

**NATIONAL DEFENSE UNIVERSITY**

**NATIONAL WAR COLLEGE**

**EXTENDED ESSAY**

**SCHWARZKOPF'S GULF WAR CAMPAIGN:**

**REVOLUTIONARY FUTURE STRATEGY**

**OR**

**HISTORIC ANOMALY?**

**LARRY NEW/CLASS OF '96**

**EXPANDED ESSAY**

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# Report Documentation Page

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## Introduction

In terms of the results and duration the 1991 Arabian Gulf War between Iraq and the United States-led United Nations coalition was one of the most successful military actions in American history. Key to the success was the air operation. For 38 days leading up to commencement of the ground phase, the coalition air forces systematically picked apart Iraq's ability to make war at the strategic, operational, and tactical levels. General Schwarzkopf, the Commander in Chief of Central Command who led the Gulf War campaign significantly changed his standing operations plan to achieve the results he did. During the crisis planning, Schwarzkopf asked the Air Force for a strategic air operation that was fundamentally different from the plan his deliberate planning process had produced. Thus, if the air operations planning would have occurred under the established process, the strategy and results could have been completely different.

The objective of this paper is to elucidate lessons that can be learned from the strategic planning for the Gulf War. The first lesson is how to better conduct military campaign planning. Other lessons arise by investigating the significance of a Commander in Chief (CINC) turning away from his established planning process in the height of a crisis. This paper consists of two parts. The first section will explain how the process that was the genesis of the Gulf War campaign plan occurred. This will show that with an ad hoc process, personalities and chance are the determining factors of the outcome. Although chance can never be eliminated in dynamic situations such as war, institutionalized processes can reduce chance to an acceptable and controllable level. The description of the ad hoc events will also serve to raise questions about the underlying reasons why Schwarzkopf did not use his standing operations plan (OPLAN). The second section will explore why a change to the OPLAN was made, what lessons have we learned from the experience and better ways for shaping future planning based on the Gulf War experience.

## The Formal Planning Process

The current formal planning process is a result of the 1986 Defense Reorganization Act. One of the goals of this act was to strengthen the power of Unified Commanders in relation to the Service Chiefs. The problem of

Service Chief dominance was not new, but the legislation was a long time coming. It was first highlighted prominently by President Eisenhower when he said

Because I have often seen the evils of diluted command, I emphasize that each unified commander must have unquestioned authority over all units of his command...today a unified command is made up of component commands from each military Department, each under a commander from that department. The commander's authority over these component commands is short of the full command required for maximum efficiency.<sup>1</sup>

The Defense Reorganization Act, also known as the Goldwater-Nichols Act after the Congressmen who introduced the legislation, placed the Service Chiefs of Staff outside the chain of command for war fighting operations. Concurrently, it directly subordinated the Unified Commanders to the Secretary of Defense and made them responsible for planning and executing war.

### ***Unified Commander Responsibilities***

The responsibilities of the Unified Commander, also known as Joint Forces Commander, are established by both law and directive. The directive comes primarily from joint doctrine publications within the Department of Defense. Even the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff is not directly in the chain of command to the Joint Forces Commander. He may transmit orders from the National Command Authority to the Unified Commander, and he acts as the President's principal military advisor. As such, the Joint Forces Commander (JFC) is responsible for joint operations planning.<sup>2</sup> This responsibility was a salient feature of the Goldwater-Nichols Act. Congress thought strategic planning was inhibited when the Unified Commander had components that were supplied by the Services and still subordinate to them.<sup>3</sup> The problem before Goldwater-Nichols was that the Service Component Commanders naturally had more loyalty to their Service chain of command than to the gaining unified chain of command. In the Gulf War, the Unified Command was United States Central Command (USCENTCOM) and the

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<sup>1</sup> Hearings Before the Committee on Armed Services, United States Senate, Ninety-Ninth Congress, First Session, Reorganization of the Department of Defense (U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, 1987), 34.

<sup>2</sup> Joint Pub No. 5-0, Doctrine for Planning Joint Operations ([Department of Defense], 4/13/95), 1-4.  
Hearings, 24-26, 33.

Commander in Chief (CINC) was United States Army General H. Norman Schwarzkopf. In exercising his responsibility for joint operations planning the CINC normally delegates the responsibility to develop component operations plans to his Component Commanders, in the case of the air component, the Joint Forces Air Component Commander

### ***The formal air war planning process***

The Joint Forces Air Component Commander (JFACC), when designated by the CINC, is responsible for developing the Joint Air Operations Plan and for the Concept of Air Operations.<sup>4</sup> The JFACC establishes a team of planners for the purpose of developing the Air Operations Plan.<sup>5</sup> In the Gulf War, the JFACC was United States Air Force Lieutenant General Charles Horner. General Horner was also the Commander of 9th Air Force with its own staff that formed the nucleus of his JFACC staff for USCENTCOM. General Horner had a standing operations plan to support USCENTCOM, and the day the Iraqis invaded Kuwait the 9th Air Force staff started working on it to determine what adjustments were needed. The initial planning concentrated on the immediate problem of defending against an Iraqi advance into Saudi Arabia. The air component was to concentrate on attacking Iraqi resupply lines to slow an advance—a typical air interdiction mission.<sup>6</sup>

### ***Service involvement***

As Commander of 9th Air Force, General Horner's Air Force chain of command extended from the Commander Tactical Air Command, General Robert Russ to the Chief of Staff of the Air Force, General Mike Dugan. The Goldwater-Nichols Act was meant to decrease what Congress perceived to be the Service Chiefs' overwhelming power and influence on their subordinates who became assigned to a unified commander.<sup>7</sup> The vision for Service involvement was for them to train and equip the forces to be contributed to the Unified Commanders

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<sup>4</sup> Joint Pub No 3-56.1 Command and Control for Joint Air Operations ([Department of Defense], 11/14/94) II-2 III-1

<sup>5</sup> Joint Pub No 3-56.1 ix

<sup>6</sup> Richard T. Reynolds, Heart of the Storm: The Genesis of the Air Campaign Against Iraq (Air University Press, Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama, January 1995) 11

<sup>7</sup> Hearings 26

The process in the above paragraphs describes the established formal system for the air operations planning. This process was employed, but there were parallel, and as we will see, conflicting processes taking place informally.

## **The Informal Planning Process**

In addition to General Horner's staff planning for the air war, Tactical Air Command headquarters, the Joint Staff, and Air Force headquarters initiated parallel planning of their own. As discussed above, these planning efforts were not part of the formal process established by either the applicable law or military doctrine. Although begun informally, one of them generated what became the inchoate heart of the Gulf War's strategic campaign plan.

### ***Service involvement and input to the Joint Forces Commander***

As General Schwarzkopf and General Horner reviewed their operations plan (OPLAN) in the event they were called on to execute, the Joint Staff in the Pentagon worked on military options to be presented to the National Command Authority. These options were not meant to be operations plans. They were intended to produce a recommended military course of action that the President could choose as the United States' response to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait and possible attack on Saudi Arabia. In the course of this effort, they informally contacted the Air Force Staff for suggestions. Colonel John Warden III, Air Force Deputy Director for War-Fighting Concepts, had already planned to devise a strategy for fighting a war with Iraq. In response to the Joint Staff, he assembled a group of Air Force personnel and began planning.<sup>9</sup>

During their initial trip to Saudi Arabia, General Schwarzkopf left General Horner there to be his forward commander. After the CINC's return to the United States, he called the office of the Chief of Staff of the Air Force. He talked to General Mike Loh, the Vice Chief (the Chief, General Mike Dugan, was out of town). In that conversation he told General Loh that he did not have anybody with the expertise to plan a strategic campaign and

asked if Loh could produce an air campaign plan.<sup>9</sup> Loh knew of Warden's planning efforts and immediately assigned him the task of putting together a strategic air campaign.

Loh called General Russ at Tactical Air Command (TAC) and told him about his conversation with Schwarzkopf. Afterwards, Russ instructed his staff to start working on plans of their own for a war with Iraq. When Warden finished a first draft of his plan it was faxed to TAC, Lieutenant General Horner in Saudi Arabia, and Lieutenant General Charles Boyd, the commander of Air University, each of whom assigned a group of people to look at its viability. Although Russ and the TAC staff had reservations about the plan, Boyd supported it.<sup>10</sup> Before either TAC or Air University could formulate and forward a plan or response to Warden's plan, Warden briefed Schwarzkopf within the timeline on which Schwarzkopf and Loh had agreed. Schwarzkopf's response to Warden's cogent briefing was so positive that he accepted the plan and essentially adopted Warden's team as an ad hoc USCENTCOM air planning staff. "That's exactly what I want! Do it! You have my approval--100 percent! This is absolutely essential! I will call the chairman today and have him give you a directive to proceed with detailed planning immediately."<sup>11</sup> The other Air Force agencies' independent planning was rendered moot after the Schwarzkopf brief and they became adjunct to Warden's planning group.

### ***Component and Supporting Command involvement***

After the initial Schwarzkopf brief, Warden briefed General Colin Powell, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Powell directed to make the planning effort more joint, which resulted in about 50 Joint Staff officers becoming part of Warden's team. The other Services who would be contributing air forces to USCENTCOM thus became part of the planning process. Meanwhile, Horner's staff, which was forward deployed in Saudi Arabia, had been concentrating their planning on the short-term defense of Saudi Arabia if the Iraqis attacked. After Warden's team produced the plan, they delivered it to Horner and his staff who continued refining it until the war started five months later.

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<sup>9</sup> Reynolds, 24

<sup>10</sup> Reynolds, 45

<sup>11</sup> Reynolds, 56

## A Bureaucratic Politics Analysis

With the chronology and basic events established, the following will focus on analysis of the bureaucratic process that took place to produce the core of the Gulf War plan. This case, like many others in history, points out how personalities and chance are as large a part of momentous events as systematic processes.

### *The actors*

The primary actors in this process were the Chairman, General Powell, the Commander in Chief, General Schwarzkopf, and his Air Component Commander, Lieutenant General Horner, the Air Force Chief and Vice Chief of Staff, Generals Dugan and Loh, respectively, and the Air Force Deputy Director for War-Fighting Concepts, Colonel Warden. Other significant actors were the Tactical Air Command Commander, General Russ, the Air Force Director of Operations, Lieutenant General Jimmy Adams, and the Joint Staff Director of Operations (J-3), Lieutenant General Tom Kelly.

The central figure for producing the air operations plan, Warden, was of the same mind as early airpower theorists such as Giulio Douhet. Douhet wrote in the period between World War I and World War II that airpower could be a decisive force if employed strategically against the heart of an adversary nation.<sup>12</sup> Warden was a strong proponent of airpower who had written a book, The Air Campaign: Planning for Combat, in 1988. To many, Warden was an airpower zealot. To wit, even though in their initial meeting Loh spoke of the need to make it a joint plan, Warden's idea was that the whole effort might be possible using Air Force assets alone.<sup>13</sup> Arguably, Warden's agenda was to seize at a chance to demonstrate that airpower alone could be a decisive force.

Warden's agenda was set in the context of ongoing debates among the Services about airpower. Many proponents of surface forces, especially in the Army and Marine Corps, consider the primary purpose of airpower is tactical--direct support of surface forces. They argue the only decisive forces are those that conquer and occupy territory. Generally, the Air Force position is that airpower can be employed on a spectrum from tactical to

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<sup>12</sup> Giulio Douhet, The Command of the Air, trans. Dino Ferrari (Washington D.C.: Office of Air Force History, 1993), 20.

<sup>13</sup> Reynolds, 28.



operational and strategic. Many such as Warden, believe the most effective employment of airpower is strategic. Strategic airpower can be a decisive force, defined as being able to coerce an enemy to agree to your peace terms-- not necessarily to occupy territory.<sup>14</sup>

The approach of some Air Force leaders was more cautious and graduated. Their ideas seemed to be geared to the immediate problem of Iraq occupying Kuwait and sitting on the border poised to attack Saudi Arabia. Among them were General Russ, Lieutenant General Adams, and Lieutenant General Horner. Russ believed Warden's plan was too violent to be supported by the American public. His idea was to send a signal with a single air attack, then reattempt diplomatic efforts. He also had reservations about the plan originating in Washington D.C., a throwback to the Vietnam era. Ironically, under his direction, the TAC staff produced an unsolicited air war plan as mentioned above.<sup>15</sup> Russ was a powerful force not only because of his position as the TAC Commander, but also because he was the senior ranking four star general to both Loh and Dugan.

Adams was on leave and out of town when Iraq invaded Kuwait. He cut his leave short and returned to the Pentagon. Before he knew all the details, he was irate at Warden, who was in his chain of command. He was also against planning from Washington and believed in a more tactical application of airpower. His first feedback after hearing the briefing was that the plan's priority should be to destroy the Iraqi army and use whatever assets were left for the strategic bombing.<sup>16</sup> Warden argued on this point and, in the end, the plan remained primarily strategic, since Schwarzkopf and Powell had already been briefed on and endorsed its strategic aspect.

Horner's thoughts fell in line with his peacetime boss, Russ. He thought the plan was too drastic. After Warden briefed him on the plan he said, "this may work in the short term, but [in] 20 years [it] will be disaster. [It will] create hatred against America!"<sup>17</sup> Like Russ, Horner also resented the plan originating in Washington, especially because it undermined his responsibility for planning as Schwarzkopf's Air Component Commander. A man known for his temper, Horner's encounter with the Colonel dispatched from Washington to brief him on the

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<sup>14</sup> These debates intensified during this period because of the issue of a Joint Forces Air Component Commander (JFACC). The Air Force doctrine office, which worked for Warden, was in a debate with the other Services about what JFACC responsibilities to include in Joint Doctrine.

<sup>15</sup> Edward C. Mann III, Thunder and Lightning: Desert Storm and the Airpower Debates (Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama: Air University Press, 1995), 2.

<sup>16</sup> Reynolds, 52.

<sup>17</sup> Reynolds, 22.

plan was confrontational. He actually grabbed the colonel's tie as he emphatically told him it was not his job or anyone else's on the Air Staff to plan the air operation.<sup>18</sup>

Another opponent of the plan was Army Lieutenant General Kelly. Kelly belonged to the surface-soldier school of thought on airpower. He was the first to speak after the briefing to Powell. "Air power has never worked in the past by itself; [ne-e-ever] worked in the past by itself. This isn't going to work. Air power can't be decisive!"<sup>19</sup> His arguments did not prevail. Yet, they were perceived to be enough of a threat that Loh and the Director of the Joint Staff, Air Force Lieutenant General Mike Carns, agreed to assign Adams as a "deputy J-3 for air" to keep Kelly from dominating the process and diminishing the airpower contribution to Schwarzkopf's plan.<sup>20</sup>

The following sequence of events further demonstrates the many directions the Air Force plan could have taken. However, due to the chance of personalities and timing Warden's efforts prevailed. Warden and his strategic airpower ideas had support from Dugan and Loh. Loh became a focal actor as Dugan was out of town. He was happy to support Schwarzkopf but deferred to the senior Russ by talking to him immediately after his call from Schwarzkopf, then sending the draft plan to Russ' staff. A pivotal point arose on the eve of Warden's departure to brief Schwarzkopf. TAC relayed to the Air Staff that it was imperative for them to receive the briefing before it went to Schwarzkopf and Loh again deferred. However, Warden asked if he could take the briefing to the Chief of Staff instead and Loh agreed, although hesitant because of Russ. When he called the Chief of Staff to tell him about the events, Dugan removed all other influence by saying neither he nor Russ needed to see the briefing. Time was of the essence and Warden needed get the brief to Schwarzkopf.<sup>21</sup>

Schwarzkopf liked the plan from the start, as mentioned above. He was aware of Warden's zealotry, but was impressed with him and his plan. In his view, the plan was not too severe. Warden had come up with a strategy designed to cripple Iraq's military without laying waste to the country.<sup>22</sup> His feedback was that the

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<sup>18</sup> Reynolds 91

<sup>19</sup> Reynolds 73

<sup>20</sup> Reynolds 79

<sup>21</sup> Reynolds 50

<sup>22</sup> H. Norman Schwarzkopf with Peter Petre, It Doesn't Take a Hero (New York: Linda Gray Bantam Books, October 1992), 318.

strategic bombing would be one of four phases of his campaign. Three of the four phases were to be accomplished primarily by airpower and the last would be the ground war.<sup>23</sup> In the end, the airpower phases were not accomplished entirely sequentially, but established an order of priority for simultaneous bombing. Schwarzkopf was also aware of Horner's emphatic distaste of the idea of receiving a plan from Washington. However, in his view Horner had his hands full as the forward commander, and Horner could take over the plan once the preliminary work was done by Warden's group.<sup>24</sup>

Powell was fully supportive of Schwarzkopf, and his sentiments fell in line with the latter's. He had heard of Warden from Schwarzkopf and was equally impressed after being briefed. He joined Schwarzkopf in asking Warden to expand the plan to include tactical strikes on the Iraqi army.<sup>25</sup>

Although President George Bush and Secretary of Defense Richard Cheney would not normally be involved in this type of planning, it was certainly within their purview. In this case, they did not engage. However, after they were briefed on the plan their support certainly provided top level credence and might have shielded the plan from any further attempts at significant change. Bush's new-found confidence was reflected in the public address he gave at the River Entrance of the Pentagon immediately after he received the briefing. During this speech, he denounced the Iraqi invasion in harsh, personal tones for the first time. He was probably pleased because the plan gave him an option to respond in a matter of weeks, instead of the months the traditional ground/military response would take. This was the most positive feedback the process could have received. Interestingly, the four objectives Warden included as his guidepost for strategic planning were not given to him via the chain of command. His group pieced them together from recent speeches and statements from Bush.<sup>26</sup> After Bush's tacit approval they endured as the political objectives for the Gulf War.

In evaluating the process, the right actors were involved although some probably felt they did not have the appropriate amount of influence. Influence is a product of personality and circumstance that affects any bureaucratic process. In a pure sense, the only actors that needed to be involved were Schwarzkopf, his chain of

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<sup>23</sup> Schwarzkopf 320

<sup>24</sup> Schwarzkopf 320

<sup>25</sup> Co in C Powell with Joseph E. Persico My American Journey (New York: Random House, 1995) 473

<sup>26</sup> Records 29

command (up and down), and anyone else he decided to include. That would make Horner and Loh the legitimate actors. In this case, the overriding actor was Schwarzkopf. He had an idea of a strategic campaign that he did not feel he would get from his JFACC. solicited an input from the Air Force, and received a plan that fit his goals. After that point, with Powell's support and Cheney and Bush's approval, his strategic campaign was unassailable. All the other strategies became moot. Although it was not a pure illustration of what law and policy dictated for the process, it was exactly what the Goldwater-Nichols Act levied in that the Combatant Commander had ultimate authority and responsibility.

The outcome of the process was a plan that stood as the genesis and nucleus of the Gulf War strategic campaign plan, which led to resounding success. In just 42 days, the coalition forces executed a strategy that terminated with the unconditional achievement of all political objectives. The initial planning process evolved and opened to all appropriate parties, who became part of Warden's planning team. However, Warden proposed the strategy and Schwarzkopf accepted it before the other actors had a chance to make an input. Subsequently, their role became one of refinement and working out the details rather than overall strategy. This does not mean Warden's agenda was accomplished in toto. Through input from Loh and Schwarzkopf, Warden compromised to make the plan more joint and include more tactical emphasis than he would have liked.

The strategic plan that led to the overwhelming success was a product of chance, and a departure from existing doctrine. This leads to the inferences that critical planning should not be left to chance, and that standing doctrine and OPLANs were not suited for the conditions of the Gulf War. Therefore, the rest of the paper will focus on first an institutional process that reduces the chance for random strategy, and second on the underlying reasons for the doctrinal misfit that occurred.

## **Approaches for Future Strategic Air War Planning**

One option for future strategic air war planning is to keep the process as is and allow bureaucratic politics to determine future outcomes--as in the Gulf War. The alternative is to formally change the process in one of several ways. Any of the options contains two important contextual considerations. There is an institutional resistance within the Air Force to running a war from Washington--a throwback to the Vietnam style of war. The

top Air Force leadership through the turn of the century will have lived through, and in most cases fought under that style of war and do not care to repeat it. The other contextual consideration is the Defense Reorganization Act of 1986. As mentioned before, this act meant to minimize Service influence on the warfighting commanders.

The Air Force took steps since the Gulf War to improve the responsiveness of Central Command operations plans. Three years after the Gulf War, in October, 1994 Iraq sent three army divisions south threatening Kuwait once again. The United States responded by deploying troops to the region in an operation called Vigilant Warrior. This essentially amounted to moving up a military exercise that was already scheduled for the region at a later date. The US reaction, which included military and other international means, succeeded in thwarting Hussein's aggressive overtures towards Kuwait. After Vigilant Warrior, Central Command developed a set of three operations plans designed for varying warning and reaction times to prepare themselves for future situations such as this. The plans provide options for preemptive action, execution on attack, and a defensive readiness posture. The forces deployed in place since the end of the Gulf War are the defensive readiness forces.<sup>27</sup>

All CINC's operations plans are periodically reviewed and therefore should reflect the CINC's desires for the employment and contribution of the air component of his campaign. However, this was the case for CENTCOM prior to the Gulf War as well. General Schwarzkopf reviewed his plan in April of 1990, but evidently was not satisfied with it in August 1990.<sup>28</sup> Assuming the same could happen in the future, the ongoing reviews and updates of CINC's operations plans do not negate the possibility of a CINC requesting a new plan, just as Schwarzkopf did. This leads to two questions. First, how should the Air Force respond if a CINC calls outside his Air Component Commander for a new air operations plan? Second, can we improve the plans such that they will not require complete overhaul for future contingencies?

The short answer to the first question is that the Air Force should respond by providing all necessary resources to support the CINC's Air Component Commander. There have already been initiatives to facilitate this. In the case of CENTCOM, the CENTAF staff and the Air Force staff work together to validate and modify their standing plan.<sup>29</sup> 'Checkmate' an air war strategy shop is the working agency on the Air Force staff that

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<sup>27</sup> Lieutenant General John P. Jumper, personal interview, 4 March 1996.  
<sup>28</sup> Mann, 28.  
<sup>29</sup> Jumper.

contributes to the CENTAF deliberate planning. Checkmate maintains and updates strategic targeting lists for many possible contingencies.<sup>10</sup> In addition, the Air Force Deputy Director for Operations is currently considering institutionalizing a Checkmate-like supporting agency that can take advantage of the national assets available in Washington.<sup>31</sup> At the execution of a plan, the CENTAF commander would deploy on a KC-10 aircraft with a planning cell to the theater. That planning cell, in communication with the forces forward and the staff behind, will plan for deploying forces and situational adjustments. Checkmate will provide a review and assistance to the process.<sup>32</sup> Therefore, the CENTAF commander is poised to provide the Air Force responsiveness for which any CINC could ask. He has standing plans that cover a wide range of possible scenarios, as well as the ability to literally adjust plans on the fly with dedicated Air Force resources acting to support him. This gives him the advantage of control over his own staff, which tends to have more appreciation for the scope of joint CENTCOM assets available, and the opinion and resources of the Air Force Staff, which can have more of an Air Force bias.<sup>33</sup>

The United States Air Forces Europe, USAFE, put together a function similar to Checkmate, the 32nd Air Operations Group. During a contingency, the 32nd AOG is capable of becoming the core of an Air Operations Center for a JFACC.<sup>34</sup> This capability has already been exercised in the Bosnia Decisive Endeavor operation.

Air Component Commanders have improved the responsiveness and adaptability of their planning process since the Gulf War. They have institutionalized coordination between the air component staffs and the Service headquarters. These efforts should result in an Air Component Commander and an Air Force better positioned to support the warfighting CINCs. They should also make an Air Force response to a CINC easier and less controversial if he asks for Service inputs outside his Air Component Commander. This would serve well as Air Force policy. The Air Force would best serve the CINCs with a policy that fully supports him *through* his Air Component Commander. The Service acting as a support structure does not threaten the autonomy of a CINC or lead to running a war from Washington. While this policy addresses the question of how to respond to CINC's needs, it does not address the more fundamental question of why a CINC might not be satisfied with his strategic

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<sup>0</sup> Major General Charles D. Link, personal interview, 13 March 1996.

<sup>1</sup> Link.

<sup>2</sup> Jumper.

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<sup>4</sup> Headquarters United States Air Forces Europe/DOQ, AOG CONOPS DRAFT, Ramstein Air Base, Germany, 25 Aug 95, Executive Summary.

plan with the air component contribution to that plan, or with his Air Component Commander's ability to respond to his needs

## The Underlying Problem

Why was Schwarzkopf dissatisfied with his operations plan which had just been exercised and reviewed? Why did he call the office of the Air Force Chief of Staff rather than ask Horner for a different approach? Why would a CINC do the same thing in the future? The answers to these questions indicate an underlying problem with military operations in general—a problem that goes beyond Air Force issues.

The context of military thought in 1990 clearly shows why the CENTCOM operations plan evolved as it did. The modern militaries of the 20th century were steeped in centuries of tradition of force-on-force set-piece battle. From the Napoleonic wars through the American Civil War, the two World Wars, and the Korean and Vietnam Wars this has been the western style of making war. We have a poor track record of evolving doctrine to meet new challenges. Our first experience with unconventional or guerrilla warfare was on the frontier against the American Indians. The Army won in the end, but the efficiency of their conventional style of warfare was questionable. No doctrine or tactics schools, training, or manuals were changed to meet that style of war.<sup>15</sup> Another experience with guerrilla warfare came in the Vietnam War. There, we again applied conventional force against an unconventional force and won the tactical and operational battles but lost the war. This does not speak highly of our strategy or the flexibility of our doctrine.

In 1990, we were just realizing the 40-year Cold War had ended. Preparations for battle in the event the Cold War became hot had two aspects, one nuclear and one conventional. The conventional battle envisioned during the Cold War was a set-piece mass-on-mass war centered around the ground conflict along the front between East and West Europe. Within this context, operations plans were likewise built around the paradigm of mass armies slugging it out until capitulation was achieved. Naval warfare and air warfare were relegated to the role of supporting the ground war. Naval battles, although fought independently from the ground operation, were

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<sup>15</sup> Robert M. Utley, "The Contribution of the Frontier to the American Military Tradition," The American Military on the Frontier, ed. James P. Tate (Washington: Office of Air Force History, 1978), 8-9.

to be fought to ensure free use of the seas and deny the enemy the same. Free access of the seas was required to support the ground war. Likewise, air battles were to be fought to support the ground forces with varying degrees of direct and indirect support. Direct support resulted in the mission of close air support, and indirect support resulted in the missions of air interdiction and strategic attack--the most indirect mission. This evolved, after much Service debate, into the air/land battle doctrine, in which airpower was integrated but subordinate to the ground battle. Doctrine at the time referred to 'air and naval support of ground maneuver.'<sup>36</sup> It even went so far as to claim that in a nuclear war, 'even though airpower is the principal means of destruction in this scenario, it is still characterized as fire support.'<sup>37</sup> In the mindset that grew during the evolution of airpower in the 20th century, strategic attack became synonymous with bombers--and, further, with nuclear forces--while the more direct air interdiction became synonymous with fighters. The Air Force was even organized with Strategic Air Command (SAC) controlling bombers and intercontinental ballistic missiles, both nuclear capable, and Tactical Air Command (TAC) controlling fighters. Schwarzkopf's operations plan, like every other CINC's plan, reflected the prevailing central ground war paradigm.

When Schwarzkopf assessed the situation, he evidently deduced over time that there was a better way to victory than by fighting it out between two massed armies on the ground. Surely, he was influenced by the assessment of casualties-- between 9,000 and 30,000 on the US side--made under the assumption of a ground war.<sup>38</sup> That seemed to be Saddam Hussein's plan. He apparently thought that if he could make the cost in human lives so high the Americans would not fight. Schwarzkopf probably also realized he was making history and would be judged on his success or failure in the process. He may have found it unacceptable to have his name linked to such carnage when he felt it could be avoided with a different strategy. His autobiography does not yield salient reasons for why Schwarzkopf changed his strategy; he only says that he asked the Air Force for 'a strategic bombing campaign aimed at Iraq's military which would provide the retaliatory options we needed.'<sup>39</sup> A more in-depth analysis of the sequence of events may be more telling. On 3 August 1990, immediately after the Iraqi invasion, Schwarzkopf displayed dissatisfaction with his Director of Operations, Air Force Major General

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<sup>36</sup> FM 00-5 Operations Mar 1986 30

<sup>37</sup> Operations 22-32

<sup>38</sup> Mann 5

<sup>39</sup> Schwarzkopf 313



Burt Moore. Moore had only been in place two months and was thrown out of Schwarzkopf's office several times that day while attempting to present options for force deployment and courses of action. Schwarzkopf ended the final briefing of the day by telling Moore to fix the plan, and telling Horner to go with him.<sup>40</sup> The next day, Schwarzkopf and Horner flew to Washington and briefed President Bush. They briefed a plan premised on Iraqi attack. Their ensuing defensive ground effort included airpower supporting the army by interdicting Iraqi resupply lines. Bush raised two military concerns, the loss of life and casualties, and Iraq's possible use of Scud surface-to-surface missiles.<sup>41</sup> Shortly after the Bush briefing, Schwarzkopf and Horner flew to the theater. After his return, the CINC called Loh on 8 August and said, "...we have a decent plan for air/land operations, but I'm thinking of an air campaign, and I don't have any expertise--anybody here who can think in those kinds of terms and look at a broader set of targets or a strategic campaign."<sup>42</sup>

Schwarzkopf may have been thinking more of a pre-Goldwater-Nichols era when he asked the Air Force via Loh for permission to use Horner, his dedicated Air Component Commander. Another possibility is he may have been unclear as to whether Horner was still in his peacetime role within the Air Force chain of command or in his wartime role in the CENTCOM chain of command. A third possibility is he was merely extending professional courtesy to the Air Force. At any rate, he said to Loh, "You know, I've sent Horner over, and I have got to ask you if I can keep him indefinitely."<sup>43</sup>

Schwarzkopf's idea that Horner was not fully his, combined with Horner being so far geographically removed, and the former's dissatisfaction with his own staff may explain why he did not turn to Horner for his crisis air operations planning. Without direction otherwise from him, his Director of Operations and his Air Component Commander supported his air/land battle OPLAN. Indeed, Horner had a strategic air operations plan, but Schwarzkopf did not ask him for it.<sup>44</sup> Instead, he asked the Air Force.

These events may also help explain why Schwarzkopf asked for a new plan from the Air Force. Bush's concern for casualties and Scuds had to pique his interest in this area. In the 8 August phone conversation with

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<sup>40</sup> Reynolds 4-8

<sup>41</sup> Reynolds 10-11

<sup>42</sup> Reynolds 24

<sup>43</sup> Reynolds 23

<sup>44</sup> Jumper

Loh he further said. I need it fast because he may launch a chemical Scud or chemical attack. We can't go out in piecemeal with an air/land battle plan. I have got to hit him at his heart! I need it kind of fast because I may have to attack those kinds of targets deep, that have value to him as a leader, if he decides to launch a plan of attack with Scuds or with even chemical or nuclear weapons.<sup>45</sup> His actions indicate he wanted to seize the moment and turn away from the air/land battle paradigm. His desire for a quick response may help explain why he turned to the Air Force initially. After he saw the projected strategic affects of the air operation, he kept that strategy even after the six month buildup of ground forces.

There are two significant points in Schwarzkopf's conversation with Loh. First, he wanted something different from air/land battle, a doctrine for which his Service fought long and hard. A second and related point is that he asked for a "strategic air campaign" instead. The term "air campaign" has been loosely used to describe the air operations of the Gulf War. For those close to doctrine for planning joint operations, such as Schwarzkopf, a campaign more properly describes the total operations to achieve strategic objectives. For example, Desert Storm was a campaign consisting of ground, sea, and air operations. Schwarzkopf's request for an air campaign connotes a primacy of the air operations, a radical departure from the view of airpower's only role being that of providing fire support for the ground forces. He later said, "I am quite confident that in the foreseeable future armed conflict will not take the form of huge land armies facing each other across extended battle lines, as they did in World War I and World War II or for that matter, as they would have if NATO had faced the Warsaw Pact on the field of battle."<sup>46</sup> It is clear that the reason Schwarzkopf radically changed his OPLAN is that he was convinced that the strategic application of airpower throughout his campaign would be more effective than the traditional air/land battle--and that he was correct.

### **Lessons Learned**

With a better understanding of how the Gulf War strategic planning started and why, the next issue is what lessons can be learned and applied to future situations. What was the impact of Schwarzkopf's departure from air/land battle and the resounding success of that strategy? How did it influence a change in future OPLANs?

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<sup>45</sup> Reynolds 24

<sup>46</sup> Schwarzkopf 502

and in military thought.<sup>37</sup> The answers to these questions are quite disappointing. In terms of the relationship of component forces, today's OPLANs are fundamentally the same as they were ten years ago. Some even move away from an institutionalized air operation by restricting aircraft to half sortie rates until ground forces are in place. Then they would fly the bulk of sorties in support of ground forces, and fly strategic missions on an as-available second priority basis.<sup>37</sup> This is neither progress nor improvement, for this approach detracts from the potential strategic impact of airpower both before and after ground components are in place. This does not take advantage of the advancements in technology and the resultant increase in effectiveness of both air and surface forces.

### ***The Competition for Resources***

The problem is one of competition for resources. Despite Goldwater-Nichols and the improvements to jointness in the Department of Defense, the Services are still competing for resources in the form of budgets--translated to force structure. That competition became more acute in the 1990's with the combined impacts of ascendancy of airpower, proven in the Gulf War, and the defense drawdown in the wake of the Cold War's end. The result of such efforts as the Base Force Study, the Bottom Up Review, and the Roles and Missions Commission--as well as the cuts in defense funding through these years--was essentially to cut the Services evenly and maintain status quo in terms of roles and organization. During this period, the Air Force Chief of Staff, General Merrill McPeak, became controversial by vocalizing the ascendancy of airpower in relation to the other components. This certainly further fueled the competitive nature of the defense budget battle and impeded the much-needed joint, cooperative effort.

Airpower appears to be facing an enduring problem in earning a proper role in joint doctrine. This is due, at least in part to its overlapping nature. The two other major media of warfare--the land and sea--have a distinct border at the littoral. Consequently, there is a clear demarcation of roles between the Army and Navy. The Marine Corps role is somewhat controversial, because it bridges the gap at the shoreline between Army and Navy roles.

The air medium, on the other hand, has no geographic boundary that limitely separates it from the other two. There is, however, a notional boundary the air forces and ground forces use to delineate responsibilities, the

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<sup>37</sup> Link

fire support coordination line (FSCL). Ground fire is responsible for the area inside the FSCL and airpower is responsible for fire outside the FSCL. Neither should cross the line with firepower unless coordinating with the other. The extent of the FSCL is one of the major doctrinal battles of roles, and therefore budget and force structure, between the Army and the Air Force. The Army tends to argue for pushing the FSCL out farther and farther and acquire the accompanying helicopters, artillery, and missile capability to support it. The Air Force tends to protect force structure by arguing for more tactical support and a more restricted FSCL. An excellent illustration occurred during the late 1950's and early 1960's. The Air Force was assigned the strategic nuclear weapons role and the Army was allowed to develop tactical nuclear missiles. The latter did so with vigor and kept extending the range and capabilities until they had a missile capable of strategic and interdiction missions, and not just battlefield defense.<sup>48</sup>

The proponents of maintaining the ground-centric paradigm raise several arguments. They say airpower has never been decisive, and the Gulf War was an anomaly because of the unique desert environment and because the Iraqis were an unworthy opponent. Yet, there are obvious flaws in this logic. First, pointing to the uniqueness of the desert environment is itself a reflection of the ground-centric paradigm. Second, a key reason why airpower has been decisive in only a few instances is due to its traditional subordination to surface operations. However, the best example of strategic use of airpower with undeniable decisiveness is the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan that ended World War II. (Again, strategic does not have to be nuclear.) More recently, the 1967 Arab/Israeli six day war showcased the strategic impact of airpower used to obtain strategic results. The outcome was determined in a three hour air operation after which the Israeli Air Force returned to the more traditional role of Close Air Support to attain the taking of territory. The Gulf War like the Six Day War, is another example where airpower was used strategically and was the decisive component. Although the desert is different from other geography we still have significant potential for military conflict in desert environments. At the least, a claim can be made that airpower can be decisive in desert warfare. Many pundits with the ground-centric mindset said the same would not be true in other environments such as Bosnia where there are tree-covered mountains and towns.

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<sup>48</sup> I. B. Holler, Jr. "An Enduring Challenge: The Problem of Air Force Doctrine." The Harmon Memorial Lectures in Military History, 1959-1987, ed. Harry R. Borowski (Washington D.C.: Office of Air Force History, 1988), 432-472.

The strategic airpower attacks by aircraft and cruise missiles in late summer, 1995 proved that argument wrong. It was a classic example of the Clausewitz theory of attacking the enemy's will to conduct war.<sup>49</sup> *Strategic airpower can erode an adversary's will by systematically taking away his capacity to conduct war.* In the case of Bosnia, when all other efforts failed to stop Bosnian Serbs from killing their neighbors, the United Nations authorized strategic bombing. Airpower attacked and destroyed weapons storage areas and command-and-control facilities, taking away vital Bosnian Serb capacity for war. Very quickly afterwards, peace and cease-fire negotiations started in earnest. As for the anomaly that the Iraqis did not fight, 38 days of strategic and tactical airpower systematically took away their command-and-control and communications capability, left the troops in the field detached from their leadership, alone, hungry, and under constant peril. It took away the Iraqi capability to conduct the operations of war and eroded their will to fight. The ground offensive was more a policing action than a two-sided war as 38,000 Iraqi soldiers surrendered.<sup>50</sup> The decisiveness and effectiveness of airpower have been proven in the cases where it was applied in a concerted strategic manner. Arguments to the contrary are simply unfounded.

A more compelling argument for applying airpower in a tactical versus strategic role is the immediacy of ground combat. It is quite understandable for troops in contact to want all fire support available, including from the air. This philosophy, which exists in our OPLANs today, argues that the priority for airpower should be to tactically support the ground operation, and *only* after that requirement is met should airpower be applied to strategic targets, if resources are available. This argument has merit but indicates a narrow focus and needs broader perspective. First, it comes from an Army that has not been under attack from enemy aircraft for over 40 years. US air superiority has come to be an assumed commodity, but it has a cost in dedicated resources (force structure). While others may assume air superiority, the Air Force considers it the first and most basic contribution it makes to a CINCPAC. Second, although aircraft have the ability to act as enhanced artillery for ground forces, it is not the most efficient application of airpower in toto. This is analogous to having a knife when under attack from a wild animal and stabbing at the animal's extremities instead of a lethal area. You have to fight to defend.

<sup>49</sup> Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton UP, 1989).

<sup>50</sup> Schwartzkopf, 467.

<sup>51</sup> This is the reason for the Air Force priority on acquiring the F-22 air superiority fighter, which will replace the F-15 as it nears 30 years of operation.

yourself and he may hurt you, but you will systematically take away his capacity to fight faster by going for his strategic areas. Similarly, airpower--properly applied--gives a CINC the ability to attack the enemy's tactical onslaught as well as his strategic vulnerabilities. Third, airpower in full subordination of ground commanders is a proven failure. To wit, the allied defeat at Kasserine Pass in North Africa in 1942 was due in part to ineffectiveness of airpower organized in small units subordinate to ground commanders.<sup>52</sup> It was after this battle that the theater air forces were reorganized under centralized command. They subsequently gained air superiority over axis airpower and the success of the ground war turned. The doctrine of the time has a familiar ring. War Department Field Manual 31-35 of 9 April 1942 stated, "the most important target at a particular time will usually be that target which constitutes the most serious threat to the operations of the supported ground force."<sup>53</sup> Interservice competition for resources dilutes our ability to apply the lessons of war. What is needed is more cooperation among the Services to fight for--rather than against--each other not only in war, but also in terms of the resources that provide maximum overall military effectiveness.

## **Recommended Solution: A Revolution in Military Affairs**

With the end of the Cold War, defense drawdown, technology explosion, and international uncertainty, many are calling the sweeping changes in the Department of Defense a revolution in military affairs. Part of that revolution is driven by external forces, but military leaders are trying to proactively influence as much as possible. The overarching focus should be on how to best fight tomorrow's wars across the spectrum of low to high intensity conflict. To do that, we must recognize each Service's core competencies and develop flexible doctrines and strategies that most effectively balance military capabilities.

### ***Applying the Dominant Force***

There are many instances where one type of force is dominant and others may have a less effective role, or subordinate role or even no role. Enforcing a naval blockade is certainly best suited for naval forces. Enforcing a

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<sup>52</sup> Mann, 16

<sup>53</sup> The Army Air Forces in World War II, Europe, Torch to Point of Land, August 1942 to December 1943  
 edited Wesley Frank Craven and James Lea Cate (Washington DC: Office of Air Force History, 1983), 137

no fly zone, such as the ongoing operations in northern and southern Iraq, are surely best suited for air forces. The same can be said for higher intensity conflicts. Airpower would likely be a dominant capability if we had to fight another war with Iraq, for example. Our doctrine and our OPLANs need to reflect the possibility of one medium of war being dominant, and the flexibility to change strategy as the environment changes due to force capabilities or geopolitical factors. Current Joint Warfare Doctrine allows for any component to be supported by any other in a flexible manner.<sup>54</sup>

CINC selection should parallel the idea of the dominant force. This has generally been the case. For example, Pacific Command, PACOM, has been labeled a maritime command because of the geography and the apparent potential for naval dominance. Likewise, other combatant CINCs are traditionally Army commanders because of the notion of ground force dominance. Conspicuously, there are no Air Force CINCs in the theater combatant commands. This seems to reflect our ground-centric paradigm of warfighting. This is not to say that the color of the CINC's uniform should determine the strategy of war. Again, we need strategies that are adaptable. However, the Gulf War was fought for 38 days with airpower followed by 100 hours of fighting with ground and air power. The preponderance of the war was fought and won in the air--airpower was the dominant force. 'Why is the CINC not an Air Force commander?' Regardless, why is the OPLAN still ground-centric?

An evolutionary change would be indicated by applying lessons from past experience and adapting to the environment as it changes. If we prove to be incapable of evolution as social and political factors turn to isolationism, our relevance may be in doubt. Thus, now is the time to take advantage of the revolution in military affairs by making revolutionary changes to our doctrine that adapts to our growing capabilities and the new geopolitical scene.

### ***Doctrinal Education***

The Air Force is largely to blame for its inability to effectively integrate airpower into joint doctrine. The Air Force organization supported the notion that tactical and strategic airpower were separate entities. The

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<sup>54</sup> Joint Publication Joint Warfare of the Armed Forces of the United States (Department of Defense 10 January 1995) IV-10

commander of the Army Air Forces, General Carl Spaatz established Tactical Air Command (TAC) in 1946 to address Army concerns about the Air Force intentions to support ground operations.<sup>55</sup> The Strategic Air Command went down the road of strategic airpower being a blunt instrument, configuring their bombers primarily with unguided "dumb" bombs and nuclear weapons. Meanwhile, TAC used advancing technology to develop precision guided munitions. These two paths led to a mission reversal in the Gulf War. B-52 bombers from SAC primarily struck the Iraqi Republican Guard—that is tactical targets—while fighters from TAC primarily struck strategic targets such as the command-and-control facilities in Baghdad. After the Gulf War, SAC and TAC reorganized into Air Combat Command. Although the reorganization was due more to the post Cold War drawdown than to evolution of doctrine, Air Combat Command is now retrofitting bombers for precision guided munitions capability. They are also posturing to provide CINCs flexible combat airpower for the spectrum of tactical to strategic application and the spectrum of low intensity to high intensity conflict.

A lack of education is another reason airpower achieved little more than a support role in Joint Doctrine. A lack of proper education continues to manifest itself in Air Force officers that perpetuate the problem of airpower being subordinated to other forces. There is an ongoing tendency for ill-prepared joint officers at all levels to cooperate in a collegial vein to get the job done at the expense of raising legitimate airpower concerns.<sup>56</sup> This provides implicit and sometimes explicit agreement with plans and concepts that could otherwise be improved by an educated airpower strategist. By educating airmen, the Air Force also indirectly educates other Services about both the capabilities of airpower and the value of airpower when applied to its full potential. An airman versed in strategic airpower doctrine better serves not only the Air Force, but also the Joint team.

The Air Force is taking an important step by expanding education in strategy and doctrine. In the past, what little education Air Force officers received about doctrine tended to be history lessons and studies of tactics and operations more than airpower strategy. The Air Force is now including doctrine at all levels of officer professional military education—hopefully more oriented towards airpower strategy. It started a School for Advanced Aerospace Studies, a Joint Forces Air Component Commander Course, and enhanced the Joint Doctrine

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<sup>55</sup> Richard G. Davis, The 31 Initiatives: A Study in Air Force-Army Cooperation (Washington D.C. Office of Air Force History, 1987) 8-9.

<sup>56</sup> Link



and Air Campaign Course. The Air Force recognizes it has raised few strategic thinkers in the past and is taking steps to produce a new breed of JFACCs and Joint Staff officers<sup>47</sup>

### ***Rethink the Doctrine***

Finally, the Air Force needs a revolutionary approach to doctrine. There is a dichotomy between arguing for a strategic airpower doctrine as the best use of the force, on the one hand, and in claiming clear responsibility for tactical support of ground forces on the other. Neither approach, by itself is prudent. Instead, we need a balanced and flexible approach that defines and prioritizes our roles according to the situation. Airpower is capable of being decisive in many potential conflicts. The OPLANs for those conflicts should recognize that and plan to apportion air sorties with the priority to strategic airpower. In other conflicts, airpower may not be judged to be the decisive force. Those OPLANs should recognize that and apportion sorties with the priority to support the dominant operation with tactical airpower. The harder case is in a scenario where no single force has the apparent dominance. In that case the OPLAN should coordinate forces for maximum synergy and apportion airpower missions accordingly. This line of thinking can provide a more coherent and joint approach to force structure decisions for all the Services.

Organizations resist change. Revolutionary change will most likely occur if brought about on more than one front. The Service staffs who seek best solutions to fight and win tomorrow's wars have to enter the fight not from a parochial point of view, but from an effectiveness point of view when working with their counterparts in the other Services. Likewise, the Joint Staff needs informed inputs from all its members to fully represent what their parent Service capabilities are. Then they can balance the contributions of all the components. The Joint Staff should provide direction to the CINCs' planning processes that influences them to consider flexibility in the development of his OPLAN. The Secretary of Defense can influence the process by asking a lot of "why" and "what if" questions when briefed on the OPLANs. For example, he could ask, "what if another strategy was used, would there be fewer losses?"

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The declining budget provides the environment for revolutionary changes. If OPLANs are going to undergo a revolutionary change, they need to start with a clean slate. Set-piece battle is not the strategy that fits all scenarios. Planners need to have a paradigm shift to determine the most efficient use of the forces available for their given set of circumstances, then assigning and prioritizing missions. The OPLANs also need to be flexible enough for changes in strategy to occur seamlessly, based on peacetime or wartime developments. For example, Schwarzkopf's phases shifted primacy from the air operation to the ground operation based on the objectives of the first phases being accomplished. If we do not shift our deliberate planning strategy, the last chance to affect change will occur during the crisis planning. There, a questionable plan will place Chairmen, Secretaries of Defense, and Presidents at the last level of review with a possibility to influence strategy. They will analyze both the military and political feasibility of the plan. They realize in the political context that the citizens of America do not support wars that are lengthy or costly in terms of lives. However, once this group approves of the CINC's plan, it will be executed as is and history will be the judge of its efficacy.

## Conclusion

General Schwarzkopf is an American hero because of his resounding success in the Gulf War. He will be recorded in history not only as the hero of the Gulf War but also as a superb military strategist. The strategy of an air-centric campaign he employed was borne out of an ad hoc process that survived more by chance than design and resulted from his demand for a revolutionary change to campaign strategy. The Air Force played a central role in that process and is now better postured to respond to a CINC's needs by moving toward institutionalizing their support for deliberate and crisis planning. Yet, operations plans today seem to ignore Schwarzkopf's revolutionary strategy and return to the old ground-centric single-solution paradigm. No strategy is right for all cases. What is needed, are strategies that take advantage of emerging capabilities and apply the most efficient force to accomplish objectives on a spectrum from low to high intensity conflict. The Air Force can best influence strategy and serve the joint team by better educating airmen in airpower doctrine and strategy. The entire defense establishment will be required to collaborate if revolutionary change is to happen. If operations planning remains on its current path, Schwarzkopf will unfortunately be remembered as a great strategist for his particular war but not one that influenced a change in military thinking. If that will be the case, future historians may have ample room to

criticize a United States military that is unadaptable to change. We now stand at a time when change is potentially easier than at any other time in our history. We find ourselves at a crossroads with two paths to take. Our foot is already on the path of no change and the signposts of our recent experience all say we need to rethink which path is correct.