phase III targets, enabled air power to bring the fight to Serbia and its capital, and created conditions unacceptable to the Serbian populace. The KLA also began a counteroffensive in late May, but its aid to the interdiction mission in Kosovo, as far as another factor in Milosevic's decision calculus, was minimal.<sup>151</sup> The significant factors were likely increased airstrikes within Serbia and Russia's addition to the negotiation efforts. Serbia was isolated, Milošević faced allegations of war crimes, and NATO was largely operating with impunity over their airspace.<sup>152</sup> The FRY had few other options.

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<sup>151</sup> Grant, *The Kosovo Campaign*, 21-22.

<sup>152</sup> Lambeth, *NATO's Air War for Kosovo*, 69-70.

Of all the case studies, OAF most supports the hypothesis. Still, it is apparent that a multitude of factors must support the capability to effectively target an enemy's vulnerabilities prior to its success. OAF highlights how unspoken national objectives provide meaningful constraints to air power employment. In fact, the majority of constraints to air power in this case study were due to a desire to maintain an alliance, not to adequately defeat an enemy or shape the battlespace to force surrender. The defeat of the enemy was largely ignored until the development of strict rules of engagement, politically controlled targeting, and a mandated low level of risk placated NATO allies. However, as seen on ODF, an emboldened enemy once again spurred an international reaction. This resulted in the deployment of air assets capable of maintaining continuous offensive air operations against an adversary that had no equal means of response and an expanding classification of acceptable military targets.

## Chapter V: Conclusion

Operation Linebacker II, Operation Deliberate Force, and Operation Allied Force each demonstrated air power's ability to obtain or positively contribute to the achievement of national objectives when used as the predominate or sole means of combat power. The hypothesis, that an air campaign positively impacts national objectives when it effectively targets an enemy's military vulnerabilities in which it has no equal means of response, was incomplete. Findings from each case indicated that while effective targeting was crucial to these campaigns, there were multiple factors that were of equal or greater importance. Although each case study provided unique insights to the effective use of air power in pursuit of national objectives, common themes for all three include: (1) the evolution of US national objectives to match military capability; (2) the isolation of the enemy from its perceived allies; and (3) ensuring the type of war waged by the enemy is conducive to targeting or exploitation by air power.

Operation Linebacker II and ODF each required a change in national objectives to enable the positive application of air power. Nixon's Vietnamization Plan, which intended to transfer military responsibility to South Vietnam, included allowances for escalatory US action if the DRV hostilities

continued.<sup>153</sup> This explicit challenge to North Vietnam was a drastic change from the Johnson administration, and the DRV's transition into a conventional campaign to capture territory and undermine Vietnamization led to opportunities for the positive application of air power. Target sets that were inconsequential to the Viet Cong guerilla campaign now carried immense ramifications for the DRV and were vulnerable to the Linebacker campaigns.<sup>154</sup> The Clinton administration brought a renewed interest to the Bosnia-Herzegovina conflict, favoring direct military action via airstrikes.<sup>155</sup> While national objectives were arguably never set for US or NATO forces in the conflict, the renewed desire to take action as a result of increased BSA hostility eventually enabled the positive application of air power. This desire also facilitated a change in military controls crucial to the campaign's success.<sup>156</sup> However, OAF differed from these two campaigns as the political authority over military controls initially resulted in a gradualist approach that resembled Operation Rolling Thunder.

Unlike Linebacker II and ODF, OAF maintained its objectives throughout the campaign. Therefore, OAF required an adaptation of its objectives given the overtly politically imposed restraints of the campaign and misunderstanding of the adversary. Initial misconceptions, based on the previous success of ODF and Operation Desert Storm, created the belief that a series of brief demonstrative airstrikes against FRY forces in Kosovo would compel Milošević to capitulate. However, Milošević's ties to Kosovo as a province of the FRY led to a much longer campaign than anticipated.<sup>157</sup> Additionally, NATO's hesitation regarding escalating attacks in fear of collateral damage and appearing as the aggressor prolonged the campaign. It allowed a dedicated adversary time to disperse forces for survivability and continue their campaign of ethnic cleansing.<sup>158</sup> As the ethnic cleansing grew in

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<sup>153</sup> Nixon, "The Great Silent Majority."

<sup>154</sup> Clodfelter, "The Limits of Airpower or the Limits of Strategy," 116.

<sup>155</sup> Henriksen, *NATO's Gamble*, 77-81.

<sup>156</sup> Reed, "Chariots of Fire," 401-02.

<sup>157</sup> Lambeth, *NATO's Air War for Kosovo*, 182.

<sup>158</sup> Mason, "Operation Allied Force, 1999," 235-36.

violence, NATO realized it must respond and authorized originally restricted targets. These airstrikes against dual-use infrastructure targets within Serbia and its capital changed the course of the conflict. This allowed NATO air forces the ability to mitigate the overt constraint against the deployment of NATO ground forces by bringing the fight to the leadership and populace of Serbia.<sup>159</sup>

All three case studies demonstrated the importance of isolating an opponent from perceived allies to ensure the positive application of air power. Prior to the commencement of Linebacker II, Nixon exploited a growing divide between the Soviet Union and China over growing Chinese nuclear capabilities. This divide ensured that the US could apply substantial air power against DRV targets without the potential external constraints on air power that deterred the Johnson administration. It also left North Vietnam with the harsh realization that without their communist allies they had no substantial means to counter US air power.<sup>160</sup> Both the BSA and the FRY felt the same type of isolation in ODF and OAF. In ODF the FRY largely abandoned the BSA once Milošević realized that initial territorial gains were at risk to NATO air forces and a growing Muslim and Croatian ground force. This isolation, coupled with vulnerable positions as a result of a previously unchecked advance, left BSA forces stretched thin and enabled the positive application of air power.<sup>161</sup> Milošević and the FRY found themselves in a similar situation once Russia pushed for negotiations that entailed FRY forces leave Kosovo in 1999. Once again, in the face of increasing airstrikes and with few means to counter a now committed NATO force, Serbia realized it had few options other than to withdraw.<sup>162</sup>

Finally, in each air campaign the adversary found themselves vulnerable to the positive application of air power, either based on the type of war they fought or their reliance on vulnerable resources to continue their offensives. The DRV, in its change from supporting a guerilla conflict to

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<sup>159</sup> Lambeth, *NATO's Air War for Kosovo*, 38-41.

<sup>160</sup> Clodfelter, *The Limits of Airpower*, 148-49.

<sup>161</sup> Owen, "Summary," 495-98.

<sup>162</sup> Lambeth, *NATO's Air War for Kosovo*, 69-70.

undertaking a conventional ground campaign, became vulnerable to Linebacker and Linebacker II. This was despite the fact that similar target sets, if not the same targets, were previously struck during Operation Rolling Thunder.<sup>163</sup> The BSA in ODF was unknowingly vulnerable throughout its campaign, but did not understand these vulnerabilities until a dramatic change within NATO enabled the use of allied air power.<sup>164</sup> In OAF, while the fielded forces in Kosovo implemented tactics to mitigate their vulnerabilities, the importance of Kosovo to Milošević was exploitable. NATO air forces, once compelled to escalate and authorized to strike targets in Serbia, brought a level of destruction unbearable to Serbians that controlled Milošević's hold on power.<sup>165</sup> Although the time required to set conditions for exploitation was a crucial in each campaign, the cases demonstrated the importance of this variable.

The Modern War Institute at the US Military Academy recently published an article titled "Why Airpower Needs Landpower" that concludes, "Airpower is inherently an enabling force. Airpower advocates have long argued that it can generate strategic effects absent landpower. As with many contentions, this is correct if the context is set tightly... But separate from this, there is a simple truth: airpower ultimately needs landpower to remain strategically important."<sup>166</sup> Initially, there appears to be validity to their argument. Although Linebacker II did not require ground forces to achieve strategic significance, two years later South Vietnam no longer had US backing and was overrun by the DRV.<sup>167</sup> Additionally, in the aftermath of both ODF and OAF an international ground-based peacekeeping force deployed to ensure the objectives obtained during the air campaign remained.<sup>168</sup> However, in the case of Linebacker II the end goal was the transfer of military responsibility to South Vietnam. In ODF and OAF

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<sup>163</sup> Clodfelter, *The Limits of Airpower*, 140-41.

<sup>164</sup> Owen, "Summary," 495-98.

<sup>165</sup> Lambeth, *NATO's Air War for Kosovo*, 38-41.

<sup>166</sup> Jahara Matisek and Jon McPhilamy, "Why Airpower Needs Landpower," Modern War Institute, November 5, 2018, accessed November 10, 2018, <https://mwi.usma.edu/airpower-needs-landpower/>.

<sup>167</sup> Pape, *Bombing to Win*, 205.

<sup>168</sup> Henriksen, *NATO's Gamble*, 120.

it was the support of international efforts to secure the respective regions. Given the content of this monograph, the rebuttal to the above article becomes, *it depends*.

There is no doubt a balance exists between the factors that enable the positive application of air power and constrain it. Part of that balance is the effective targeting of an adversary's vulnerabilities. However, it appears now that an even greater variable is the one pointed out by Clodfelter regarding the nature of national objectives, "Often, this variable is the most important. Are the positive goals truly achievable through the application of [air power]?"<sup>169</sup> This question is by far the hardest to answer, and it is often not until the entire framework is applied to a past or potential conflict that the answer surfaces. Sometimes, as in the case of Linebacker II the acceptable level of risk to forces must escalate. Other times, as seen in ODF and OAF the risk to international perception must escalate. Risk escalation on both accounts may entail the deployment of ground forces, but it may not. There is no one answer as to what made or will make air power effective in the achievement of national objectives; however, the three case studies demonstrate that every application required an appreciation and basic merging of national objectives and military capabilities. Effective targeting of an adversary's vulnerabilities, while no doubt crucial to a campaign's success, then followed.

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<sup>169</sup> Clodfelter, "Airpower Versus Asymmetric Enemies," 44.

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