



Air Power Conference 2012
“Conference Summation”
Deputy Chief of Air Force: Air Vice Marshal Leo Davies CSC
Friday 11 May 2012

(Check with delivery)

Good Afternoon distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen.

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It is my purpose in this very brief session to provide a summation of the conference proceedings; although it is not for me to tell you what you learned from this conference. It's a task that suits me, as I generally choose to be a man of few words and I will do my best to continue that form; although I could stop now as LTGEN Noguier covered things so nicely.

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Yesterday morning, Air Marshal Brown challenged you to question the underlying principles of air power against the realities of the recent operations. This challenge, I think, quite neatly set the framework for the themes we have explored over the past two days.

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Big themes, themes of consequence and themes of relevance. Themes that do in themselves challenge us to think clearly and coherently about air power, military force and the political purposes to which it is put.

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Air power and coercive diplomacy, as our speakers have reminded us, are terms, ideas, concepts that might not naturally appear as comfortable bed fellows.

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The notion of military force to coerce is quite reasonably a sensible, if contested notion. The idea of coercive diplomacy, however, is less obviously a rational or logical combination.

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But as we have heard, coercive diplomacy must be a stepped approach; scaled, proportional, and discriminatory.

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Effective coercive diplomacy requires a threat which the targeted actor must perceive as credible. They must be in no doubt that we are prepared to carry through on the threat.

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Yet as we have been reminded, force, diplomacy and coercion have indeed, crossed the span of time, interacted and shaped each other in a complicated fashion and this fact was borne out in the discussions yesterday.

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Most importantly, how these ideas have interacted in practice is directly related to the context and circumstance in which they come together.

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The context of the Arab Spring is perhaps exactly the sort of complex, dynamic and convoluted circumstance that really challenges us to think clearly about the use of air power.

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If we further complicate the situation with the emerging norm of 'responsibility to protect' and the inevitable complexities of UN mandated coalition operations, we can find ourselves very quickly trying to navigate a minefield of ethical, conceptual and pragmatic challenges.

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CAF noted in his opening address that diplomacy, backed by credible and capable air power, has been a core element of our security strategy.

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But our speakers yesterday challenged us to think seriously about how, when and under what conditions force, or the threat of force, specifically air power, can not only be used to effectively coerce an adversary, but how this can be incorporated into a diplomatic process or strategy.

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Many of you might agree with me that there is no consensus on this and no operational model to fit all situations.

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Air power, as an element of coercive diplomacy, does however enable a bridge between policy and strategy, providing greater range of options to achieve limited objectives.

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It has a utility beyond simple kinetic effect. But, successful coercive diplomacy needs to reflect proportionality, reciprocity and credibility.

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One point made yesterday that struck me as fundamental to each of us as individuals and as military members, was that those who reside in zones of safety have a duty of care to those who live in zones of danger. Our work can never be divorced from the ethical and humanitarian values for which we stand.

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How we employ the forces we command in complex and dynamic situations when military endstates may be opaque, is I would suggest, one of the most important lessons we should ponder.

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Impacts for air power

Now, let me provide the ‘**so what**’ of this conference.

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This conference set out to provide a considered perspective on the contemporary and evolving international security environment, and to investigate the use of air power in Libya within the context of the generally coercive strategy employed by NATO. .

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Qaddafi’s rationality was relevant to the success or failure of coercive operations in Libya, but the question of the rationality of any actor is central to the effectiveness of any coercive strategy.

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I believe this has been achieved, but some may ask what does this mean for our Air Force.

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The Libyan air campaign offers us a unique opportunity to examine the use of modern air power, and there is much we can take away from this. My main takeaways include:

- While it is clear to all of us that $R = P_S * (B_S - C_S) + (1 - P_S) * (B_F - C_F)$, I concede that some may disagree whether B_F or B_S is more relevant.

- Air power at times may be the only viable military option to project force into hostile territory. That projected force comes from an air base, fixed or floating, and as highlighted by most of our overseas visits, that air base does not have to be yours.
- And as we have repeatedly heard today, ISR, and lots of it, is integral to all air missions,
- Capacity has a quality all of its own, both in capability but also in response. A coalition arguably has a greater ability to coerce a belligerent than does an individual state.
- **Precision** is the norm and expected by our governments, but precision not just in the sense of weapon delivery but also precision in judgement and advice, precision in timing, precision in strategy, precision in intelligence, and precision in the employment of tactics.
- Collateral damage needs to be minimised in order to sustain legitimacy. Collateral damage continues to drive our weapon development, TTPs and, in some cases, government acceptance of risk. Linebacker II would not have worked in Libya.
- Engagement breeds interoperability, which is fundamental to effective coalition operations.
- Tailored air forces offer a range of options for force employment, and lastly

Air power's flexibility, responsiveness, and scalability offer governments credible and useful options.

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What I didn't hear during the past two days is that we, as like-minded air power advocates, are going down the wrong path.

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Although, we might agree that the Libyan campaign was not a totally successful example of coercive diplomacy, the use of air power in coercive operations is undeniably effective.

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The undeniable success of Odyssey Dawn and United Protector might already have made a difference to the next time a belligerent country faces a unified coercive coalition.

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With these takeaways in mind, I now ask the Chief of Air Force, Air Marshal Geoff Brown, to the podium for remarks and to close the conference.