

OPERATION ANACONDA: LESSONS LEARNED,  
OR LESSONS OBSERVED?

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by

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The opinions and conclusions expressed herein are those of the student author and do not necessarily represent the views of the US Army Command and General Staff College or any other governmental agency. (References to this study should include the foregoing statement.)

## ABSTRACT

OPERATION ANACONDA: LESSONS LEARNED, OR LESSONS OBSERVED? by Major David J. Lyle, USAF, 82 pages.

Operation Anaconda, a subordinate operation to Operation Enduring Freedom in 2002, was notable for difficulties in integrating US air and ground forces in order to bring combat power to bear on a stronger than originally anticipated foe. In the seven years of study and debate since 2002, key players from both sides have for the most part agreed that with better preliminary coordination, the operation could have been executed less risk to US and coalition personnel. While many commentators have noted that suboptimal command and control relationships, lack of communication, and confusion all contributed to the initial problems in air/ground coordination, few have examined the joint and service doctrine from 2002 to determine to what degree it might have negatively influenced the smooth planning and execution of the operation. This study seeks to determine if any inconsistencies or omissions in joint and service doctrine may have contributed to the problems with air and ground integration observed in Operation Anaconda, and also to determine if doctrinal updates since 2002 have adequately addressed any systemic disconnects the study discovers. In any cases where modern doctrine still does not address the key problems noted in Anaconda, the study will suggest modifications to doctrine which will increase the likelihood that the key “lessons observed” from the operation truly become “lessons learned” in the institutional consciousnesses of the ground and air components.

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## ACRONYMS

ACCE	Air Component Coordination Element
ALO	Air Liaison Officer
AOC	Air Operations Center (Air and Space Operations Center in USAF Doctrine)
ASOC	Air Support Operations Center
ATO	Air Tasking Order
BCD	Battlefield Coordination Detachment
CAOC	Combined Air Operations Center
CAS	Close Air Support
CFACC	Combined Forces Air Component Commander
CFLCC	Combined Forces Land Component Commander
CJTF	Combined Joint Task Force (NATO) or Commander, Joint Task Force
JAEP	Joint Air Estimate Process
JOPP	Joint Operations Planning Process
JTF	Joint Task Force
LNO	Liaison Officer
MDMP	Military Decision Making Process



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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

At the heart of warfare lies doctrine. It represents the central beliefs for waging war in order to achieve victory. Doctrine is of the mind, a network of faith and knowledge reinforced by experience which lays the pattern for the utilization of men, equipment, and tactics. It is the building material for strategy. It is fundamental to sound judgment.

— General Curtis E. LeMay, USAF, 1968

“ . . . we weren’t idiots, but we weren’t asking the questions we needed to . . . ”

— Lieutenant General Franklin L. Hagenbeck, USA, 2004

Determining the best way to integrate the capabilities of the different US military services--increasing “jointness”--has been a continuous challenge in modern warfare. Despite the vast increases in communications and information sharing capabilities that have accompanied digitalization, integrating the efforts of the various services continues to present a challenge. These problems of integration have been especially acute between the United States’ oldest and youngest military services--namely, the US Army and US Air Force. Over their sixty plus year relationship, in both peacetime and war, the two services have often argued and debated over what the proper relationships should be between the ground and air components, and how they should be defined. Both have codified these beliefs in their individual service doctrines, which respond to joint doctrine from their own service’s perspective, and also provide the intellectual underpinnings of their permanent and abiding partnership between the ground and air focused services. But outside of actual combat, there are seldom sufficiently robust opportunities to see if the

various doctrines are compatible in the actual practice of high intensity combat. This paper will examine a case study from recent combat history in which the ties between the Army and Air Force were indeed tested, and were by many accounts found wanting.<sup>1</sup>

From a results based viewpoint, March 2002's Operation Anaconda was a tactical success against Al Qaeda and its Taliban supporters in Afghanistan, with the key events of the operation summarized as follows:

Originally planned as a three-day battle with light combat, Operation *Anaconda* turned out to be a seven-day battle with intense combat and was officially terminated only after 17 days. Operation *Anaconda*, which lasted from March 2–18, was successful because up to several hundred enemy fighters were killed and the rest fled the Shahikot Valley, leaving it in the control of US and allied forces. US casualties totaled eight military personnel killed and over 50 wounded. Success was achieved because the US military showed a capacity to adapt by employing joint operations and modern information networks to surmount a surprising and difficult challenge.<sup>2</sup>

Despite the fact that this characterization is factually accurate, its brevity belies the complexity of the operation, the unanticipated risks that were undertaken, and the extreme difficulties that soldiers and airmen undertook in order to ensure success.

While there is still disagreement on the causes, most of the extant literature on Operation Enduring Freedom acknowledges that there were significant problems

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<sup>1</sup>Elaine Grossman, "Was Operation Anaconda Ill-Fated from Start?," *Inside the Pentagon*, 29 July 2004, [http://www.d-n-i.net/grossman/army\\_analyst\\_blames.htm](http://www.d-n-i.net/grossman/army_analyst_blames.htm) (accessed 22 March 2009).

<sup>2</sup>Richard Kugler, *Operation Anaconda in Afghanistan: A Case Study of Adaptation in Battle* (Washington, DC: Sponsored by the Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense Forces Transformation and Resources, Center for Technology and National Security Policy, Case Studies in National Security Transformation Number 5, February 2007), 1.

integrating air and ground operations during the opening phase of Operation Anaconda.<sup>3</sup> Since then, the action has been the subject of numerous professional journal articles, after action reports, and case studies since then, most of which focused primarily on the tactical level complications that resulted from suboptimal command and control structures and poor coordination between the components. Most have commented specifically on disconnects between the ground and air headquarters involved, noting shortfalls in the planning efforts in both sides.<sup>4</sup>

What has not been evident in most accounts of this event is a detailed analysis of how service and joint doctrine might have shaped the entering arguments and assumptions that commanders used to decide on what level of coordination was required to effectively plan and conduct the operation. This study will examine if deficiencies in doctrine may have negatively influenced decisions on operational design and planning in 2002, causing systemic disconnects in the way US air and ground forces planned and executed operations. Second, the study will see if updates in joint and service doctrine since 2002 corrected any systemic deficiencies in air/ground integration that the study discovers. Lastly, this study will identify potential areas for improvement, and make recommendations to correct deficiencies that were demonstrated by the evidence of

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<sup>3</sup>Rebecca Grant, “The Echoes of Anaconda,” *Air Force Magazine* (April 2005); Richard L. Kugler, Michael Baranick, and Hans Binnendijk, *Operation Anaconda: Lessons for Joint Operations* (Center for Technology and National Security Policy - National Defense University, 2009).

<sup>4</sup>Richard B. Andres and Jeffrey Hukill, “Anaconda: A Flawed Joint Planning Process,” *Joint Force Quarterly*, no. 47 (4th Quarter 2007); Headquarters United States Air Force AF/XOL, *Operation Anaconda: An Air Power Perspective* (Washington, DC: United States Air Force, 2005).

Operation Anaconda, but still not been sufficiently addressed in joint and service doctrine to reasonably prevent their reoccurrence in future high intensity combat operations.

### Background

Operation Anaconda was arguably the first conventional style military operation in Operation Enduring Freedom, the US effort to destroy the Al Qaeda organization and their Taliban supporters in the wake of the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks against New York City and Washington, D.C. Operation Enduring Freedom began in Afghanistan in October of 2001, and by November most of Al Qaeda and their Taliban supporters had been driven out of the major urban areas by US and Afghan Northern Alliance forces. In January 2002, coalition forces received reports that a large number of Taliban and Al Qaeda fighters were assembling in the Khowst--Gardez region in Eastern Afghanistan, and were reportedly holding out in an extremely rugged mountainous redoubt in the Shahi-Kot Valley.<sup>5</sup>

Initial planning for an operation to clear out the region was begun by Joint Special Operations Task Force North (JSOTF-N) under Colonel John Mulholland. However, in February 2002 responsibility for planning the operation was turned over to then Major General Franklin L. Hagenbeck and the 10th Mountain Division, which formed the core of Combined Joint Task Force (CJTF) Mountain. The 10th Mountain Division assumed the planning and execution responsibilities for what would become Operation Anaconda on 14 February 2002, with a planned D-Day of 25 February, leaving it eleven days to

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<sup>5</sup>Andres and Hukill, 136.

plan the operation at the same time the entire unit was in the midst of a move from Karshi Khanabad (K2) in Uzbekistan to Bagram Air Base in Afghanistan.<sup>6</sup>

The clearing operation was planned as a classic “hammer and anvil” operation. Elements of the 10th Mountain Division and 101st Airborne Division (Task Force Rakkasan) were to act as the blocking forces as “the anvil” while Afghan forces (Task Force Hammer), assisted by US special operations forces, would sweep through the villages in the valley in Objective Remington, capturing or destroying any enemy forces there as “the hammer.”

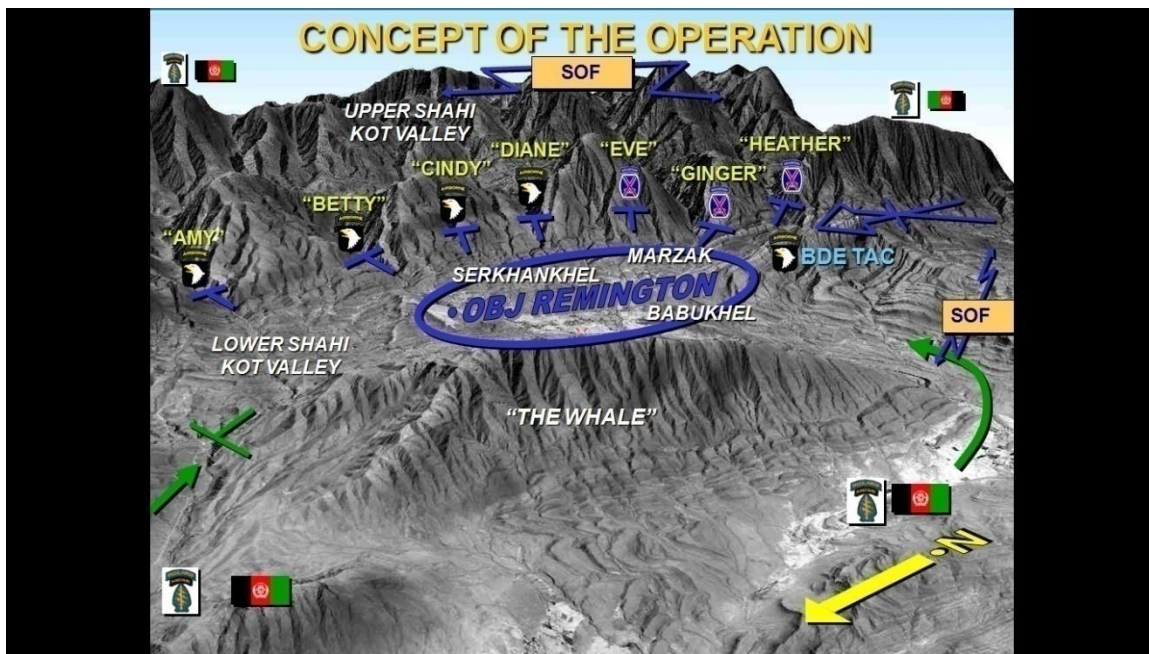


Figure 1. Concept of the Operation

Source: 3-101st AVN Battalion, *Operation Anaconda* (US Army, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault)), Slide 13, Power Point Presentation.

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<sup>6</sup>Sean Naylor, *Not a Good Day to Die: The Untold Story of Operation Anaconda* (New York: Berkeley Publishing Group, 2005), 87.

Even without enemy resistance, the Shahikot Valley itself presented a formidable challenge to US and coalition forces. At 7,500 feet of elevation, surrounded by high ridgelines, natural caves, and limited access, the valley presented significant natural protection to defenders, as the Soviets found out after being defeated there twice in the 1980's with significant losses.<sup>7</sup> The operation intentionally planned to minimize the use of preparatory airstrikes due to two main considerations: Anaconda planners assumed that the enemy fighters would primarily be located in the villages, and that they would number less than 200 fighters.<sup>8</sup> Having come to the consensus that preparatory airstrikes in previous Tora Bora operations had degraded ground forces ability to collect useful intelligence from Al Qaeda and Taliban positions, CJTF Mountain planners requested only a minimum number of pre-sweep airstrikes prior to the air assault and ground movements.<sup>9</sup> Thus, CJTF Mountain went into Operation Anaconda with confidence in its superior strength relative to the enemy, despite having only a few Apache gunships for emergency close air support (CAS), a few light-to-medium mortars, and only one heavy mortar with a limited supply of ammunition--a much lower total organic fires capability than would normally be assigned to an Army division.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>Richard Kugler, *Operation Anaconda in Afghanistan: A Case Study of Adaptation in Battle*, 5.

<sup>8</sup>Rebecca Grant, *The First 600 Days of Combat: The US Air Force in the Global War on Terrorism* (Washington, DC: Iris Press, 2004), 75.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, 105-106.

<sup>10</sup>Headquarters United States Air Force AF/XOL, 10.

The commander of the theater air effort, also known as the Combined Forces Air Component Commander (CFACC), Lieutenant General T. Michael Moseley, was unaware of the scope of the Operation Anaconda until 25 February, only four days prior to the adjusted 29 February D-Day.<sup>11</sup> As a result of the late notification of the scale of the operation, the air component's capability to react to the situation was reduced, resulting in a number of complications upon the start of the ground action. These included tankers and fighter bombers being out of optimal positions, unresolved logistical and procedural issues on D-Day (such as aircraft basing, airspace deconfliction measures, and rules of engagement) that slowed down air component reaction times to urgent air support requests, and many naval air assets being unavailable on D-Day due to a carrier maintenance down day.<sup>12</sup> Thus, when the demand for air support was suddenly greater than originally anticipated, the air component struggled to fill the suddenly urgent demands of the ground component.

#### Air/Ground Disconnects in Anaconda

A March 2009 study from the National Defense University lists “25 Problems That Occurred During Operation Anaconda.” Of these, the following are the most relevant to the subject of air/ground coordination:

- Erroneous intelligence estimates underestimated the enemy threat and reliability of Afghan forces
- Deficiencies in both JTF and CFACC headquarters manning

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<sup>11</sup>Ibid., 36

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., 137-138.



- Ambiguous Command and Control relationships that confused responsibilities between service and functional components within the same geographic area
- Late involvement of the CFACC/AOC in the planning effort that delayed the air component response
- Manpower caps imposed by higher headquarters that limited both the size and types of forces that deployed to Afghanistan
- Withdrawal of the Afghan “hammer” force on the first day of combat, leaving the Task Force Rakkasan “anvil” exposed
- Preplanned airstrikes on the first day were aborted due to SOF proximity and lack of situational awareness of the conventional scheme of maneuver
- No air component branch plans were devised to match the ground branch plans
- Bad weather slowed deployment and affected air support
- The air assault into the Shah-i-kot Valley was conducted without significant preplanned organic or air delivered covering fires, requiring additional emergency CAS
- 5 of 7 Apache helicopters non-mission capable after the first day of combat due to enemy fire and weather considerations, requiring additional air support assets to take up their emergency CAS missions
- SOF and CJTF Mountain activities were not coordinated, resulting in mutual interference with air support
- Lack of ASOC or airborne command and control aircraft to manage CAS hampered planning and execution of close air support

- Communication problems between ground controllers and CAS aircraft hampered efficient delivery of close air support
- Deconfliction problems with numerous aircraft attempting to delivering fires in the same constrained airspace hampered timely delivery of close air support
- Geography of the Shah-i-kot and enemy tactics degraded intelligence collection and fires effectiveness against enemy positions
- Insufficient identification of the need for additional air support to mitigate lack of available artillery/mortar support led to higher than anticipated demand for CAS
- Overly restrictive and complex rules of engagement which often required approval at the CENTCOM level delayed timely delivery of air delivered supporting fires
- Suboptimal or inappropriate weapons loaded on air support aircraft compared to the support required led to suboptimal CAS<sup>13</sup>

From the other sources of information in the body of literature we can add the following additional problems relating to air/ground coordination:

- Dozens of JSOAs, engagement zones, special engagement zones, restricted fire areas, no fire areas, off-limits sites of interest, and constant unknowns

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<sup>13</sup>Richard L. Kugler et al., *Operation Anaconda: Lessons for Joint Operations*, 48-51.

about friendly troop positions created a jigsaw puzzle of battlespace control measures.<sup>14</sup>

- General Hagenbeck was not granted command over Afghan forces, special operations forces and the US air component forces--from the Air Force, Navy, and Marines--that were slated to provide support to Anaconda ground operations.<sup>15</sup>
- US Army divisions were sent to Afghanistan without any tanks, infantry fighting vehicles, or artillery.<sup>16</sup>
- The CFACC and his CAOC staff were not involved in the initial planning and officially became aware of the impending operation only when General Hagenbeck's operations order was issued February 20.<sup>17</sup>
- The air component had less than ten days to arrange combat and airlift support for Operation ANACONDA--including two extra days, courtesy of a weather delay.<sup>18</sup>
- Diplomatic clearances were not in place in sufficient time for full deployment of air assets.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>Headquarters United States Air Force AF/XOL, 46.

<sup>15</sup>Richard Kugler, *Operation Anaconda in Afghanistan*, 8.

<sup>16</sup>Headquarters United States Air Force AF/XOL, 10.

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*, 41.

<sup>19</sup>Grossman.

- Initially there was no joint fire control network dedicated to close air support - Air Support Coordination Center (ASOC) or airborne command and control (ABCCC) element - to enable forward air controllers on the ground could coordinate air strikes.<sup>20</sup>
- Central Command had dedicated most of the frequency “bandwidth” on satellite-based communications systems available in Afghanistan to special operations forces, leaving air controllers a single frequency on which to coordinate all airstrikes close to friendly forces.<sup>21</sup>
- Confusion with a special operations operated gunship resulted in fratricide when it mistakenly targeted Task Force Hammer.<sup>22</sup>
- Limited CAS was available for Task Force Hammer after Task Force Rakkassan became engaged before the Afghan forces entered the villages, influencing them to abort their mission.<sup>23</sup>
- Enemy targets in the mountains were normally small and hard to see.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>20</sup>LTC John Jansen, USMC; LCDR Nicholas Dienna, USN; MAJ William Todd Bufkin, II, USMC; MAJ David I. Oclander, USA; MAJ Thomas Di Tomasso, USA; and Maj James B. Sisler, USAF, “JCAS in Afghanistan: Fixing the Tower of Babel,” *Field Artillery* (March 2003), 24.

<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup>Grant, *The First 600 Days of Combat*, 77.

<sup>23</sup>Kugler, *Operation Anaconda in Afghanistan*, 15.

<sup>24</sup>*Ibid.*, 19.

- Although several USAF officers and over 30 Enlisted Forward Air Controllers (EFACs) were assigned as liaisons to the ground forces, they were not always properly equipped.<sup>25</sup>
- Task Force Mountain was slow to ID airlift requirements, resulting in a late scramble to get fuel and troops to Bagram, and limiting the amount of organic ground force fires that could be delivered in the air assault.<sup>26</sup>
- The aircraft carrier on call was not notified of the start of operations and was not ready to support high intensity combat operations at the beginning of the operation.<sup>27</sup>
- No mission rehearsals with the air component were held prior to the operation.<sup>28</sup>
- No significant increase in liaison officer manning was allocated to C JTF Mountain until days prior to execution.<sup>29</sup>
- Late identification and notification of the scale of the operation to the air component led to suboptimal apportionment of theater air assets and insufficient time to move them into place.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>25</sup>Ibid.

<sup>26</sup>Grant, “The Echoes of Anaconda,” 48.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., 29.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., 49.

<sup>29</sup>Colonel Robert D. Hyde, Colonel Mark D. Kelly, and Colonel William F. Andrews, US Air Force, “Operation BOA: A Counterfactual History of the Battle for Shah-i-kot,” *Military Review* (September-October 2008): 70.

- Few CJTF Mountain headquarters personnel had previous joint experience at the JTF level.<sup>31</sup>
- Slow movement of notification of the operation between and inside the land and air headquarters further hampered the air response.<sup>32</sup>

The majority of the Air Force criticism of the operation has centered on the late date at which the air component became aware of the scope of the operation, which in their opinion put their vital theater logistics planning, apportionment recommendations, and repositioning of forces and liaisons behind schedule almost from the start. While both sides have admitted in hindsight that direct high level coordination between the ground and air commanders could have been better, the question still remains: how could the staffs have failed to communicate the anticipated size and scope of the operation with both air liaison officers present at various times in the ground planning process, given that specified liaison elements, namely the Army Battlefield Coordination Detachment officers assigned to the CAOC and Air Force Air Liaison Officers assigned to ground forces, were in place during the majority of the planning for Anaconda?

It is apparent in nearly all of the extant literature that both Airmen and Soldiers worked hard to come up with workable solutions to meet these challenges, and often coming up with creative solutions to provide combat power where it was needed.

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<sup>30</sup>Andres and Hukill, 138.

<sup>31</sup>Grossman.

<sup>32</sup>Headquarters United States Air Force AF/XOL, 35-37.

Ultimately, the operation was a tactical success for US led coalition forces.<sup>33</sup> The main takeaway from Operation Anaconda in the eyes of most who have written on the subject was that many of the problems JTF Mountain encountered could have been either prevented or alleviated by better coordination between the air and ground components in the time that was available between the start of planning and the time the operation began.<sup>34</sup>

### Primary and Secondary Research Questions

#### Primary

How many of the observed problems with ground and air integration in Operation Anaconda, if any, were partially caused by following joint and service doctrine as written, thus indicating a systemic flaw in the doctrine itself?

If there were systemic problems in 2002's doctrine, which ones are still not addressed sufficiently in the current doctrine to prevent recurrences of those problems in future high intensity combat operations?

#### Secondary

What observed problems from 2002 did joint and service doctrine not address?

What changes to current doctrine might alleviate any remaining problems with air and ground integration that were identified in Operation Anaconda?

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<sup>33</sup>Col Matthew D. Neuenswander, "JCAS in Operation Anaconda--It's Not All Bad News," *Field Artillery* (May-June 2003), 2-4.

<sup>34</sup>Grossman.

## Definitions

Listed below is a brief glossary of key terms relevant to this study. Based on Joint, Air Force, or Army Publications, these definitions will aid the reader, regardless of background, in understanding the concepts and analysis presented in this paper.

Air Component Coordination Element (ACCE): A team of joint airpower experts from the air component dispatched by the combined force air component commander (CFACC) to other joint and functional component headquarters to serve as the CFACC's "eyes and ears" in the field. This liaison element interfaces primarily at the operational level of warfare, and was developed in the wake of Operation Anaconda to improve coordination between the air and ground components.

Battlefield Coordination Detachment (BCD): The BCD is the primary liaison from the US Army to the JAOC. It is a standing organization, normally aligned with each numbered air force. The BCD processes land force requests for air support and airspace, monitors and interprets the land battle situation in the JAOC, provides the necessary interface for the exchange of current operational and intelligence data, and advises the JFACC on all facets of Army operations.<sup>35</sup>

Combined of Joint Air Operations Center/ Joint Air Operations Center (CAOC/ JAOC): The senior command and control element of the Theater Air Ground System (TAGS). A jointly staffed facility established for planning, directing, and executing joint

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<sup>35</sup>Air Land Sea Application Center, *TAGS: Multiservice Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures for the Theater Air Ground System* (Langley AFB: Government Printing Office, 2007), I-4.



air operations in support of the joint force commander's operation or campaign objectives.<sup>36</sup>

Functional component command: A command normally, but not necessarily, composed of forces of two or more Military Departments which may be established across the range of military operations to perform particular operational missions that may be of short duration or may extend over a period of time.<sup>37</sup>

Joint Task Force (JTF): A joint force that is constituted and so designated by the Secretary of Defense, a combatant commander, a subunified commander, or an existing joint task force commander.<sup>38</sup>

Tactical Air Control Party (TACP): A subordinate operational component of a tactical air control system designed to provide air liaison to land forces and for the control of aircraft. This liaison element reports to the CFACC but deploys with the land forces, and interfaces with those land forces primarily at the tactical level of warfare.<sup>39</sup>

### Limitations

The final monograph will remain "unclassified" to ensure maximum distribution and discussion. As it is anticipated that combat operations in Afghanistan will continue at the time of this paper's release, it cannot discuss some specific command and control

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<sup>36</sup>Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication 1-02, *Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2007), 282.

<sup>37</sup>*Ibid.*, 218.

<sup>38</sup>*Ibid.*, 295.

<sup>39</sup>*Ibid.*, 527.

mechanisms that are currently in place for reasons of operational security of coalition forces involved.

### Scope

This paper will discuss the specific instances of air support to the conventional ground forces in Operation Anaconda, and discuss wider implications of the theater force posture inasmuch as it affected the results of that operation. The analysis of the doctrine and suggestions for improvement will extend to other possible future scenarios in which air support will be required to support larger than company sized ground operations.

### Delimitations

The study will focus on operational level planning and liaison methodologies in historical (2002) and current doctrine, to include doctrine and liaison elements, but will not examine the effects of deliberate choices not to follow doctrinal command and control structures, which have already been covered in detail by other studies and articles. It will also confine itself to a study of the interaction between the US Air Force led air component and the US Army led CJTF Mountain, and will not specifically address concurrent special operations (such as the Battle of Takur Ghar, otherwise known as Robert's Ridge) except to discuss their effect on the CFACC and CJTF Mountain interactions. As the tactical level problems and subsequent improvements have been well covered in the extant body of literature, this study will focus primarily on the operational level planning and liaison, and discuss the tactical level only so much as is necessary to show how they are affected by, and link into, the operational level.

### Assumptions

The purpose of doctrine is to share the collective experience of an organization in order to help it reflect on its past experiences, learn from mistakes, and plan for success in the future. As such, inclusion of a concept in doctrine is assumed to be the primary indicator that an organization has accepted a specific observation and the response to it as a “lesson learned”. While key concepts do not necessarily have to be explicitly stated in doctrine in order to be generally held true by the members of an organization, my assumption is that the lesson has not truly been learned until it has been addressed in doctrine, which indicates the broad acceptance of a concept across the majority of the organization, a normal prerequisite for inclusion into that organization’s body of doctrine. If a concept has not been accepted in doctrine, I will assume that the specific lesson was observed, but was either not truly learned, was viewed as an aberration specific to the unique situation of Anaconda, or was discounted as not valid.

For purposes of this study, I assume that published joint, US Army, and US Air Force, and doctrine were the most significant influences to the thought processes that underpinned the planning and execution of Operation Anaconda. While the operation was in fact both a joint and combined operation involving not only all of the US military services but also coalition partners, the planning staffs of the primary ground and air units involved (10th Mountain Division and the Combined Air Operations Center) were primarily manned by US Army and US Air Force personnel respectively, and therefore it is reasonable to assume that they were most heavily influenced by their own service’s doctrine in addition to joint doctrine.

### Significance

The insights and changes suggested by this study could help the joint force better understand how other functional components operate, and including specific instructions on how to plan and conduct mutually supporting joint operations. A direct benefit of such a study might lead to changes in operational design constructs that prevent future instances of planning and execution missteps like those observed in Operation Anaconda.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

There are several different types of sources relevant to this study. First, the premise that doctrine shapes our planning decisions requires an examination of the joint, US Army, and US Air Force planning and liaison doctrine that were accepted at the time of Operation Anaconda in March of 2002, and also the current doctrine dealing with the same subjects. Also relevant to the study are the after action reports of the key players in the form of unit produced Power Point presentations and formal reports. Additionally, there have been several significant independent studies conducted since 2002 that have focused on Operation Anaconda. There are several major books and studies that discuss the operation, and multiple professional journal articles and case studies that examine both the circumstances and the key decisions made with direct interviews from the decision makers.

#### Doctrine Applicable to this Study

While there are numerous joint and service doctrine documents that describe air-ground integration at the tactical level, this study will focus on the documents that inform how planning and liaison between the air and ground components at the operational level. These will include the doctrine documents that describe how the various components in a joint task force should conduct collaborative planning, as well as the doctrine that describes how the liaison necessary for this interaction is to be provided.

First, this study will examine the joint and service doctrine that was in place at the time of Operation Anaconda. The joint doctrine most relevant to this study includes the overarching joint warfare concepts presented in Joint Publication 1, *Joint Warfare of the Armed Forces of the United States* dated 14 November 2000, and the description of joint operating mechanisms in Joint Publication 0-2, *Unified Action Armed Forces* dated 10 July 2001.<sup>40</sup> Below this in the joint doctrine hierarchy are the doctrine documents which described how joint planning and execution should be accomplished: these documents are Joint Pub 5-0, *Doctrine for Planning Joint Operations* dated 13 April 1995 and Joint Publication 3-0, *Doctrine for Joint Operations* dated 10 September 2001, and Joint Pub 5-00.2, *Joint Task Force Planning Guidance and Procedures* dated 13 January 1999.<sup>41</sup> The integration of air component into joint operations is further described in Joint Publication 3-56.1, *Command and Control for Joint Air Operations* dated 14 November 1994, and Joint Pub 3-09.3, *Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures for Close Air Support (CAS)* dated 1 December 1995.<sup>42</sup> Also relevant for examining collaboration of joint

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<sup>40</sup>Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication 1, *Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 14 November 2000); Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication 0-2, *Unified Action Armed Forces (UNAAF)* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 10 July 2001).

<sup>41</sup>Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Pub 5-0, *Doctrine for Planning Joint Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1995); Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication 3-0, *Doctrine for Joint Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2001); Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Pub 5-00.2, *Joint Task Force Planning Guidance and Procedures* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 13 January 1999), IX-4, IX-6, IX-7, IX-10.

<sup>42</sup>Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication 3-56.1, *Command and Control for Joint Air Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 14 November 1994); Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Pub 3-09.3, *Joint Tactics, Techniques, and*

forces at the operational level is Joint Pub 6-0, *Doctrine for Command, Control, Communications, and Computer (C4) Systems Support to Joint Operations*, dated 30 May 1995, and the Air Land Sea Applications Center (ALSA) *JTF Liaison Handbook* dated August 1998.<sup>43</sup> From the US Army service doctrine, this study will examine Field Manual 101.5, *Staff Organization and Operations* dated 31 May 1997, Field Manual 3-0, *Operations* dated June 2001, and Field Manual 100-13, *Battlefield Coordination Detachment (BCD)* dated 5 September 1996, Field Manual 3-31, *Joint Force Land Component Commander Handbook*, and Field Manual 3-01.2, *JAOC/AAMDC Coordination*, all of which describe how the US Army planned , executed and liaised with the air component (respectively) at the time of Operation Anaconda.<sup>44</sup> From the US Air Force perspective, the most significant doctrine documents are Air Force Doctrine Document 2, *Organization and Employment of Air and Space Power*, Air Force Doctrine

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*Procedures for Close Air Support (CAS)* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1995).

<sup>43</sup>Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Pub 6-0, *Doctrine for Command, Control, Communications, and Computer (C4) Systems Support to Joint Operations*,(Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1995); Air Land Sea Application Center, *Joint Task Force Liaison Handbook* (Langley AFB: Government Printing Office, August 1998).

<sup>44</sup>Headquarters, US Army, Field Manual (FM) 101-5, *Staff Organization and Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1997); Headquarters, US Army, Field Manual 3-0, *Operations* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 2001); Headquarters, US Army, Field Manual 100-13, *Battlefield Coordination Detachment* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1996); FM 3-31 *Joint Force Land Component Commander Handbook* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2001); Field Manual 3-01.2, *JAOC/ AAMDC Coordination* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, January 2001).

Document 2-1, *Air Warfare* dated 22 January 2000, and Air Force Doctrine Document 2-1.3, *Counterland*, dated 27 August 1999.<sup>45</sup>

Next, the study will review the current body of joint and service planning and liaison doctrine, as of 20 March 2009. This includes Joint Publication 1, *Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States* dated 14 May 2007, Joint Publication 3-0, *Joint Operations* dated 17 September 2006, Joint Publication 5-0, *Joint Operation Planning* dated 26 December 2006, Joint Publication 6-0, *Joint Communication System* dated 20 March 2006.<sup>46</sup> Also included in this review is Joint Publication 3-30, *Command and Control for Joint Air Operations*, and Joint Publication 3-33, *Joint Task Force Headquarters* dated 16 February 2007, the ALSA *Joint Task Force Liaison Integration* handbook dated January 2003, and the ALSA *Theater Air Ground System* handbook dated April 2007.<sup>47</sup> Current US Army doctrine relevant to this study includes Field

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<sup>45</sup>Headquarters, US Air Force, Air Force Doctrine Document 2, *Organization and Employment of Aerospace Power* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2000); Headquarters, US Air Force, Air Force Doctrine Document 2-1, *Air Warfare* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 2000); Headquarters, US Air Force, Air Force Doctrine Document 2-1.3, *Counterland* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1999).

<sup>46</sup>Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication 1, *Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 14 May 2007); Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication 3-0, *Joint Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2006); Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication 5-0, *Joint Operation Planning* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 2006); Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication 6-0, *Joint Communications System* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 2006).

<sup>47</sup>Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication 3-30, *Command and Control for Joint Air Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 5 June 2003); Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication 3-33, *Joint Task Force Headquarters* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 16 February 2007); Air Land Sea



Manual 5-0, *Army Planning and Orders Production* dated January 2005, Field Manual 3-0, *Operations* dated February 2008, FM 6-0, *Mission Command: Command and Control of Army Forces* dated August 2003, and Field Manual 100-13, *Battlefield Coordination Detachment (BCD)* dated 5 September 1996, which remains as the most current BCD guidance.<sup>48</sup> Current USAF doctrine relevant to this study includes Air Force Doctrine Document (AFDD) 1, *Air Force Basic Doctrine* dated 17 November 2003, AFDD 2, *Operations and Organization* dated 3 April 2007, AFDD 2-1.3, *Counterland Operations* dated 12 September 2006; Air Force Doctrine Document 2-1.9, *Targeting* dated 8 June 2006, AFDD 2-8, *Command and Control* dated 1 June 2007, *Air & Space Commander's Handbook for the JFACC* dated 27 June 2005, and *Air Component Coordination Element Handbook* dated 6 September 2005.<sup>49</sup>

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Application Center, *Joint Task Force Liaison Handbook* (Langley AFB: Government Printing Office, January 2003).

<sup>48</sup>Headquarters, US Army, Field Manual 5-0, *Army Planning and Orders Production* (Washington, DC: Government Publishing Office, 2005); Headquarters, US Army, Field Manual 3-0, *Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2008); Headquarters, US Army, Field Manual 6-0, *Mission Command: Command and Control of Army Forces* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2003).

<sup>49</sup>Headquarters, US Air Force, Air Force Doctrine Document (AFDD) 1, *Air Force Basic Doctrine* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2003); Headquarters, US Air Force, AFDD 2, *Operations and Organization* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2007); Headquarters, US Air Force, AFDD 2-1.3, *Counterland* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2006); Air Force Doctrine Document 2-1.9, *Targeting* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2006); Headquarters, US Air Force, AFDD 2-8, *Command and Control* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2007); Air Force Doctrine Center, AFDCH 10-01, *Air and Space Commander's Handbook for the JFACC* (Maxwell AFB: Government Printing Office, 2005); Air Force Doctrine Center, *Air Component Coordination Element Handbook* (Maxwell AFB: Government Printing Office, 2005).

### Official After Action Reports

After action reports prepared by the land component units involved in Operation Anaconda are primarily found in the form of Power Point Presentations prepared by the individual units involved. Included in this study are after action report presentations by the US Army 10th Mountain Division (Coalition Joint Task Force Mountain), and the US Army 101st Airborne Brigade (Air Assault--Task Force Rakkasan), including individual subordinate unit after action reports from various subordinate units of both organizations.<sup>50</sup> There is one official US Air Force after action report, titled *Operation Anaconda: An Air Power Perspective* which was published by Headquarters, US Air Force, in February of 2005.<sup>51</sup> To date there have been no official after action reports specific to Operation Anaconda issued by Headquarters, US Army. US Central Command (CENTCOM) produced an after-action report in June 2002, but it was not released.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>50</sup>10th Mountain Division G3, *Coalition Joint Task Force Mountain Afghanistan and Operation Anaconda Brief* power point slideshow; COL William H. Forrester, Commander, 159th Aviation Brigade, *101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) Anaconda After Action Brief* slides. Maintained on file at the Combined Arms Research Library, Ft Leavenworth, KS.

<sup>51</sup>Headquarters United States Air Force AF/XOL, *Operation Anaconda: An Air Power Perspective*.

<sup>52</sup>*Ibid.*, 13.

## Books

There are two books that address Operation Anaconda in great detail: Sean Naylor's *Not a Good Day to Die*, and Benjamin Lambeth's *Air Power Against Terror*.<sup>53</sup> *Not a Good Day to Die* offers the best insight into the inner workings of the CJTF Mountain headquarters and decision making process, as well as the most complete picture of the combat operations on the ground. Benjamin Lambeth's *Air Power Against Terror*, a RAND Corporation study, focuses on the air perspective of operation as part of a larger survey of Operation Enduring Freedom. Operation Anaconda is described from the combatant commander's perspective in the biography *American Soldier* by General Tommy Franks, who commanded US Central Command during Anaconda.<sup>54</sup> Operation Anaconda was also featured prominently in Rebecca Grant's 2004 book *The First 600 Days of Combat: The US Air Force in Operation Enduring Freedom*.<sup>55</sup>

## Case Studies and Reports

There are several RAND Corporation studies that discuss Anaconda in the context of examining air and ground integration, including the 2005 study *Beyond Close Air Support: Forging a New Air-Ground Partnership* and the 2007 report *Learning Large Lessons: The Evolving Roles of Ground Power and Air Power in the Post-Cold War*

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<sup>53</sup>Naylor; Benjamin S. Lambeth, *Air Power Against Terror: America's Conduct of Operation Enduring Freedom* (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 2005).

<sup>54</sup>General Tommy Franks, *American Soldier* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2004).

<sup>55</sup>Grant, *The First 600 Days of Combat*.

*Era*.<sup>56</sup> There are also several case studies and after action reports available, including a May 2003 Government Accounting Office Report titled *Military Readiness: Lingering Training and Equipment Issues Hamper Air Support of Ground Forces*, a November 2003 Air University case study, the 2005 official US Air Force after action report, and a 2007 Case Study prepared by the Center for Technology and National Security Policy for the National Defense University.<sup>57</sup> Many print articles on Operation Anaconda reference an unapproved but widely circulated student thesis from the US Air Force School of Advanced Air and Space Studies (SAASS), titled “Operation Anaconda: Command and Confusion in Joint Warfare” by Maj Mark Davis, US Army.<sup>58</sup> Writing in June 2004, Davis proposed that the majority of the problems in Anaconda were due to suboptimal and non-doctrinal command and control structures chosen in response to an unfamiliar and rapidly developing situation following the 9/11 attacks, and his study has been widely referenced in the existing body of literature on Anaconda. Because this thesis was never approved by SAASS, this thesis does not cite it. The most recent report issued at

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<sup>56</sup>Bruce R. Pirnie et al., *Beyond Close Air Support: Forging a New Air-Ground Partnership* (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 2005); David E. Johnson, *Learning Large Lessons: The Evolving Roles of Ground Power and Air Power in the Post-Cold War Era* (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 2007).

<sup>57</sup>Government Accounting Office, GAO-03-505, *Military Readiness: Lingering Training and Equipment Issues Hamper Air Support of Ground Forces* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office); USAF Major Edgar Fleri et al., *Operation Anaconda Case Study* (Maxwell AFB: College of Aerospace Doctrine, Research and Education, 2003); Headquarters United States Air Force AF/XOL, *Operation Anaconda: An Air Power Perspective*; Richard Kugler, *Operation Anaconda in Afghanistan: A Case Study of Adaptation in Battle*.

<sup>58</sup>Major Mark G. Davis, USA, “Operation Anaconda: Command and Confusion in Joint Warfare” (Unapproved student thesis, School of Advanced Air and Space Studies, Maxwell AFB, AL, 2004).

the time of writing is a March 2009 study from National Defense University titled *Operation Anaconda: Lessons for Joint Operations*, by Richard L. Kugler, Michael Baranick, and Hans Binnendijk, which wraps up much of the existing literature with the information from their 2007 case study in a comprehensive survey of lessons and conclusions.<sup>59</sup>

### Articles

In addition to these studies, numerous magazine and journal articles have been written about the difficulties of air-ground integration in Operation Anaconda. The first notable example of these was a June 2002 interview of then Major General Frankin Hagenbeck in *Field Artillery*, in which he offered what was perceived by many Airmen to be a critical evaluation of the US Air Force air support of the operation.<sup>60</sup> In the same issue, another article by Lieutenant Colonel Christopher Bentley, General Hagenbeck's fire coordinator in the operation, criticized what he perceived to be excessively long timelines for requesting air support in his article "Afghanistan: Joint and Coalition Fire Support in Operation Anaconda."<sup>61</sup> These two articles spawned numerous articles seeking to dispute these officers' characterizations of the operation. Such articles include

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<sup>59</sup>Kugler et al., *Operation Anaconda: Lessons for Joint Operations*.

<sup>60</sup>Fort Sill Public Affairs Specialist Robert H. McElroy, with Patrecia Slayden Hollis, Editor, "Afghanistan: Fire Support for Operation Anaconda," *Field Artillery*, (September-October 2002); Lieutenant Colonel John M. Jansen, USMC; Lieutenant Commander Nicholas Dienna, USN; Major Wm Todd Bufkin II, USMC; Major David I. Oclander, USA; Major Thomas Di Tomasso, USA; and Major James B. Sisler, USAF, "JCAS in Afghanistan: Fixing the Tower of Babel," *Field Artillery* (March-April 2003).

<sup>61</sup>Lieutenant Colonel Christopher F. Bentley, "Afghanistan: Joint and Coalition Fire Support in Operation Anaconda," *Field Artillery* (September-October 2002): 10-14.

“JCAS in Afghanistan: Fixing the Tower of Babel” by officers from all four services, and “JCAS in Operation Anaconda-It’s Not All Bad News” by US Air Force Colonel David M. Neuenswander, who was the first Air Expeditionary Group Commander in Afghanistan providing air support to the operation.<sup>62</sup>

Since these initial articles, a number of articles have commented both on the discussions of the operations between the air and ground components (or the lack thereof), with several notable articles by Rebecca Grant and Elaine Grossman.<sup>63</sup> More recently, the 4th quarter 2007 edition of *Joint Force Quarterly* posted two articles on the fifth anniversary of the operation; “Anaconda: a Flawed Joint Planning Process” by Richard B. Andres and Jeffrey B. Hukill, and “Five Years After Operation Anaconda: Challenges and Opportunities” by Michael Isherwood.<sup>64</sup>

Both articles suggested that while progress had indeed been made in tactical execution, there seemed to be lingering issues with joint planning and integration between the land and air components that remained unsolved despite the lessons of Anaconda. Most recently, the September-October 2008 edition of *Military Review*

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<sup>62</sup>Lieutenant Colonel John M. Jansen, USMC; Lieutenant Commander Nicholas Dienna, USN; Major Wm Todd Bufkin II, USMC; Major David I. Oclander, USA; Major Thomas Di Tomasso, USA; and Major James B. Sisler, USAF, “JCAS in Afghanistan: Fixing the Tower of Babel,” *Field Artillery* (March-April 2003); Col Matthew D. Neuenswander, “JCAS in Operation Anaconda--It’s Not All Bad News,” *Field Artillery* (May-June 2003).

<sup>63</sup>Grant, “The Echoes of Anaconda,” Rebecca Grant, “The Airpower of Anaconda,” *Air Force Magazine*, September, 2002; Grossman.

<sup>64</sup>Andres and Hukill; Michael W. Isherwood, “Five Years after Operation Anaconda: Challenges and Opportunities,” *Joint Force Quarterly*, no. 47 (4th Quarter 2007): 141-145.

featured an article by four US Air Force officers titled “Operation Boa: A Counterfactual History of the Shah-i-kot,” detailing their impression of the flaws of Operation Anaconda by presenting their impression of how it might best have been planned and conducted, and then contrasting this with what actually happened.<sup>65</sup> Whether or not one agrees with their conclusions, the tone and topic of the article is a clear indication that the lessons of Anaconda--and the perception that the joint force still has not embraced these lessons--are still very current and relevant issues for some in the joint community.

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<sup>65</sup>Hyde et al., “Operation BOA: A Counterfactual History of the Battle for Shah-i-kot.”

## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study acknowledges the extensive review of primary sources and primary interviews extant in the existing literature, and seeks to go a step beyond them to determine the root intellectual foundations of the choices that were made and highlighted by the authors already mentioned. First, the study reviewed the relevant literature to establish exactly what problems and disconnects made Operation Anaconda an almost universally understood example of “what not to do” in regard to integrating air and ground operations, despite its ultimate tactical success. It then analyzed the problems in order to tie the tactical manifestations of the problems back to their root causes in operational planning and liaison prior to and during execution. It then examined the joint, US Army, and USAF doctrine for operational level planning and liaison that was in place in February and March of 2002, to establish to what degree the doctrine addressed (or did not address) the sources of the air-ground integration problems of Anaconda. After identifying deficiencies in the 2002 doctrine, it then reviewed the current joint and service doctrine to see if changes since 2002 had effectively addressed the “gaps” assessed in the earlier doctrine. A successful adaptation would indicate that a lesson of Anaconda indeed had been learned, that future reoccurrences in future conflicts would be due to neglect or ignorance of doctrine rather than systemic doctrinal inadequacy. For the issues that remained unaddressed, the study makes recommendations in chapter 5, Conclusions and Recommendations.



## CHAPTER 4

### ANALYSIS

In the debates about Anaconda that have persisted since the conclusion of the operation in March of 2002, the true complexity of the operation has often been overlooked. Protagonists on both sides have often singled out several individual points of contention with what happened between the plan's inception and conclusion, but have often overlooked key factors that contributed to those problems in their analyses. In truth, Operation Anaconda was in many ways a "perfect storm" of politics, operational factors, tactical problems, the friction of war, weather, geography, chance, and the enemy's vote. According to the findings of this study, the complexity of the situation in Operation Anaconda severely tested the ability of the air and ground components to work together in a time constrained environment, and in doing so exposed seams and limitations in the operational doctrine when it was followed--as was the case more often than not - almost exactly as it was written.

#### Cause and Effect Relationships of the Problems

While several decisions made above the CJTF Mountain level certainly had negative influences on the planning and execution of Operation Anaconda (i.e. inaccurate intelligence estimates, overly restrictive Rules of Engagement, and force caps on total numbers of troops allowed to deploy to Afghanistan) the origins of many of the problems with air/ ground integration in Operation Anaconda can be directly traced back to the lack of operational level integration between the components, to include special operations

forces. Despite having liaison elements from the other component in both the land and air headquarters, neither component was able to fully anticipate the requirements for air support that the ground component during planning, and even when the scope of coordination required became apparent, communication between the headquarters continued to be a challenge until creative solutions were engineered on the spot.

The single most traumatic event of Operation Anaconda that makes it notable was the fact that American ground forces in Task Force Rakkasan were suddenly and unexpectedly exposed to significant enemy fire, with little ability to maneuver or respond in kind, despite having overwhelming US air superiority. According to this study, the three primary causes of this were as follows: the cancellation of the Afghan “Hammer” operation leaving Task Force Rakkasan exposed to the full weight of enemy fires, the underestimation of the enemy threat and Afghan dependability in intelligence reports that lead to TF Rakkasan assaulting with insufficient organic fire support, and the inability of close air support forces to provide timely and adequate close air support to the pinned down ground force within the confines of the Shai-i-kot Valley due to a number of contributory factors.<sup>66</sup>

In each of the three cases, operational level coordination between components played a role. In the first, inadequate coordination between special operations, the land component, and the air component working in the same battlespace caused a cancellation of some preplanned airstrikes that were intended to support the air assault of Task Force Rakkasan, and also resulted in fratricide within Task Force Hammer. In the second,

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<sup>66</sup>Kugler, *Operation Anaconda in Afghanistan*, 14-15.

inadequate communication of collection requirements resulted in a less robust collection effort than was theoretically possible with the assets available at the time. This resulted in a much higher risk for one part of the “hammer and anvil” force if the other was forced to cancel, given a dearth of available organic fire support assets and readily available reinforcements. In the third, lack of common frequencies, multiple controllers working the same targets, understanding of Rules of Engagement, confined airspace with no active controlling agency or airborne command and control, and the rugged terrain all combined to make timely and accurate delivery of close air support fires exceedingly difficult for US aircrews and ground controllers.

All three of these major problem areas link back to two major areas that complete and adequate doctrine should address: how air and ground components planning processes be integrated at the operational level, and what role should liaisons play during both planning and execution. It is with this in mind that this study will examine the doctrine that was in place during the planning of Anaconda in two major areas: planning and liaison. The analysis will seek to conclude if a planner or liaison fully informed by doctrine should have reasonably been expected to anticipate and avoid the coordination missteps of the operation that were physically manifested in the problem areas listed above.

#### Analysis of Planning Doctrine in 2002

Joint and service doctrine in 2002 contributed to the problems in these three areas, both by what they specifically stated, and what they omitted. Overall, joint doctrine in 2002 prescribed a top to bottom planning methodology which centralized initial long

range planning within the JTF itself, only directly communicating requirements to supporting components after the initial planning had been completed, which in the case of Combined Joint Task Force Mountain meant delaying formal coordination with the air component. Service doctrine also followed this methodology, and describes individual service component planning efforts rather than true collaborative efforts. The following discussion of doctrine will illustrate these points

### Joint Doctrine for Planning in 2002

While the 14 November 2000 Joint Publication 1, *Joint Warfare of the Armed Forces of the United States* emphasizes that “Joint Warfare is Team Warfare,” places “unity of command” as a fundamental principle of war, and delineates the responsibilities of the supported and supporting commanders.<sup>67</sup> These responsibilities are further expounded on in Joint Pub 0-2, *Unified Action Armed Forces*, which clarifies supported and supporting relationships in this way:

The supported commander should ensure that the supporting commander understands the assistance required. The supporting commander will then provide the assistance needed, subject to the supporting commander’s existing capabilities and other assigned tasks. When the supporting commander cannot fulfill the needs of the supported commander, the establishing authority will be notified by either the supported or the

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<sup>67</sup>Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication 1, *Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States*, viii, V-9 thru V-10.

supporting commander. The establishing authority is responsible for determining a solution.<sup>68</sup>

Neither Joint Publication 1 nor Joint Publication 0-2 specify how planning and coordination at senior levels are to be achieved, perhaps intentionally in order to give commanders freedom of action, or because the earlier admonition to teamwork assumes close coordination as a prerequisite. Joint Pub 5-0, *Doctrine for Planning Joint Operations*, describes the planning procedures that were done for Anaconda as “Crisis Action Planning,” which include “parallel deliberate planning, but are more flexible and responsive to changing events,” and does not specify how these should be accomplished.<sup>69</sup> These procedures are spelled out to some degree in Joint Pub 5-00.2, *Joint Task Force Planning Guidance and Procedures*, which defines the optimal composition of a joint task force, establishes the requirement for the commander of the joint task force to ask higher headquarters for assistance when the JTF is insufficiently manned or equipped, and establishes the basic responsibilities and prerogatives of the JTF commander. Chapter IX, JP 5-00, *Joint Task Force Planning Guidance and Procedures* finally gets to the crux of the question of how a JTF should plan with the following guidance:

The CJTF will make the decision on how planning will be accomplished for the JTF. Regardless of how it is accomplished, planning requires the full integration and synchronization of the JTF staff.

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<sup>68</sup>Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication 0-2, III-9.

<sup>69</sup>Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Pub 5-0, *Doctrine for Planning Joint Operations*, ix.

The CJTF staff must maintain a close relationship with the supported combatant commander's staff during CAP Phases III-VI to ensure that planning activities are coordinated.

It is important that the CJTF keeps the JTF components informed of planning initiatives--the CJTF should strive to have JTF components assigned for planning as early as feasible.

The JPG should be expanded for some planning functions. Typically these representatives will be called for when specific subject matter expertise and staff or component planning input is required. These members of the JPG should only be called for under specific circumstances. Many of these representatives are liaison officers (LNOs) and JTF staff action officers with specific duties and responsibilities to the CJTF.

In establishing these timelines and milestones, consideration must be given not only to the time required for the JTF to accomplish its planning, but also the time required by the JTF components to plan and produce the necessary products required by the CJTF.

The CJTF must determine, based on such factors as mission execution time, direction from the supported combatant commander, and staff experience, when the components are brought "on board" for planning and the necessary time required for both the JTF and components to do their planning. (1) In some situations, it may be best for the JTF to take the first 2-3 days for its planning and gradually phase in the components for planning. (2) The JPG may be doing much of the planning but it is the responsibility of the CJTF to establish the planning timeline for the overall effort to include that of the components.<sup>70</sup>

Thus, while Joint Publication 5-00.2 gives the responsibility of bringing along the components to the JTF commander, and states that "The process is never done in a vacuum; instead, concurrent planning with the combatant commander's and components' staffs is a must whenever feasible," it does not infer, and actually advises against, parallel planning starting immediately upon receipt of mission.<sup>71</sup> By discussing the "thirds" rule

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<sup>70</sup>Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Pub 5-00.2, *Joint Task Force Planning Guidance and Procedures*, IX-4, IX-6, IX-7, IX-10, IX-12.

<sup>71</sup>*Ibid.*, IX-40.

of allocating planning time between JTF and subordinate commands, joint doctrine advises a sequential rather than parallel planning processes during initial JTF planning.<sup>72</sup>

The 2002 doctrine for planning joint air operations also follows this theoretical construct as well, and is expressed in the description of the Joint Air Operations Planning Process in Joint Publication 3-56.1, *Command and Control for Joint Air Operations*. The process as written assumes joint task force guidance as a prerequisite for the JFACC's planning and strategy formulation, and does not describe concurrent planning with the joint task force that is conducted to assist the JFC in formulating the JTF guidance.<sup>73</sup>

#### Army Planning Doctrine in 2002

The primary US Army planning doctrine in 2002 was Field Manual 101-5, *Staff Organization and Operations*, dated 31 May 1997. This manual describes the Military Decision Making Process (MDMP), the Army's planning process which was appropriate for preplanned missions such as Operation Anaconda. The description of MDMP conforms to the Joint Doctrine paradigm discussed earlier in which the joint staff provides guidance and an initial concept to the ground component, and the ground component then proceeds with its own planning nested under the joint task force plan. Coordination with the air component is mentioned only tangentially in the document: it mentions the G3 requirement to understand what support is available from the air

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<sup>72</sup>Ibid.

<sup>73</sup>Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication 3-56.1, *Command and Control for Joint Air*, III-4.

component, but does not state how this should be ascertained.<sup>74</sup> While the document defines the responsibilities of air liaisons assigned to the ground component, it does not mention specifically anywhere how coordination with other functional component commands should be accomplished except through assigned liaisons.

Army Field Manual 3-0, *Operations*, dated June 2001, mentions the importance of linking air and ground operations in the context of the joint plan, but is also silent on how the air and ground components should collaborate with each other during planning.<sup>75</sup> Similarly, Field Manual 3-31, *Joint Force Land Component Commander Handbook*, dated December 2001, also discusses coordinating through liaison elements and the joint targeting process, but does not specifically mention direct component to component coordination measures.<sup>76</sup>

#### Air Force Planning Doctrine in 2002

The primary air force doctrine document describing air/ground coordination in 2002 was Air Force Doctrine Document 2-1, *Counterland*, dated 27 August 1999.<sup>77</sup> The document states that “*true joint planning requires that all components be equally involved in planning the various stages of a military campaign*” (emphasis from source), and roughly describes how the JFACC should produce a Joint Air Operations Plan

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<sup>74</sup>Headquarters, US Army, Field Manual 101-5, *Staff Organization and Operations*, C-2.

<sup>75</sup>Headquarters, US Army, Field Manual 3-0, *Operations*, 2-7.

<sup>76</sup>Headquarters, US Army, Field Manual 3-31, *Joint Force Land Component Commander Handbook* .

<sup>77</sup>Headquarters, US Air Force, Air Force Doctrine Document 2-1.3, *Counterland*.



(JAOP) that supports the joint effort, but never discusses exactly how this should be accomplished in the context of a collaborative effort outside the established joint targeting processes.<sup>78</sup> The Joint Air Operations Plan Planning Process is described in Air Force Doctrine Document 2, *Organization and Employment of Aerospace Power*, dated 17 February 2000.<sup>79</sup> Just as it is in the case of MDMP, the doctrine for JAOP planning rests very much on the air component taking joint task force guidance and developing an air component supporting plan, and there is no reference in the document to specifically collaborating with the ground component when developing the JAOP.

### Analysis of Planning Doctrine Shortcomings in 2002

#### Analysis of Liaison Doctrine

Both joint and service doctrine, with some exceptions in specific areas, neglected to prescribe the roles of liaison elements outside of short term targeting, intelligence, and mobility tasking cycles, or to describe how the functional component headquarters might communicate directly with each other to facilitate collaborative planning efforts.

#### Joint Doctrine for Liaisons in 2002

JP 5-00.2 does not advocate any specific mechanisms for cross component coordination aside from including liaison officers in the Joint Planning Group, which by doctrine should be composed primarily of officers from the supported component, which in the case of Anaconda was the ground component. Nowhere does the primary joint

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<sup>78</sup>Ibid, 70.

<sup>79</sup>Headquarters, US Air Force, Air Force Doctrine Document 2, *Organization and Employment of Aerospace Power*.

planning publication describe general officer level interaction, other than to discuss the importance of trust and personal relationships among members of the staff. Given that the JP 5-00.2 does specifically mention liaisons, it's logical to look at the joint doctrine for liaisons to try and find more fidelity on the roles and responsibilities of these elements, in order to backwards engineer a more concrete collaborative planning process into the vacuum of guidance left by the planning publications. In 2002, this doctrine was expressed in the Air Land Sea Application Center (ALSA) publication *JTF Liaison Handbook*, dated 26 August 1998. In describing the duties of the liaison elements in a Joint Task Force, it specifically states:

An LNO is an important catalyst, facilitating effective coordination between staffs. However, it's important to realize that an LNO's work is not a substitute for proper JTF-component staff interaction. Staff-to-staff coordination will always be essential at all levels to ensure unity of effort. Similarly, established command and control procedures (such as fragmentation orders [FRAGOs], warning orders [WARNORD], and alert orders [ALERTORD]) are the proper method for communicating specific orders and taskings.<sup>80</sup>

On page I-5, the handbook goes on further to state that the doctrinal method for a JTF J-3 operations officer to communicate with a subordinate command is to first publish a FRAGO which the component liaison immediately relays to his or her home component, after which "the J-3 should communicate directly with the operations officer or equivalent staff principal of that unit, rather than using the LNO as a middle man to relay the expectations and interpretations of the two staffs."<sup>81</sup> Thus, the liaison officer handbook recommends on method of JTF to component coordination, but still infers a

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<sup>80</sup> Air Land Sea Application Center, *Joint Task Force Liaison Handbook*, I-4.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, I-5.

“JTF acts first, then communicates with the components” approach that follows the issuance of a written order, implying that the JTF commander has already accepted a course of action brief that the components may or may not have contributed to.

#### US Army Liaison doctrine in 2002

The US Army document that described the interaction between the ground component and air components is Field Manual 100-13, *Battlefield Coordination Detachment*, which is dated 5 September 1996 and is still in effect at the time of writing.<sup>82</sup> The document describes the BCD integration into various JAOC cells, and in reference to planning specifically mentions coordinating with the Combat Plans division of the JAOC on operations 24-96 hours out from execution.<sup>83</sup> There is, however, no specific mention of how to coordinate plans further out than 96 hours, and no specific mentions of the BCD playing a role outside of coordinating very near term operations.

The one other Army Field Manual extant in 2002 that does shed light on where the ground and air components specifically interact directly is Field Manual 3-01.2, *JAOC/AAMDC Coordination*, which details communication links and systems that should be used between the Army Air and Missile Defense Command and the JAOC to coordinate for joint air defense.<sup>84</sup> This document is focused primarily on coordinating the

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<sup>82</sup>Headquarters, US Army, Field Manual 100-13, *Battlefield Coordination Detachment*.

<sup>83</sup>*Ibid*, 2-3.

<sup>84</sup>Headquarters, US Army, Field Manual 3-01.2, *JAOC/AAMDC Coordination*, II-2 to II-3.

specifics of air defense, and does not spell out how collaborative planning methods for other air/ground activities should be facilitated.

#### US Air Force Liaison Doctrine in 2002

There was no US Air Force equivalent doctrine for operational level liaison between the CAOC and the ground component in 2002. The roles of air liaison officer at tactical levels was addressed in doctrine specific to the targeting process and for close air support coordination, but there was not a manual specific to operational level liaison describing a tie between a liaison element in the ground headquarters and the air operations center command element or the Combat Plans Division.

#### Shortcomings in Liaison Doctrine in 2002

With a focus in both services doctrine on the targeting cycles and the 24 to 96 hour windows mentioned in the BCD handbook, the doctrine of 2002 fails to instruct either the joint force or the components on how operations further out than 96 hours should be planned and coordinated. It also fails to spell out the importance of having the ground and air components consult with each other while course of action development is ongoing, and does little to prevent a recurrence of the events like those that were observed in Operation Anaconda.

#### Analysis of Current Doctrine

While Operation Anaconda did spur some advances in operational level coordination between the air component and the joint task force and sister component headquarters, and encourages collaborative planning, it still describes a top down, “JTF

plan first” methodology, and does not proscribe specifically procedures for the various components to plan collaboratively or identify how the risks caused by shortfalls in organic fires of ground units should be addressed with airpower. Left unchanged, a repeat of the otherwise preventable capabilities mismatches and logistical challenges of Anaconda are likely to repeat in future high intensity joint operations.

### Today’s Joint Planning Doctrine

Joint Publication 1, *Joint Doctrine of the Armed Forces* dated 14 May 2007 combines and updates the doctrine that was formerly included in Joint Pub 1 and Joint Pub 0-2. Consciously or not, Joint Publication 1 continues to infer a sequential planning methodology rather than a truly collaborative planning effort, as evidenced by the following excerpt from “Command and Control Fundamentals:”

Joint force staff principals must understand that their primary role is to provide sufficient, relevant information to enhance SA and understanding for the JFC and for subordinate CDRs. Once a decision is made, CDRs depend on their staffs to communicate the decision to subordinates in a manner that quickly focuses the necessary capabilities within the command to achieve the CDR’s intent.<sup>85</sup>

Joint Publication 1 repeats the guidance formerly expressed in Joint Pub 0-2 that coordination between components should be done through mechanisms like synchronization matrixes, the exchange of liaisons, and interoperable communications systems, and also acknowledges that “Constant coordination and cooperation between the combatant command and component staffs--and with other combatant commands--is a

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<sup>85</sup>Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication 1, *Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States*, IV-15.

prerequisite for ensuring timely command awareness.”<sup>86</sup> However, the publication does not specify how these coordination elements should interact.

Joint Publication 5-0, *Joint Operation Planning*, dated 26 December 2006 provides guidance on the Joint Operations Planning Process (JOPP), the current process for integrating joint planning efforts. While the JOPP tangentially describes service components providing information when the joint task force analyzes deployment and sustainment requirements for its plan, there is no direct mention of anyone but the JTF staff participating in the formulation of JTF mission analysis products, course of action development, or course of action analysis. If component liaison involvement is implied with the mentions of the JTF staff, it is not specifically stated as being an integral part of the process. The publication does mention alerting the JTF components with initial guidance, which implies that this planning guidance usually follows an independent JTF staff mission analysis.<sup>87</sup>

In short, Joint Publication 5-0 does not provide much more specific guidance for how subordinate components should be “included” in the joint planning process, and in fact continues the trend of formulating JTF plans first, and then starting most of the component planning after the JTF commander’s initial guidance has been issued, just as it was in Anaconda. Joint Publication 3-33, *Joint Task Force Headquarters*, which replaced Joint Pub 5-00.2, does provide more fidelity on the specific responsibilities of subordinate commanders, and details how collaborative participation at battle rhythm

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<sup>86</sup>Ibid., IV-17.

<sup>87</sup>Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication 5-0, *Joint Operation Planning*, III-21.

events aids coordination and communication between the JTF and the components. But aside from assigning specific products to be delivered, it does little to clarify how parallel planning should be accomplished between the JTF and components to drive the production of those products. Such vagueness is evidenced by the unqualified tasks of, “Plan, coordinate, and integrate military operations” and “Monitor current operational status of friendly forces and conduct current operations planning” assigned to the JTF Operations directorate.<sup>88</sup> Similarly vague is the task of “Coordinate planning efforts with higher, lower, adjacent, multinational HQ, and the interagency, IGOs, and NGOs as required” assigned to the JTF Plans Directorate.<sup>89</sup>

The current joint doctrine for air operations, Joint Publication 3-30, *Command and Control for Joint Air Operations*, dated 5 June 2003, shows some recognition of the challenges of Anaconda in its updated text from the old Joint Pub 3-56.1. In Chapter Three, the manual specifically states:

The JFACC must ensure that planning occurs in a collaborative manner with other components. Joint air planners should meet on a regular basis with planners from other components to support integration of operations across the joint force.<sup>90</sup>

Despite this, the Joint Air Estimate Process, which replaces the Joint Air Operations Planning Process from the previous version, still does not specify how concurrent joint planning efforts should inform one another, or how the inputs of other

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<sup>88</sup>Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication 3-33, *Joint Task Force Headquarters*, VII-1.

<sup>89</sup>Ibid, IX-2.

<sup>90</sup>Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication 3-30, *Command and Control for Joint Air Operations*, III-1.

components should be included into the output of the process, the Joint Air Operations Plan.

#### Current US Army Planning Doctrine

Field Manual 5-0, *Army Planning and Orders Production*, dated January 2005, replaced the FM 101-5 used in 2002, and like the former manual describes the Army's Military Decision Making Process as the one most appropriate for the timelines involved in Operation Anaconda. The manual describes in general both vertical parallel planning both between superior and subordinate levels of command, and also horizontally between equivalent units, but in the same section emphasizes the importance of written warning orders in facilitating this coordination.<sup>91</sup> But aside from general definitions of collaborative and parallel planning, information sharing systems, and cross staff communication, no specific references are made in the doctrine as to how specifically such planning should be accomplished. Additionally, the manual does not mention specifically how liaison elements from other services should be used to facilitate collaborative planning, and does not include the names of these elements (ACCE, ALO, MARLO) in the document.

Field Manual 6-0, *Mission Command: Command and Control of Army Forces*, dated March 2003, follows a similar emphasis on how command and control is conducted within the vertical alignment of the superior and subordinate units of an Army unit. While it does generally discuss external coordination with other units (other functional

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<sup>91</sup>Headquarters, US Army, Field Manual 5-0, *Army Planning and Orders Production*, 1-22 - 1-29.



components could be inferred here), it discusses both liaison and communications primarily in the context of deconflicting the actions of US Army and adjacent units between geographically defined areas of operation, rather than describing a give and take planning process with either higher headquarters or a horizontally aligned sister command.<sup>92</sup> This manual does describe the roles and duties of the Air Liaison Officer and Theater Airlift Liaison Officer in an Army unit, and reinforces the roles of both as tactical level coordinators of direct air support.<sup>93</sup>

Field Manual 3-0, *Operations*, dated February 2008 is the most currently updated field manual to describe US Army operations in the context of a joint force. While it echoes joint doctrine in describing the command relationships between functional components, and also in describing coordinating authority and direct liaison, it does not mention specifically how these authorities are exercised.<sup>94</sup>

#### Current US Air Force Planning Doctrine

Air Force Doctrine Document 2, *Operations and Organizations*, dated 3 April 2007, is the document that describes US Air Force organization and planning. In the description of the Joint Air Estimate Process (JAEP), AFDD 2 reflects the same paradigm reflected in joint and army doctrine in which JTF guidance is passed to the components in a written order, and then component planning begins. It specifically describes the process

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<sup>92</sup>Headquarters, US Army, Field Manual 6-0, *Mission Command: Command and Control of Army Forces*, 6-15 - 6-16.

<sup>93</sup>*Ibid.*, D-33, D-40.

<sup>94</sup>Headquarters, US Army, Field Manual 3-0, *Operations*, B-7 - B-8.

in this way: “They then devise a game plan for supporting the JFC’s strategy by developing COAs and schemes of maneuver for the assets under their command, and integrating these with the efforts of other components or elements of the joint or combined force.”<sup>95</sup> It goes on further to describe how the various components plans may be integrated, “As the JFC develops the OPORD prior to execution, subordinate Service and functional components are also tasked to develop supporting plans and/or OPORDs. These products should then be cross-walked by the JFC staff to ensure integration.”<sup>96</sup> The following discussion of the Joint Air Estimate Process further describes how the JFACC staff produces its own mission analysis and courses of action, which are issued operationally in a Joint Air Operations Plan, and tactically in the Air Tasking Order after joint task force commander approval of the plan.

Air Force Doctrine Document 2-1.3, *Counterland Operations*, dated 12 September 2006, details the tactical level interface between ground and air forces from the US Air Force perspective. AFDD 2-1.3 advocates that “True joint planning requires that all components be equally involved in planning the various stages of a military campaign”, and discusses the importance of communicating weapons requirements and air refueling for supporting land operations, it does not suggest a specific methodology for doing it.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>95</sup>Headquarters, US Air Force, Air Force Doctrine Document 2, *Operations and Organizations*, 84.

<sup>96</sup>Ibid, 85.

<sup>97</sup>Headquarters, US Air Force, Air Force Doctrine Document 2-1.3, *Counterland Operations*, 89, 79.

Air Force Doctrine Document 2-1.9, *Targeting*, dated 8 June 2006, is the other US Air Force Doctrine Document describing how the air component and other components plan collaboratively for the purpose of deliberate targeting. It describes the joint targeting process, and how components can nominate targets to be included in the JTF targeting process usually administered by the Air Force Component Commander acting as JFACC, but it does not discuss the cross component planning collaboration that would support targeting recommendations.<sup>98</sup>

#### Current Joint Liaison Doctrine

The current version of the ALSA JTF LNO integration gives a perhaps the best indication of how the process of integrating subordinate components into a JTF planning process might be done, urging an “aggressive and capable LNO” to ensure “the sending organization’s direct involvement in relevant JTF activities at the highest levels, and ensuring that “the capabilities and requirements of the sending organization are clearly articulated early-on” in “various JTF boards and agencies.”<sup>99</sup> Where the other joint doctrine leaves the interaction between the JTF and the components vague, this manual seizes on one of the collaborative tools available to both: the LNO, who has access to the battle rhythm events of the JTF as well as the communication tools to pass information rapidly back and forth between the two headquarters.

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<sup>98</sup>Headquarters, US Air Force, Air Force Doctrine Document 2-1.9, *Targeting*, 6-9.

<sup>99</sup>Air Land Sea Application Center, *Joint Task Force Liaison Handbook*, I-6.

### Current US Army Liaison Doctrine

The US Army Field Manual 100-13, *Battlefield Coordination Detachment*, which is dated 5 September 1996, remains unchanged since 2002.<sup>100</sup> For a discussion of the contents of this field manual, refer to the previous section on US Army Liaison Doctrine in place in 2002.

### Current US Air Force Liaison Doctrine

Air Force Doctrine Document 2, *Operations and Organizations*, gives detailed descriptions of the liaison elements from the other services and functional components, and also describes the Air Component Coordination Element (ACCE), a liaison element to other commands designed to operate primarily as an operational level interface to both superior and sister commands.<sup>101</sup> Created in the wake of Operation Anaconda, the ACCE is specifically tasked in the document to “Ensure the JFACC is aware of each commander’s priorities and plans” and “Ensure the JFACC staff coordinates within their surface component/JTF headquarters counterparts to work issues.”<sup>102</sup> The ACCE is also stated to be the primary mechanism to interface with multiple joint task forces in the instance that the JFACC commands the air component at the theater level, as was the case in CENTCOM at the time of Operation Anaconda.<sup>103</sup> AFDD 2 also suggests that the air

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<sup>100</sup>Headquarters, US Army, Field Manual 100-13, *Battlefield Coordination Detachment*.

<sup>101</sup> Headquarters, US Air Force, Air Force Doctrine Document 2, *Operations and Organizations*, 70-73.

<sup>102</sup>*Ibid.*, 71.

<sup>103</sup>*Ibid.*, 76-77.

component and other components may augment the JTF staff during initial planning efforts by sending a team of planners to that headquarters, distinct from and in addition to the assigned ACCE.<sup>104</sup>

The function of the ACCE is further clarified in Air Force Doctrine Center Handbook 10-03, *Air Component Coordination Element Handbook*, dated 6 September 2005. It specifically states that an ACCE is the “JFACC’s primary liaison and personal representative to the joint force and/or designated joint component commanders,” and also that “USAF will provide an ACCE to the headquarters organization serving as the joint force land component commander (JFLCC).<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>104</sup>Ibid, 82.

<sup>105</sup>Air Force Doctrine Center Handbook 10-03, *Air Component Coordination Element*, 1.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Overall Conclusions

The key question that perhaps best solidifies the nagging question of Operation Anaconda for many who have written on the operation is perhaps this one: why did the air component not know about the operation a week prior to its actual notification, and why was it not more involved in the planning? Some of this answer may be revealed by the evidence in the doctrine. This study indicates that despite the fact that both joint and service doctrine have recognized the importance of collaborative, parallel planning between a joint task force and its components, it continues to rely on a “JTF plan first, then components supporting plans” methodology. Because of this, there will likely continue to be delays in detailed service or functional component involvement in the JTF planning until later in planning stages, as was evidenced in the case of Anaconda. This will likely be further exacerbated when the core of the JTF staff has little experience operating at the operational level and tends to adhere more closely to the doctrinal construct as a guide, as was apparently the case in Operation Anaconda. While liaison element roles have been expanded since 2002, current doctrine still does not detail how sister components should perform collaborative planning with the JTF Joint Operations Planning Process within the contexts of the Military Decision Making Process or the Joint Air Estimate Process.

With no specific methodology for the almost totally concurrent and linked component planning that would have been required to mitigate the problems observed

within the timelines of Operation Anaconda, it can be concluded that the doctrine - if it was used - was insufficient for the task that was given. It can also be argued that doctrine subliminally encouraged the lack of JTF and component coordination by emphasizing a “JTF FRAGO first” methodology rather than active component participation in JTF mission analysis or course of action development. Therefore, the joint planning and liaison doctrine of 2002 was an underlying cause of the air components “lack of inclusion” in the joint planning process, and also for the tactical disconnects that cascaded from this initial lack of coordination.

In many ways, combining the planning with the liaison doctrine explains the actions of CJTF Mountain in Operation Anaconda that have been so often critiqued since 2002. Given the doctrine available to him, it was reasonable for Major General Hagenbeck to have assumed that he was coordinating with the CFACC when his Air Liaison Officers were present, and also indicates why there may have been a preference for communicating to his supporting components through written orders rather than through direct general officer coordination. He was essentially doing things “by the book”, albeit by a nonspecific one that gave the commander great leeway in how he brought the components “on board”. While this does preclude the higher echelon communication of requirements and capabilities that might have happened sooner between Generals Hagenbeck, Moseley, and Mikolashek, it does help to explain why all three did what they did, especially in light of the erroneous intelligence estimate that had predicted only light resistance to the operation. The evidence suggests that there was ample time and forces available with which the components could have anticipated and

mitigated many of the problems that were to come, had better coordination occurred both within and between the JTF and air component headquarters.

Service doctrine in 2002 was similarly tied to this paradigm--in both cases, the Military Decision Making Process and the Joint Air Operations Plan Planning Process, as written in doctrine, imply that the components draw primarily from the JTF guidance, are developed primarily within the individual component as supporting plans to the JTF plan, and do not mention any specific requirements to collaborate on course of action development in most cases, with the notable exception of JAOC/AAMDC coordination for air defense.

#### The Role of Doctrine

According to the Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms, doctrine is defined as the “Fundamental principles by which the military forces or elements thereof guide their actions in support of national objectives. It is authoritative but requires judgment in application.”<sup>106</sup> Thus, military doctrine is a collection of what is commonly agreed to be the best “conventional wisdom” at the time of its publication, based on both the historical experience of the organization that writes it, as well as an encapsulation of the accepted theories of that particular time. As such, it has the authority of the organization that publishes it, and is meant to drive both planning and employment, but serves a instructive role rather than a regulatory one (hence the “judgment” qualification in the definition). Doctrine is also a reflection of the beliefs of the

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<sup>106</sup>Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication 1-02, *Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2007), 166.



organization that produces it; hence there will often be different interpretations of the same or similar tactical problems between joint and service doctrines. US military doctrine is written at various levels: at the top of the hierarchy is Joint Doctrine, which is promulgated by the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, and is intended to synchronize the conceptual underpinnings of all of the US military branches. The individual services also produce their own doctrine documents, which in the case of the US Army are called Field Manuals or “FMs,” and in the Air Force called Air Force Doctrine Documents or “AFDDs.” Additionally, the services often combine efforts (as in the example of publications from the Air Sea Application Center, or ALSA) to produce manuals for tactics, techniques, and procedures, which are usually more narrowly focused than doctrine, and deal with a specific part of the coordination of the various services.

While what the actual doctrine documents say is important, the process of creating doctrine itself is probably a greater driver of an organizations self concept than what finally is approved in the document itself. Within the military services, and between them in the case of joint doctrine, the core beliefs about warfare are warfighting are vetted, argued, and negotiated at multiple levels until a satisfactory compromise can be agreed to among all of the various stakeholders, even if only begrudgingly. Thus, inclusion of a concept in service or joint doctrine is perhaps only the “tip of the iceberg,” and indicates a substantially greater amount of buy in and currency for the core ideas expressed by the doctrine than what may actually be on the page.

The fact that doctrine must survive a rigorous bureaucratic process of acceptance also indicates that inclusion of a concept into doctrine implies that an intellectual shift has occurred toward which the various services will continue to move in the future. Thus,

naturally doctrine lags theory, and may often also require actual practice to validate the theories behind it before a theory is able to gain enough acceptance to warrant inclusion in the codex of doctrine. Conversely, if a concept has not seen at least an initial expression in doctrine, it's likely that either insufficient theory exists, or that there has been insufficient study of supporting evidence to advance a particular a theory into doctrine. From this line of reasoning, and for the purposes of this study, the author assumes that if the lessons of Anaconda have not been at least initially addressed in current doctrine, the lessons have been observed, but not been learned and adopted into the intellectual consciousness of the individual services or joint force as a whole.

While US forces have demonstrated competence working with their joint partners within individual functional components (such as Naval Aviation, USMC aviation, and USAF air working for the same JFACC), understanding or acknowledging the mutual interdependence between the various functional components continues to present a challenge which is acknowledged but not thoroughly expounded on in either joint or service doctrine. Complete strategies need to include the best mix of capabilities, requirements, and key objectives of all of the functional components as entering arguments to the joint and component planning processes, and should not seek to blend separate, individually developed functional component plans that highlight the strengths of the components acting singly into a “compromise” course of action. Based on this study, US military strategies are currently being limited by the design of our planning structures as outlined in doctrine, as they were in the example of Operation Anaconda.

## The Role of Planning Doctrine

In order to plan a highly demanding, economy of force operation like Operation Anaconda, a truly integrated joint plan should consider equally the capabilities, requirements, vulnerabilities of the entire joint force, and utilize the best mix capabilities and tactics possible to meet the objectives of the operation at an acceptable level of risk.

If one accepts this, some other assumptions must follow:

1. The joint planning staff must consider the capabilities of the various functional components equally in their evaluation of the best “ways and means” to achieve desired ends at acceptable risk within the given timelines
2. The functional or service components will have the best idea of what the current capabilities of their component are, and their input should inform the joint staff as it considers possible courses of action
3. The functional or service components must necessarily have an idea of what the other components are planning in order to come up with relevant plans themselves. For example, it would be useless for the air component to plan for close air support combat patrols in an area where no ground forces will be present, and it would be equally useless for the ground component to plan an operational movement requiring large amounts of CAS if all of the strike aircraft were planned against air defense targets at the same time.
4. The separate plans of the functional or service components must be adjudicated at some level before the JTF decides on the “joint” plan. The later these plans are adjudicated, the less time there will be to adjust for the best overall solution, and it will become more likely that operational disconnects will occur between land and air forces that will need to be adjusted for during execution.

### The Role of Liaison Doctrine

Liaison doctrine should serve to instruct service components and functional components on what the physical manifestations of their coordination authorities and direct liaison should look like in actual execution. It should define the roles of the actual liaison personnel, including what their authorities are (and are not), indicate which organizations they should be assigned to in the JTF or sister component headquarters, and indicate what planning and administrative processes they should have visibility on. Liaison doctrine could also recommend preferred collaborative methods, such as phone, video, and computer applications that are required to be maintained by the receiving unit for the liaison's use. Most importantly, useful liaison doctrine should define what level of access the various liaison members have to the leadership of the headquarters they are interfacing with, and ensure that liaison personnel are assigned at the appropriate levels and given the necessary access to directly liaise for the commander they represent.

### What Happened in Anaconda

It should not be surprising to us that there was little cross component coordination going into Operation Anaconda until late, given the doctrine that was in place at the time. 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division was arguably given a Herculean task, assuming an entirely new mission, with an undermanned division staff, in the midst of a move from K2 to Bagram. As they assumed the mantle of a joint task force--albeit without the joint manning that would normally accompany such responsibilities--they fell into a dual-hatted JTF/CFLCC role. The CFACC was technically serving the entire theater, but a theater JFACC concept is not described in joint or service doctrine. Using the doctrine at the

time, the CFACC falls into place as a subordinate command, and was thus tasked by an operational order after the initial concept was already developed. The Air Liaison Officers that were eventually assigned were focused on the tactical preparations they knew would be necessary to support close air support and targeting, but were not necessarily focused on operational level concerns like tanker placement and aircraft carrier deck cycles--a CAOC responsibility. With no dedicated air force liaisons to specifically try to estimate the total requests for air support and the logistical positioning required of the air component to enable those requests, word only filtered to the CAOC after the BCD received the initial concept and OPOD and passed it on to the CAOC director. Nothing in doctrine described how the JTF commander should specifically communicate his upcoming requirements to the CFACC outside of the designated staff processes, thus there was little mention of the operation until it was time to talk to the CENTCOM commander about approving the plan. With no collaborative procedures given in doctrine to describe collaborative planning between the G3 and the plans division in the CAOC, unsurprisingly none was done. Of course, all of this was exacerbated by the erroneous intelligence estimates of the enemy threat which decreased the overall sense of urgency in most operational level headquarters, including at CENTCOM.

Perhaps one of the most significant gaps in joint and service doctrine in 2002 (and still today) is some kind of estimation of the air component's ability to mitigate risk when ground forces are deployed without all of their organic fires capabilities. Even knowing that Task Force Rakkasan would have to air assault into the Shah-i-kot without artillery and a full complement of mortars and attack helicopters, there was nothing in doctrine to

estimate how much air support would be required to make up for the gap in capability. Such information would have been useful in higher headquarters when deciding on where to draw the line on force caps, the decision to accept risk to execute before a full ASOC was up and running, and may have also influenced the ground component to place a higher priority on initial coordination with the air component.

### Current Shortfalls in Joint Planning and Liaison Doctrine

Air Force General John Jumper, the US Air Force Chief of Staff in 2002, expressed what he felt was the most significant lesson learned from Operation Anaconda, ““We know how to do CAS at a tactical level,” he said. At the operational level, the ‘giant lesson learned,’ according to Jumper, was that ‘we absolutely positively must have the right interfaces at the operational level of war.’”<sup>107</sup> The example of Operation Anaconda indicates the importance of the various services collaborating closely during their planning processes, but doctrine then, and even today, does little to describe the specifics of what this coordination should look like. Even in 2002, joint and service planning doctrine acknowledged the importance of concurrent planning and the liaisons that enable cross component coordination. But there is little in either joint or service doctrine that spells out how concurrent planning should look in actual practice.

Joint and service doctrine, both then and now, portray the joint planning process as one that is done mostly in parallel rather than as a truly cooperative effort throughout the operation. Joint doctrine describes a process in which a joint task force commander’s staff receives the mission, warns the components, does initial mission analysis and course

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<sup>107</sup>Grant, *The First 600 Days of Combat*, 81.

of action development, recommends a course of action to the JTF commander, and then promulgates guidance to the JTF components. Information sharing and liaison are encouraged, but the interchange of components with the joint staff during the initial planning phases is not discussed, nor is it depicted graphically in diagrams describing the planning processes. Both Army and Air Force Doctrine describe almost autonomous subordinate planning efforts that are initiated and integrated afterwards by joint staff guidance and review, but do not discuss the components actively planning collaboratively with the JTF in initial mission analysis, COA development, and wargaming.

Additionally, the service doctrines do not discuss nor depict an active interchange of ideas and discussion between each other during parallel operational planning. The current paradigm suggests that after the joint force commander staff gives initial guidance, the air and land components come up with what are essentially separate air and ground courses of action, which will be later reconciled by the joint staff into a single, joint plan for an operation or campaign. The targeting doctrine and liaison handbooks talk about how close coordination is done within the 24 to 96 hour cycles of targeting, intelligence collection, air support request, and airlift support planning, but aside from the ACCE handbook do not specifically mention how longer term planning between the components is to be coordinated (specifically, between the G35 or G5 in the ground headquarters and the Strategy Division in the CAOC).

There is an additional challenge to longer term planning the way the current doctrine depicts planning between vertically aligned staffs within the ground component. In the case in which a lower level unit comes up with a plan that requires a significant air effort to provide close air support, intelligence collection, or other forms of direct

support, the total requirements for all of the ground components subordinate units are unlikely to be communicated to the superior ground planning staffs until the short term air support request cycle, giving the ACCE no visibility into looming theater level air efforts that may be required to support the total requests. If this notification gets to the division or corps planning staffs late, it will most likely get to the ACCE and CAOC staffs late as well.

Another challenge in communicating requirements for air support exists due to the defined role of the Air Liaison Officer. While the ALO may be the only Air Force representative present during lower level distributed planning, their mission in doctrine is tactically rather than operationally focused. Their mission is to coordinate the short term requests for air support, help the ground commander to set short term prioritization assets for the air assets assigned to directly support him, and to monitor the execution of current operations. To date, no mechanism exists in doctrine to express how ALOs should feed longer term plans for air requests to the CAOC or the ACCE. In effect, many of the ALOs have one piece of the puzzle, but there is nothing in doctrine that tells how these pieces might be put together until right before an operation begins. Despite this, ground planners have some justification to say that they indeed thought the air component was informed because an ALO was present--and may have even assisted--during their planning effort.

In sort, while joint and service doctrines have advanced in the tactical realms due to Operation Anaconda (as was evidenced in Operation Iraqi Freedom), updates to operational level doctrine are still lagging. With the exception of the ACCE playing a role as the JFACC's representative at JTF and sister component headquarters, little has



changed significantly in the operational level planning processes since 2002 to prevent a repeat of the problems evidenced in Anaconda.

### Recommendations

Operation Anaconda highlighted that in a time constrained environment, the joint planning process as it is currently described in doctrine was inadequate to the task. To prevent this in the future, we should reform joint and service doctrine to describe truly collaborative, parallel joint planning. This would include having the JTF staff bring in the component staffs immediately at mission receipt through a combination of existing liaison mechanisms and informational technology. Planning should then proceed cooperatively between the JTF and components by collaborating on a commonly framed and agreed on problem statement, joint intelligence preparation of the battlespace and mission analysis. JTF components should provide inputs on their current capabilities, force dispositions, and risks throughout the JTF course of action development process. Direct component participation in JTF wargaming through physical presence of component planners or by virtual relay via liaisons and collaborative tools would also help to ensure a better JTF plan that maximizes the total capabilities of the joint force while mitigating overall risks. Joint and service doctrines should be rewritten to show exactly how their organizations communicate and cooperate with the other service or functional components during these steps of the Joint Operations Planning Process, and directly link the steps of the JOPP to the steps of MDMP and JAEP (soon to be renamed “JOPP Air” in upcoming doctrinal revisions), and MDMP and JAEP to one another. These doctrinal constructs would better focus on producing integrated plans that

maximize the strengths of all components together from the very inception, rather than to continue to develop service or functional component plans that emphasize the individual strengths of the components taken separately in somewhat “stovepiped” planning processes as the current doctrine describes.

While the ACCE concept has dramatically improved the operational level liaison between air and ground staffs, there is still nothing in joint or US Air Force air component doctrine to formally link the operational level ACCE liaison with the tactical level air liaison officers and tactical air control parties. By establishing formal doctrinal ties between these organizations, all involved would have a better idea of the anticipated total requirements for air support from the ground component, and the network could even be used to provide more situational awareness to the ground component commander on the theater level scope of various decentralized ground planning efforts occurring simultaneously, a level of monitoring which current Army doctrine does not proscribe. To expand the power and reach of the total air liaison contingent to ground forces (ACCE + TACP), we should define formal links between the Air Liaison Officers, Air Component Coordination Element, and the AOC Strategy Division in Joint Publications and Air Force Doctrine. Additionally, including parallel blocks of instruction on the other liaison elements in both the AGOS and the AOC Formal Training Unit would help to cement these relationships, tying the operational and tactical levels of liaison together for both planning and execution.

To further increase the JFACC’s visibility into the ground components’ requirements for air support, and also to increase the ground component commander’s visibility on distributed planning among various ground units, we should create and adopt

a collaborative tool to estimate, collate, and communicate lower echelon, pre-decisional anticipated requests for airpower both to superior ground planning staffs and the CAOC. Provide the estimates in this tool to the upper echelon air and ground headquarters as a situational awareness tool to estimate the aggregate requests for air support of multiple, disconnected distributed ground planning efforts early enough to plan the logistics required to maximize support. The tool could be used to help determine when insufficient resources are available for multiple parallel operations, and help the ground commander to set priorities for sequential operations. This tool for logging future air support requirements could be adjusted realtime by air liaison officers working in lower echelon ground units planning their own operations, and could allow multiple users to “vote” not unlike the current coordination mechanisms used by various players to coordinate time sensitive targeting between multiple organizations in the JADOCS time sensitive targeting manager. Unlike that tool, the timeline for coordination could be extended beyond the current air tasking order time period along a longer range calendar to show the current anticipated demand for air support of all types extended into the future. A collaborative tool like this might be the first indicator to both air and ground components alike that the sum of the distributed ground operations in a certain time period is going to generate a theater level requirement for air support beyond standard steady state operations, and would provide a level of visibility over distributed and decentralized planning that is currently not available to the joint force.

To increase the understanding of the demand ground planners might need from airpower when they got into battle with less than their full complement of organic fires, doctrine should include a methodology to estimate of what amount effort is required from

the air component to mitigate the risks assumed when ground units deploy without their full complement of organic fires. There is currently no doctrine available to estimate the additional bill in close air support or intelligence support if an Army unit has reduced organic capability for either self or enemy imposed reasons. Establishing a baseline comparison of capabilities between organic ground capabilities and available air support would give both ground and air component commanders a better tool to evaluate the risks of proceeding with combat operations when logistics, geography, politics, or time limit the ground component's ability to deploy with its full complement of organic assets. It would also help to call attention to when the scope of air support required rises to the level of a major theater effort, requiring significant close coordination between air and ground components to ensure that sufficient planning and preparatory time is available to provide the required support at acceptable levels of risk.

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