

AIR POWER STUDIES CENTRE

PAPER 52

March 1997

**THE GOODWILL OF THE SERVICES AND THE
PROBLEMS OF A LESSER PARTNER: THE CREATION
OF THE AUSTRALIAN MANUAL OF DIRECT AIR
SUPPORT, 8 JUNE 1942**

By

Major Russell Parkin

About the Author

Major Russell Parkin was a visiting fellow at the Directorate of Army Research and Analysis in 1995-96, researching the history of Australian close air support doctrine 1942-45. He is a RAEME officer who joined the Regular Army in 1990; prior to that he was an officer in the Army Reserve, graduating from officer cadet training unit, 2 Training Group, in 1982. He is a graduate of Macquarie University, Wollongong, Sydney University of Technology, and the University of New South Wales.

INTRODUCTION

In the decades preceding the Second World War, armed forces tended to view military operations in terms of discrete environments. War at sea was an exclusively naval problem, land operations were the preserve of armies and, in many cases, air power was allocated a purely ancillary role. In the 1930s, the whole edifice of Imperial Defence for Australia and Britain's Far Eastern possessions rested on this fragmented concept of war. As the fate of the Royal Navy and its base at Singapore demonstrated, this narrow, conservative view of military operations was out-of-date. However, the realisation that sea, land and air warfare were intimately and inextricably linked was slow to develop. This was not due to technical or operational difficulties. The development of a unified approach to war was retarded largely by human nature itself.

The major impediments to developing doctrines which spanned operational environments were the parochial attitudes within the various armed services. Roger Beaumont, an historian of joint military operations, believes '... the intensity of partisanship on issues of jointness has sometimes approached the level of emotion held towards foes in war, for it touches closely on the critical bonding and cohesion that lie at the heart of military institutions, and their predisposition to see the world in 'them-us' terms'.¹ In an environment so suffused by rivalry, the development of effective joint doctrines becomes a political process requiring tact and negotiation - skills not generally sought or cultivated in combat leaders.

Against such a background, this paper traces the evolution of an Australian close air support doctrine manual during the early stages of the Pacific War. While the technical solutions to the operational and tactical problems of cooperation between air and land forces in the South West Pacific Area (SWPA) are important, they are less interesting than the processes by which they were arrived at. The circumstances surrounding the development of the manual in mid-1942 have certain contemporary resonances, giving the history of these events a sense of *déjà vu* and recalling Thucydides' belief that history is valuable 'to those who wish to have a clear understanding of both events in the past and of those in the future which will, in all human likelihood, happen again in the same or a similar way'.² Certainly, these events have a lot to say about the development of doctrine, human nature, military organisations and change.

HUMAN NATURE AND ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE

An understanding of organisational culture is important in any study of inter-service cooperation. Each service will approach a problem from a different perspective. Cooperation between land and air forces, particularly in the 1920s and 30s, had to overcome barriers created by two antagonistic conceptualisations of war. For armies coordination and discipline have always been important because battle is such a chaotic environment. Over the centuries, by standardising and controlling as many aspects as possible, armies learned that they could bring a measure of predictability to battle. In contrast, the *Weltanschauung* of air forces highlighted the inherent

¹ Beaumont, R., *Joint Military Operations: A Short History*, Westport Connecticut, 1993, p xv.

² Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War*, Book I, Trans. R. Crawley, London, 1910.

flexibility of air power and its capacity for surprise and manoeuvre - characteristics which stress independence.

The First World War reinforced the need for coordination and planning in land operations, particularly where firepower was concerned. General Monash's attack on Hamel was a model for cooperation between a combined arms team of infantry, artillery, tanks and aircraft. While Monash's staff work and planning have been called methodical, he described it in more artistic terms '... as a score for an orchestral composition, where the various arms and units are the instruments, and the tasks they perform are their respective musical phrases'.³ This image encapsulates the teamwork and coordination essential for success in land warfare.

Following the First World War, the approach to warfare adopted by many of the world's air forces emphasised their potential for independent action. Writing about the Great War, American historian John Morrow called air warfare:

... the apotheosis of modern, technological, and industrial society. It literally and figuratively enabled its combatants to rise above the anonymity of mass society and modern warfare to wage a clean and individual struggle. It allowed the preservation of notions of sport and individual combat in a war in which land and naval conflict amply demonstrated that modern warfare had rendered such ideas obsolete and ludicrous.⁴

To men like Trenchard, Mitchell and Douhet, the proper employment of air power was as an autonomous strategy, divorced from surface forces. Pioneers of strategic air power doctrine, such as Mitchell and Douhet, were nonconformists and did not work well within the constraints of traditional military discipline. The air forces of the inter-war period were small, elite fraternities. With a faith that often amounted to dogma, they believed that the application of appropriate procedures and technology could surmount almost any obstacle encountered in war.

Historical forces also contributed to the emotional and psychological barriers between the services. During the 1920s and 30s, severe financial constraints exacerbated inter-service tensions. The Air Forces of Britain and Australia were forced to fight political battles to retain their autonomy while, in the United States, the Army Air Corps campaigned for independence by cultivating members of Congress.⁵ Not surprisingly, under these circumstances the process of formulating doctrine for land/air cooperation made little progress. In Britain, where a doctrine manual was written in 1932, the concept of land/air cooperation remained largely academic because it was rarely tested in realistic training and failed to incorporate the lessons of operational experience.⁶

³ Quoted in Pedersen, P., *Monash As Military Commander*, Melbourne, 1985, p 232.

⁴ Morrow, J., *The Great War in the Air*, Washington, 1993, p 366.

⁵ For a history of the inter-war USAAC see Brett, G., 'The Air Force Struggle for Independence' in *Air Power History*, Volume 43, Number 3, 1996, p 22ff.

⁶ See *The Employment of Air Forces with the Army in the Field*, London, 1932. By this date the RAF and the Army had a decade of experience in joint operations against native peoples within the Empire.

MILITARY ORGANISATIONS AND CHANGE

Armed forces are inherently conservative. There is a pronounced bias against innovation of any kind which will threaten the status quo, because specific roles or missions are seen to justify the existence of a particular service or corps. Land/air cooperation cuts across traditional service boundaries. As a mission, close air support requires two different services to coordinate and integrate to produce a unified application of military power. In the highly partisan atmosphere of the inter-war period it was an innovation which upset too many allegiances and caused too many antipathies. General Donn Starry, one of the architects of the US Air/Land Battle doctrine, analysed the conditions necessary for change to be successful in a military organisation. After looking at a number of historical examples, he came up with seven factors required for effecting change. They included:

- a. A mechanism to identify the need for change.
- b. A shared and rigorous intellectual framework among those responsible for change, which results in a common approach.
- c. A spokesman for change.
- d. The building of consensus.
- e. Continuity among the architects of change.
- f. Support for change, if not complete advocacy, in the senior ranks.⁷

As Starry's factors show, to create the conditions necessary for change requires both leadership and teamwork. However, as noted above, these will often be lacking because existing organisational structures, attitudes and the interaction of personalities can inhibit cooperation.

Historically, the greatest incentive for change in military organisations has been provided by defeat. Two examples of this are the German Army in the 1920s and 30s and the US Army in the 1970s and 80s. In both cases senior officers - Von Seeckt and Deputy - were instrumental in pushing through the necessary reforms and creating the conditions for doctrinal innovation which enabled their armies to successfully undergo change. Defeat was also a significant factor in the development of Australian close air support doctrine. In early 1942, when a Japanese invasion of Australia seemed imminent, air power was seen as an important weapon in the defence of the nation. However, up to that time in the Second World War, the Australian experience of tactical air power had been learned from enemies who seemed to be able to coordinate the actions of air and ground forces into an effective and devastating new method of warfare.

⁷ Starry, D., 'To Change an Army', *Military Review*, LXXIII (March, 1983), p 23. The seventh of these factors is concerned with testing innovations so that their relevance is demonstrated to a wide audience.

THE GOODWILL OF THE SERVICES - INTER-SERVICE RIVALRY, 1941

Even before the Japanese advanced into South-East Asia, the Germans had taught the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) the lessons of air power in Greece, Crete and North Africa. A number of Australian senior officers had experienced the Germans' use of air power at first hand. General S. Savige described the German aircraft attacking the Australian forces at Thermopylae as delivering 'a full issue of bombing' and the raids by over 200 bombers against hard pressed forces on Crete as 'full and complete mastery of the air.'⁸ Like Savige, Generals Sir Thomas Blamey and Sir Iven Mackay had also experienced the attacks by the 8th German Air Corps in the retreat from the Aliakmon River. The Germans had ordered over 1,000 aircraft to concentrate on defiles and bridges to slow the allies and aid the advance of their own ground forces. The Royal Air Force (RAF) had a total of only eight squadrons - 80 aircraft - in Greece.⁹ Without air cover all daytime movement by the Australian, New Zealand and British troops was stopped. The soldiers devised a new and unflattering meaning for the letters RAF; their commanders took to heart the necessity for dedicated air support.¹⁰

Back in Egypt Blamey, as General Officer Commanding (GOC) the AIF, was keen to see that '... our troops should never again be asked to go into action under conditions similar to those in Greece and Crete'. In a letter to Percy Spender, the Minister for the Army, he stated his belief that to avoid this situation it was 'essential to have an air component of bomber and fighter aircraft as part of the organisation of an army Corps'.¹¹ Over the following months his advocacy of this position was very strong. He wrote repeatedly to members of the War Cabinet urging them to press the British on this matter. After the publication of a joint Army/RAF Directive No. 3 on Direct Air Support in late September 1941 he was able to inform the Minister for the Army '... that the difficult problem of air support for the Army will be solved when air forces and troops are trained in this procedure.'¹² In a cable to Robert Menzies, the Australian Prime Minister, Blamey said, on the subject of air support, 'Great advance in this last two months. Attitude of Air Force here now most cooperative. Feel certain that this is largely due to your pressure ...'¹³ The efficacy of lobbying by the Australian Government, while a minor matter, is open to question and is something which requires further investigation.

The subject of air support was also taken up by General Mackay, who on his return to Australia in late August 1941 had become GOC Home Forces. This appointment followed closely upon his own experiences in Greece and Mackay was, therefore,

⁸ Letter dated 12/6/41 from author's private collection.

⁹ Those RAF units in Greece acquitted themselves well in the face of the enemy's overwhelming air superiority. The British novelist, Ronald Dahl, then a young fighter pilot, records his experience of the fighting in Greece in his book *Going Solo*, London, 1986.

¹⁰ See Dennis, P., et al., *The Oxford Companion to Australian Military History*, Melbourne, 1995, p 103 which records that in the Middle East a common definition for the acronym RAF was 'Rare As F...'.
¹¹ Australian Archives (AA) MP 729/7, File 37/42/419, Letter from Blamey to Minister for the Army dated 14 June 1941.

¹² *ibid.*, 11 October 1941.

¹³ *ibid.*, 11 October 1941.

particularly active in pursuing the question of air support for the army, which he was now building in Australia. Upon his return he made a number of statements on the recent campaigns in Greece and the Middle East, touching on the subject of air support. These statements were widely reported in sixteen articles which appeared in the press between 29 August and 7 September 1941. Although not all of the articles favoured the Army position of outright control of some air assets, they often highlighted the poor record of cooperation between the RAF and the Army.¹⁴ With such coverage in the daily press, it was not surprising that questions about air support were asked in parliament. On 27 August, in the House of Representatives, J.A. Beasley, referring to Mackay's criticisms of collaboration between ground and air forces in the Middle East, asked Spender for further information. The Minister's reply would have caused concern among senior Air Force officers, particularly when he stated his agreement with Mackay about '... the need for coordination by a certain portion of the air arm with the army, under the control of the Army Commander'.¹⁵

On 3 September, Mackay was asked to discuss the situation in the Middle East with the Advisory War Council. High on the agenda was the subject of air support and co-operation between the Army and the Air Force. Once again Mackay was forthright, stating 'It was essential ... that a section of the Air Force must be in close touch with the Army fighting with it, in the same manner as the Navy has the Fleet Air Arm.'¹⁶ When John Curtin, the Labor leader, sought Mackay's views on the most suitable higher command organisation for Australia, he received a predictably careful answer. 'Whilst the three Services were established separately,' the General said, 'it was fully appreciated that there was a need for close co-operation between them and machinery to this end already existed.'¹⁷ The future Prime Minister's view, recorded in the minutes of the meeting, was that there '...should be a Commander-in-Chief in the Middle East who should be in charge of all land and air forces there and, that a similar principle should apply in Australia.'¹⁸ This was an interesting intuition in the light of subsequent events regarding the higher direction of the war in the South West Pacific.

In the following months, as more information about the campaign in Greece became available, the opinion of the politicians and the press seemed to swing firmly against the Air Force. In October 1941, the recently elected Curtin Government had sought assurances from the British authorities '... that Australian troops will never again go into action except with air support of a degree and character considered adequate by the Government's own military advisers'.¹⁹ With the change of government there was more speculation in the press about Army control of Air Force units detailed for air support. Under headlines such as 'Air Cooperation Under Army Control' the public was informed that F.M. Forde, the new Minister for the Army, was considering the formation of more Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) cooperation squadrons 'under direct army control'.²⁰ Mackay's name was again prominent in these reports. The

¹⁴ AA. A5954/1, File 260/12. This file contains a number of newspapers cuttings from September 1941.

¹⁵ Hansard, *Representatives*, 27 August 1941, Canberra.

¹⁶ AA (Can.) A5954/1, File 240/1. Extract from Advisory War Council Minute dated 3 September 41.

¹⁷ Mackay's caution was probably wise since in his job of GOC Home Forces he would need to work closely with the chiefs of all three Services.

¹⁸ The Navy was not included '... in view of the implications of general Admiralty strategy.' More importantly, this indicates that Curtin, a practical politician, felt that unity of purpose between the Services would only come with unity of command.

¹⁹ AA. MP 729/7/0, File 37/421/419. Extract from minute to Minister for Defence, 27 October 1941.

²⁰ *Melbourne Herald*, 10 October 1941.

following month, an opinion expressed in the Senate on 13 November 1941, by Senator C.H. Brand of Victoria, was characteristic of the mounting criticism of the RAAF. After noting that the war had demonstrated the importance of close cooperation between land and air forces, the Senator went on to say:

Perfect coordination and cooperation between this air artillery and land troops must be practised in our militia camps. Should there be any objections on the part of the Royal Australian Air Force, the officials standing in the way must be removed.²¹

Some opinions about the Air Force were expressed in more vitriolic terms. On 16 December 1941, in the House of Representatives, G.J. Rankin stated, 'If I had my way, I should burn tomorrow all the blue uniforms in Australia'.²² He went on to characterise the RAAF as 'being spoilt' and, like his colleague in the Senate, advocated that Australia adopt a similar system to that used by the Germans to ensure cooperation between the services. Significantly, Brand and Rankin had been members of the First AIF. Both had subsequently attained the rank of major general in the militia and were thus not likely to look kindly upon any sign of intransigence by the RAAF.²³

Rankin, in particular, had reason to be hostile. He was still an active soldier in 1941, commanding the 2nd Cavalry Division. In late October, troops from his formation had been involved in a joint Army/Air Force exercise held at Corangamite in western Victoria. He had not been impressed by the performance of the squadrons involved in the exercise. For some reason the air sortie was delayed, so Rankin had sent his troops in to attack the 'enemy' armour. Following this successful attack, the umpires ordered the defeated units from the field. At this point, the aircraft arrived and dive-bombed the already beaten 'enemy.' 'Then', as Rankin later told the press, 'they looked around for fresh fields to conquer, saw my troops ... and promptly dive-bombed them too.'²⁴ Arthur Drakeford, the Air Minister, had told the press that the exercise, dubbed the 'Battle' of Corangamite, was designed to determine 'the ability of Australian air squadrons to support the Army' and 'what weaknesses, if any, there are in existing measures for air support of the Army.'²⁵ It is doubtful that the Minister would have been pleased by the success of the exercise in highlighting the poor co-ordination between the Services. Certainly, the exercise was not a public relations coup for the RAAF.

²¹ Hansard, Vol 169, 16th Parliament, 1st Session, *Senate*, Estimates and Budgets, 13 November 1941, Canberra, 1941, p 362.

²² *ibid.*, *Representatives*, International Affairs, 16 December, 1941, Canberra, 1941, p 1107.

²³ Senator C.H. Brand was a highly decorated infantry officer (CB, CMG, CVO, DSO) who had become a major general in the First World War. C.E.W. Bean wrote of him in 1915, 'Within three years this untiring officer had won a place in Australian history.' *The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-18: The Story of ANZAC*, Vol I, Sydney, 1921, p.135. Like Brand, G.J.Rankin, the member for Bendigo in Victoria, was also a major general. He had served as a major in the 4th Australian Light Horse and held both the DSO and VD.

²⁴ *Daily Telegraph*, 24 December 1941. Other press reports of the exercise also highlighted this incident. The cause of this incident was almost certainly inexperience and poor communications. See press cuttings in AA (Melb.) MP 729/7, File 37/42/419 Pt 1.

²⁵ AA (Melb.) MP 729/7, File 37/42/419, Part 1. Unattributed newspaper article dated 27 October 1941.

Senior Air Force officers did not sit idly by as pressure mounted for part of the RAAF to be handed over to Army control. In September the Chief of the Air Staff (CAS), Air Chief Marshal Sir Charles Burnett, sent Frederick Shedden, the Secretary of the Defence Department, a copy of an air staff paper stating in a covering note that ‘... the question of close air support for the Army has been much discussed lately in the press. It was raised informally in the War Cabinet some weeks ago.’ The CAS felt that the Secretary might find the British paper to ‘... be of help and general interest’.²⁶ The paper stated the RAF position that the senior air commander, in consultation with the commander-in-chief, was the best person to determine the control of limited air assets. It pointed out that the Air Force needed to maintain flexibility to direct the maximum effort against enemy forces at the most critical point, thereby attaining air superiority. The following month, this was also the theme of an extensive newspaper article entitled ‘How Air Power Best Aids Army’ by the Australian war correspondent John Hetherington, who had interviewed a senior RAF officer.²⁷

By late November 1941, any doubt that there was now a propaganda war over the question of air support to the Army was dispelled by a letter from Air Commodore D.E.L. Wilson, the Commander of the RAAF’s No. 2 Training Group, to Air Vice-Marshal H.N. Wrigley.²⁸ The letter, accompanied by copies of three recent press articles, stated the opinion that a section of the Sydney press was trying to influence the new Labor cabinet ‘in regard to the handing over of a part of the RAAF to Army control’.²⁹ Wilson pointed out the tone of the articles was less concerned with cooperation than with ensuring the dominance of the Army over the RAAF. Two possible sources of inspiration for these articles were given: senior Army officers or the ‘ill-considered thought of amateur newspaper strategists’. ‘Being of a suspicious turn of mind, however, and remembering a press campaign about a decade ago to carve up the RAAF between Army and Navy’, Wilson said that he ‘was inclined to the former view’.³⁰ The letter continued by noting that the real danger for the RAAF at this point was the inexperience of the new government which might easily be swayed by both public opinion and the Army hierarchy.

Indeed, the letter stated ‘... that they, the Army, have designedly commenced their propaganda in this State, being fully aware that Sydney, the most powerful centre in the Commonwealth, is not an Air Force stronghold, and that our policy is to avoid display and publicity’.³¹ To counter this, the letter urged ‘... that the Air Board, through whatever medium they consider desirable, institute a scheme of counter-propaganda in this State’.³² This remarkably frank statement of inter-service antagonisms ended by suggesting a series of marches and fly-overs as counters to the Army displays. It also provided an outline for a leader article in the *Sydney Morning*

²⁶ AA. A5954/1, File 240/1. Letter to Shedden from Burnett dated 11 September 1941. Burnett was an RAF officer seconded to the RAAF.

²⁷ *Melbourne Herald*, 24 October 1941.

²⁸ Wilson was a long serving officer, having been seconded to the RAAF from the Army in 1923. Gillison, D., *The Royal Australian Air Force 1939-42*, p 24.

²⁹ AA. A5954/1, File 240/1. Letter to AVM H.N. Wrigley undated (c. Nov/Dec 41).

³⁰ *ibid.*

³¹ *ibid.*

³² *ibid.*

Herald 'the only paper of consequence here which has not attacked our Service'.³³ Unfortunately, there is no reply to this letter on the file.

Claims of total intransigence by the RAAF were countered by a number of developments, most importantly the agreement between the CAS and the Chief of the General Staff (CGS), General Sturdee, to establish a School of Army Co-operation. Interestingly, the suggestion to start a school along similar lines to the RAF's School of Army Cooperation at Old Sarum in Wiltshire came from the Army. Sturdee felt:

The necessity for close cooperation between the Army and Air Force in the field is daily becoming more marked and as yet very little has been done in Australia to train personnel in this important aspect of operations.³⁴

The CGS wanted the school to study all aspects of cooperation and instruct personnel from both services in all phases of reconnaissance and in bomber support. He was 'particularly anxious that not only Staff Officers and A.I.L.O.s but also Commanders of combatant formations and units should attend the course.'³⁵ His letter closed by suggesting Canberra as the site for the school and offered Army cooperation in providing accommodation for the new unit. Canberra was a sensible choice for the school. Units from both services were already co-located in the area, including an Army cooperation squadron (No. 4) at the RAAF station, the Royal Military College and the Army Tactical School.

Advising his superior on this matter, the Deputy CAS, Group Captain J.E. Hewitt wrote 'in view of the growing demand for close support of Army I think that we should make every effort to establish the school suggested by the CGS.'³⁶ The CAS's reaction to the proposal was positive, if a little puzzling. In a note to the file he stated his agreement in principle, adding '... in fact I thought we had already established a School of Army Cooperation in Canberra with the squadron there.'³⁷ Indeed, before the war these units had often worked together. The Army Cooperation Squadron based at Canberra had provided lectures and demonstrations on aspects of air support to the Army's training establishments. However, there was no formal arrangement and support was provided on the basis of bids submitted to the Air Force by the Army annually.³⁸

In the following months inter-service staff discussions determined the personnel and accommodation requirements and, although the Army would be asked to supply instructors, Burnett felt '... we must get a competent Air Force officer to run it, as it

³³ Gillison, D., *The Royal Australian Air Force 1939-42*, pp 103-4 notes that in the pre-war years the RAAF did not enjoy good relations with the press because of its objections to the reporting of air accidents. Even in 1940 the Director of RAAF Public Relations, WGCDR L. F. McDonnell was denied the right to attend daily conferences because the CAS opposed publicity.

³⁴ AA (Can.) A705/1, File 208/3/493. Letter from CGS to CAS dated 22 September 41.

³⁵ A.I.L.O. is the abbreviation for Air Intelligence Liaison Officer, which was later shorted to ALO or Air Liaison Officer. These were Army officers posted to Army Cooperation Squadrons with the task of interpreting the Army's requirements for air support to the Air Force. Later in the war their role was greatly expanded and they worked with all types of Air Force units.

³⁶ Note to file GPCAPT Hewitt to CAS dated 22 September 41.

³⁷ AA (Can.) A705/1, File 208/3/493

³⁸ See AA (Can.) A705/1, File 208/3/433. Army Co-operation Policy 1938-39.

must be run by the Air Force.’³⁹ To this end, the RAF were requested to second a suitable officer to the RAAF to command the school.⁴⁰ By November, a syllabus for a four week course covering air photography, intelligence, reconnaissance, artillery co-operation and communications had been devised.⁴¹ An important reference for the syllabus was the original Middle East pamphlet, Directive No. 3. The school was opened in early January 1942 by the Ministers for the Air Force and the Army. The first course had a total of 19 Army students. During the remainder of the war the School of Army Co-operation would become the most important centre for the training of personnel from Australian and other Allied services in the theory and practise of air support.⁴²

In December Air Commodore F.M. Bladin held discussions on Directive No. 3 with the Director of Military Training and General Mackay’s principal staff officer.⁴³ They agreed on the adoption of the system for direct air support described in the pamphlet and even listed some amendments required to adapt it to Australian conditions. A senior RAAF staff officer was charged with amending the document from the air point of view and Mackay’s staff officer was to do the same for Army. Bladin’s remarks included several constructive criticisms on the provision of accurate intelligence to Air Liaison Officers (ALOs) and also his intention to submit the document to both the General and Air Staffs when the necessary amendments were completed. However, in January the RAAF officer reviewing the British directive learned from an Intelligence Summary that Directive No. 3 had been superseded. He requested permission to signal Headquarters Middle East to ascertain whether a better system had been substituted.⁴⁴ The outcome of this request is unclear but it almost certainly would have resulted in a delay to the process of publishing an Australian air support directive. In any case, the Japanese attacks on Hawaii, Malaya and the Philippines had overtaken these concerns for the time being. With the radically altered strategic situation which followed 8 December came the Americans, and the threat of RAAF subordination to the Army disappeared almost overnight.

THE PROBLEMS OF A LESSER PARTNER - COALITION POLITICS, 1942

On 1 January 1942, Major General George Brett, US Army Air Corps (USAAC), arrived in Brisbane as both the Deputy Commander of the American British Dutch

³⁹ AA (Can.) A705/1, File 208/3/493. Note to file CAS to DCAS dated 24 September 41.

⁴⁰ WGCdr J. N. Stephenson was a long serving officer with excellent credentials in Army Co-operation. He had joined the RAF in 1923 as a ‘boy’ apprentice. After commissioning in 1928 he had served with Army Cooperation squadrons in England and in 1935-36 had worked as a staff officer in the Middle East, no doubt seeing a great deal of ‘air control.’ More recently, in 1940 he had commanded an Army Co-operation squadron (No.613) in the Battle of France.

⁴¹ AA (Can.) A705/1, File 208/3/493. Syllabus dated 28 November 41.

⁴² Personnel from the USAAF and RNZAF would also attended courses run by the school. Later in the war, officers who were posted to the school as instructors were often selected for important staff or command positions with fighting formations, where they could make very practical use of their expertise.

⁴³ AA. A5954/1, File 240/1, Minute on Air Support for the Army, Bladin to DCAS dated 16 December 1941.

⁴⁴ AA. A5954/1, File 240/1. Letter to Secretary of the Air Board from SASO, Southern Command dated 22 January 1942.

Australian Command (ABDACOM) and the Commander of US Forces in Australia. Initially, the efforts of the US Forces in Australia, who were mainly support troops and Air Corps, were directed towards aiding the Philippines. The focus was on the creation of base facilities and setting up a supply system to support General MacArthur's command on Luzon. However, as the situation in South East Asia deteriorated in February and March, defending the Australian bases became their priority. In February 1942, the CAS, Burnett, had made a sweeping submission to the Minister for Air proposing the amalgamation of the USAAC and the RAAF. It stated in part that:

The idea of building up side by side independent United States and Australian Army and Air Forces appears to be undesirable if it can be avoided, and will lead to overlapping and misunderstanding, especially during operations. It is inevitable that while operating in this country US forces must be very largely dependent on the Australian Army and the RAAF for services, higher administration, provision of aerodromes, etc. Many of the US requirements may conflict with the present and future plans of the Australian Services and, in practice, it is possible that competition instead of cooperation will result.⁴⁵

On the face of it such an arrangement was making a virtue of necessity; the USAAC was short of personnel, the RAAF had a shortage of aircraft, but could supply the Americans with logistic and administrative facilities. Burnett's proposal was rejected as impractical by the Australian Government and never put to the Americans.⁴⁶

General Millard F. Harmon, Deputy Chief of the US Army Air Staff, gave Brett full authority to work with the Australians, '... and go ahead and work it out locally. Whatever Brett does in conjunction with Australian and other air authorities will not be criticised from this end.'⁴⁷ Brett selected a combined air staff of Australian and American officers in roughly equal proportions to coordinate the air operations of USAAC and RAAF units.⁴⁸ The Australians were naturally quite happy with this situation but the USAAC soon became discontented with the arrangement because it gave the RAAF 'a substantial degree of administrative and even operational control of American units'.⁴⁹ Indeed, Brett complained that, while cooperation with the RAAF was 'excellent', all control of the RAAF (except for operational control) was taken from him 'due to Australian political interference and sabotage'.⁵⁰ While the RAAF

⁴⁵ Cited in Williams, R., *These Are Facts*, Canberra, 1977, Appendix VIII.

⁴⁶ The Americans would have rejected it too because the last paragraph gave the Australians authority over the US Commander, something which they would never countenance. See Williams, *op. cit.*, p 294.

⁴⁷ AA. A981, File 56A. Cablegram, R.G. Casey to Department of External Affairs dated 12 March 1942.

⁴⁸ In 1930, while a student at CGSC, Fort Leavenworth, Brett wrote a paper entitled: 'Should the Air Corps of the Army and Navy be combined into a separate independent department or bureau, or should they continue to operate as component parts of the Army and Navy'. Considering his conclusion that Service loyalties would mitigate against the efficiency of such a 'combined' organisation, it is ironic that twelve years later he tried to combine the air forces of different nationalities.

⁴⁹ Watson, R., 'The Defence of Australia' in Craven, W., & Cate, J., (eds), *The Army Air Forces in World War II*, Vol I, New York, 1948, pp 420-21. RAAF administrative control over the USAAC arose from the fact that Australian officers held the command positions at air bases. Moreover, the Australians were effectively able to exercise operational control of USAAC units through their control of the five military regions into which the continent was divided.

⁵⁰ Brett to Adjutant General US Army dated 8 March 1942, cited in *The AAF in Australia to the Summer of 1942*, US Army Air Forces Historical Study No. 9, Washington, July 1944, p 72.

began to discover the difficulties of working with a large coalition partner, the Army had few such problems. Australian troops out-numbered the Americans significantly and Australian commanders turned their thoughts to the defence of the nation against Japanese invasion. Securing effective cooperation between the air and ground forces featured heavily in Army's plans.

In an effort to adapt the British directive on air support to Australian conditions, a conference was held at Army Headquarters Melbourne in mid-February 1942. Ten officers attended the conference, six from the Army and four from the RAAF.⁵¹ The Army delegation included Major General G. Vasey, two colonels, one lieutenant colonel and two majors. The head of the RAAF delegation was a group captain and the three other officers were all wing commanders. Vasey's presence is certainly an indication of the importance which the Army attached to the meeting. The relatively junior ranks of the RAAF officers may also reflect the Air Force's view of the conference.⁵² After stating that air support was essential to the success of land operations, the conference minutes recorded a series of propositions which focused on the morale aspects of air attack and concluded, 'The importance of securing adequate and well controlled air support for forces in Australia can not therefore be exaggerated.' The minutes also covered a number of aspects of air support which were unique to Australia's resources and conditions. Apart from achieving the 'political' purpose of getting senior Air Force and Army personnel talking on the subject, the conference obviously established a suitable basis for the formulation of an Australian air support directive. There is no record of any other meetings of this type. The work of drafting the manual was left to staff officers in both services and proved to be a very slow process.

Certainly, this was the opinion of Mackay in April 1942. Now GOC Second Army, he expressed 'very strong opinions' regarding what he referred to as 'the tardy recognition and development of Army-Air co-operation.'⁵³ Mackay believed that '... failure to develop, and develop speedily, this co-operative support will certainly prolong the war, if nothing worse.'⁵⁴ Asked to comment on Directive No. 3A (a revised version of the September 1941 document) during the drafting of the Australian direct air support doctrine manual, he was critical of the revised directive on a number of specific points. In common with senior officers in the British Army, Mackay was unhappy with the time lag between requests for air support and the arrival of aircraft over the target. He felt a suitable response time for air support was

⁵¹ At the conference for the Army were General Vasey from HQ Home Forces, Colonel R. Hopkins, the Director of Military Operations on the General Staff at Army HQ, Colonel H. Edwards, the Chief Signals Officer, Major A. Mander also from the General Staff at Army HQ and Major Wheeler from HQ 1 Armoured Division. The RAAF delegation was Group Captain C. Wiggins, Director of Signals, Wing Commanders R. Sims, Senior Air Staff Officer, Southern Area, V. Hancock from the Directorate of Plans and J. Stephenson (RAF), Commanding Officer of the School of Army Cooperation.

⁵² RAAF HQ was in Melbourne and Burnett, the CAS, could easily have sent officers more senior in rank.

⁵³ Mackay to GHQ, Direct Air Support, 20 April 1942, AA (Melb.), MP 729/6/0, File 37/401/815.

⁵⁴ *ibid.* Tedder's involvement in the development of close air support in North Africa is one example. Another more recent example is the close personal involvement of General William DePuy in the development of the US Army's FM 100-5 in the late 1970s. See Romjue, J., *From Active Defence to Air/Land Battle: The Development of Army Doctrine, 1973-1982*, Fort Monroe, VA, June, 1984. Tedder, Mackay and DePuy developed their interest in doctrine in the wake of significant defeats. However, it would be wrong to push this parallel too far, except to say that it is more usual for doctrine to be developed by anonymous committees of staff officers.

thirty minutes and not the one hour suggested in paragraph 22 of the directive. In the Middle East, thirty minutes had been shown to be possible by an experimental Army Air Support Control Unit.

His other criticisms, concerning target selection, the accuracy of bombing and the moral versus material effects of attack from the air, were supported by references to his own experiences, together with reports from Australian troops in Greece, Crete, Syria and Malaya. He suggested that the draft Australian air support doctrine, in contrast to 'the narrow and somewhat circumscribed outlook' of the British directive should be changed and 'our aim made big, even though our first accomplishments may have to be small'.⁵⁵ To achieve this, he proposed a more inspiring tone for the manual and he felt that throughout the document the impression should be given that direct air support be 'recognised as the rule and not the exception'.⁵⁶

Mackay's strong opinions were perhaps also the result of his frustrations with the slow process of developing procedures for the employment of direct air support by Australia's ground and air forces.⁵⁷ The tardiness he complained of was a period of six months spent examining the British directive with very little practical result. Since the agreement with Air Commodore Bladin in December 1941 and the Army Headquarters conference in mid-February 1942, progress on the directive had been so slow that, only now in late April was Mackay being asked to provide comments on the draft Australian air support directive. Many of his general criticisms of the British directive amplified the feeling that the Air Force was holding back from full cooperation:

In spite of all that has happened, my feeling is that the Air Force does not yet realise the full significance and importance of direct cooperation with the Army, nor the tremendous strength of its own arm when employed in this direction ... With regard to the directive itself, it strikes one as somewhat narrow and circumscribed in outlook. It approaches the question grudgingly and lays stress on the small numbers of aircraft available ...

This whole question is so vital to our success that it should not be left to the goodwill of the Services ... it should be made obligatory by higher authority that the Army and Air Force should enter at once upon wholehearted training, till they master all points of this powerful but neglected form of attack.⁵⁸

Mackay's feelings were supported by a Major Molloy, the ALO charged with reviewing Directive No. 3A, which was the foundation document of the Australian doctrine manual. He considered that the revised pamphlet:

... far from being an improvement on No. 3, lays down a policy and a system which is retrograde. It is also considered that the policy is pre-eminently RAF

⁵⁵ Mackay to GHQ, Direct Air Support, 20 April 1942, AA (Melb.), MP 729/6/0, File 37/401/815.

⁵⁶ *ibid.*

⁵⁷ His biographer, Chapman, notes that, upon his return from the Middle East, Mackay was moved to comment on the 'business as usual' attitude prevailing in Australia in the face of the developing Japanese threat. See Chapman, I., *Iven G. Mackay Citizen and Soldier*, Melbourne, 1975, p 242.

⁵⁸ Mackay to GHQ, Direct Air Support, 20 April 1942, AA (Melb.), MP 729/6/0, File 37/401/815.

(Middle East) in that it is indicative of the RAF attitude of being unwilling to delegate the control of any of its forces to the Army.⁵⁹

Directive No. 3A incorporated the experience of exercises and operations in the months which followed the publication of the original pamphlet, especially Operation Crusader, which began on November 18, 1941. However, for Molloy reviewing Directive No. 3A the

... greatest lesson learnt as regards the employment of aircraft in direct support of the Army was that the control of aircraft was too far back, namely, at Army Headquarters. This was the expressed opinion of both Corps Commanders and the other Formation Commanders and it is also the agreed opinion of the two officers responsible for organising air support on behalf of the Army.⁶⁰

Here was the familiar Army complaint about control of Air Force assets. The AIF's view was that control of aircraft and communications should be devolved to the formations which were intimately involved with the battle.

Control was also now very much an issue for the senior Army leaders. In late March 1942, General MacArthur had arrived in Australia and was appointed Supreme Commander of Allied Forces in the SWPA. Control of strategic planning and operations in the SWPA was centred in MacArthur's headquarters. American dominance was also reflected in the appointment of senior commanders within the theatre. Despite Blamey being given the position of Commander Allied Land Forces, MacArthur's senior staff comprised American officers, most of whom had come with him from the Philippines. MacArthur ignored suggestions by General George C. Marshall, the US Army's Chief of Staff, and made no attempt to appoint senior Australian officers to his staff on the grounds that 'there was no prospect of obtaining qualified senior staff officers from among the Australians'.⁶¹ At least one senior American officer discovered this was not true and the Australians, '... though they were usually too polite to say so, considered the Americans to be - at best - inexperienced theorists'.⁶² As a result of this policy, Blamey's headquarters was almost entirely staffed by Australians, who were effectively deprived of any real authority in the higher direction of the war.⁶³

Blamey was not the only senior officer who experienced problems with the supreme commander. Perhaps the clearest demonstration that coalition warfare is about the inter-play of personalities and the interests of national sovereignty was the fate of General Brett. Brett was appointed Commander Allied Air Forces at the same time

⁵⁹ AA. MP 729/7/0, File 323/701/407. Extract from minute dated 5 May 1942.

⁶⁰ Molloy did accept some of the modifications in the new directive. For example, he agreed with the need to mark armoured fighting vehicles and incorporated the simplified system of ground to air recognition signals into the Australian draft manual.

⁶¹ Long, G., *MacArthur as Military Commander*, London, 1969, p 91. The Australian official history records that there was no evidence of MacArthur ever asking Blamey to supply senior staff officers, although there were many who '... had the advantage of experience in recent operations in Africa, Europe and Asia.' McCarthy, D., *South-West Pacific Area First Year: Kokoda to Wau*, Canberra, 1959, p 29.

⁶² Eichelberger, R., *Jungle Road to Tokyo*, London, 1951, p 29.

⁶³ The American domination of operational planning influenced the development of both forces and, while the Australians generally achieved a high level of tactical competence, very few senior officers were exposed to the complexities encountered by commanders at the operational level of war.

that Blamey became the Land Commander. It was therefore with Brett that any agreement over direct support would have to be negotiated. However, Brett was never in favour with MacArthur and rapidly lost his support in America as senior US air officers began to object to the reliance of their forces on the Australians. The use of RAAF systems and procedures for allocation and recording of missions was now seen as endangering 'the identity of their air units'.⁶⁴ Major General Robert C. Richardson, on a tour of Australia for General Staff Headquarters in Washington, reported that '... a historian examining these records would never know that the Americans ever participated in these operations.' He was also of the opinion that '... no American Commander should be placed in the position of being dependent on foreigners for the communications essential to combat'.⁶⁵

Washington agreed with Richardson. In late July 1942, General J.T. McNary, Marshall's deputy, chaired a conference to consider Richardson's report.⁶⁶ General H.H. Arnold, Chief of the US Army Air Forces, reacting to the information in Richardson's report, complained that American '... units are not being employed in accordance with War Department doctrines and principles ... and no attempt has been made on our part to gain control'.⁶⁷ By endeavouring to build a genuinely combined Allied Air Force, Brett was running counter to a long standing American policy.⁶⁸ The SWPA was to be an American controlled theatre and Arnold's statement was a clear enunciation of this policy.

Brett's disfavour with MacArthur is more difficult to explain. The hostility, it would appear, was all on MacArthur's part and Brett seemed at a loss to understand the cause of the supreme commander's antipathy.⁶⁹ As Brett would tell his replacement, General George Kenney: 'I have seen General MacArthur just seven times. Every endeavour I have made to explain what I was trying to do has been lost among lengthy dissertations which I would not take the time to deliver to a second lieutenant ... he is ... absolutely bound up in himself.'⁷⁰ In fact, part of the answer may have been

⁶⁴ *The AAF in Australia to the Summer of 1942*, p 74. The USAAC received mission assignments and filed operational reports on RAAF forms. The latter were sent to Allied headquarters via RAAF channels and contained no reference to the USAAC beyond the type of aircraft used.

⁶⁵ *ibid.*, p 34.

⁶⁶ Craven, W., & Cate, J., (eds), *The Army Air Forces in World War II*, Vol IV, p 98. The result of this conference was a plan to form the US air forces into a distinct organisation and free them from obligations to the defence of Australia.

⁶⁷ Horner, D., *Crisis of Command*, Canberra, 1978, p 113.

⁶⁸ In 1917, the US Secretary for War, Newton Baker, had written to General Pershing regarding his approach to working within the coalition with the French and British: 'You are directed to cooperate with other forces employed against the enemy, but in so doing the underlying idea must be kept in view that the Forces of the United States are a separate and distinct component of the combined forces, the identity of which must be preserved'. Pershing, J., *My Experiences in the World War*, Vol I, New York, 1931, p 38.

⁶⁹ Gillison, D., *The Royal Australian Air Force 1939-1942*, p 571. Gillison suggests that the source of this antipathy was the service rivalry between the US Army Air Corps and the rest of the US Army. MacArthur had served on the court martial of 'Billy' Mitchell and his role in the proceedings of the court was ambiguous. Certainly, for its part, the Air Corps had no reason to count MacArthur as a friend.

⁷⁰ Cited by Wolk, H., 'George C. Kenney: The Great Innovator', in Frisbee, J. (ed.), *Makers of the United States Air Force*, Washington, 1989, pp 133-134.

that MacArthur felt that, in the Philippines, the Air Force had let him down.⁷¹ Kenney would also note that the loyalty of Air Force personnel was a sore point with MacArthur, who said that he ‘... had no use for anyone in the whole organisation from Brett down to and including the rank of colonel’. He felt that the ‘air personnel had gone beyond just being antagonistic to his headquarters ...’, opposing him ‘... to the point of disloyalty’.⁷² Part of the problem which Brett and, after him, Kenney faced in their dealings with MacArthur was the interference from General Richard Sutherland, MacArthur’s chief of staff. Sutherland was protective of MacArthur and, at least while Brett was in charge of the Air Forces, also had a habit of intervening in the planning of air operations, to the point of dictating mission timings and even targets. Kenney was critical of Sutherland’s personality and the historian Gavin Long noted that he ‘... was the wrong chief of staff for MacArthur, whose foibles he would not offset but nourish.’⁷³

By early May 1942, the draft Australian directive on air support was close to publication. On 2 May, Brett informed Blamey that he had ‘... considered the principles enunciated in the draft Directive on Air Support and I am in agreement with those expressed except in the following instances’.⁷⁴ He had three exceptions, the first of which was the prearranged allotment of squadrons to Army formations. Brett suggested significant amendments to sub-para 22 (b) which covered this topic because he said:

I feel that if we make a basic allotment of squadrons now for air support of the Army and we later fail to fulfil it owing to circumstances outside our control, the loss of morale due to this failure will be more serious than the situation brought about by the military commander’s ignorance of what support he can count on for planning his operations.⁷⁵

For the Army this was a major point as they had always felt the control of air assets guaranteed that air support would be forthcoming. In his reply, Blamey conceded the ‘difficulties of allocating squadrons under present circumstances’. The strategic situation in May was rather uncertain. The Japanese were yet to be defeated in the Battle of the Coral Sea and air power was needed to patrol the seaward approaches to Australia and New Guinea. Perhaps with this in mind, Blamey agreed to the alterations to sub-para 22 (b) in order to ‘expedite the publication and issue of the manual’.⁷⁶ However, he pointed out that, unless Air Force units and Army formations ‘... had reasonable experience in Direct Air Support before land operations commence, its potential value will be considerably reduced’.⁷⁷

⁷¹ Manchester, W., *American Caesar*, Melbourne, 1978, pp 206-212 discusses the handling of the USAAC units in the Philippines and MacArthur’s part in the debacle at Clark Field. Other accounts are contradictory and the issue was never formally investigated.

⁷² Kenney, *A General Reports*, New York, 1949.

⁷³ Long, *MacArthur as Military Commander*, p 52. See also Kenney, *op. cit.*, p 53. Kenney characterises Sutherland as arrogant, ambitious and opinionated. Interestingly, he also speculates as to whether Sutherland was even loyal to MacArthur. Eichelberger felt that he was a natural climber who ‘would advance his interests at the expense of other fellows’. See Luvaas, J., (ed.), *Dear Miss Em, General Eichelberger’s War in the Pacific, 1942-45*, Westport, Conn., 1972, p 99.

⁷⁴ AA. A5954/1, File 260/12. Letter from Brett to Blamey dated 2 May 1942.

⁷⁵ *ibid.* Letter from Brett to Blamey dated 2 May 1942.

⁷⁶ *ibid.* Letter from Blamey to Brett dated 7 May 1942.

⁷⁷ *ibid.* Letter from Blamey to Brett dated 7 May 1942.

Despite such a major concession, the manual endorsed by Brett and Blamey on 8 June 1942 represented the Army's views on direct air support. It appeared to be a significant victory for the Army and Mackay would have been pleased by the importance which the manual placed on the morale aspects of air support. However, it was a short lived victory, not least because in many ways the manual was a seriously flawed document. For example, the Army had insufficient trained personnel to man the communications links envisaged in the manual.⁷⁸ Within six months of its publication, reports like the one sent by Wing Commander W. Rae to the CAS were suggesting '... that the system which is being taught in Australia - and which has been accepted by General Brett and General Blamey in the preface to the Manual of Direct Air Support - for some reason is not working in the fighting area'.⁷⁹

The reasons for this had a great deal to do with personalities and coalition politics. When Colonel S. Anderson (USAAC) of the War Department's Operations Division returned from a visit to the SWPA, General Marshall, asked him, 'Should I relieve General Brett?' Anderson's reply was, 'Yes, sir. As long as General MacArthur and General Brett are the commanders in the South-West Pacific, there is going to be no cooperation between the ground and the air, and I don't think you are going to relieve General MacArthur.'⁸⁰ In August Brett was replaced by General Kenney. After winning MacArthur's support, one of Kenney's first acts was the creation of the Fifth Air Force on 3 September 1942. By creating a separate national structure he intended to free the USAAC units in Australia '... of obligations for the immediate defence of Australia in order to concentrate on the support of a rapidly moving offensive to the north'.⁸¹ From an American point of view, the ability to act unilaterally made great sense (operationally, logistically, etc). The establishment of the Fifth Air Force was the natural corollary of their preponderance within the coalition.

This change of leadership brought a change in focus which meant the provision of direct air support was now a very low priority. Wing Commander Rae reported that in New Guinea:

It is felt that the US Army, including the US Army Air Corps ... does not understand the British system ... and therefore the two services are not cooperating satisfactorily ... The solution to efficient Army-Air Cooperation in combat areas appears to depend upon agreement between C-in-C SWPA and C-in-C Allied Land Forces and also the Commander Allied Air Forces that the principles and methods of cooperation in use throughout the British Empire should be adopted *wholeheartedly* in the New Guinea theatre.⁸²

⁷⁸ AA. MP729/6, File 37/401/815. Minute from Director of Military Training dated 11 July 1942 indicated that the shortfall in trained signals personnel was a significant deficiency - 11 officers and 330 other ranks!

⁷⁹ AA. A1196/2, File 36/501/232. Memorandum from WGCdr W. Rae to CAS dated 8 December 1942. Rae's credentials for commenting on the state of Army-Air cooperation in New Guinea are impressive. He had served twice with RAAF No. 3 Army Cooperation Squadron, attended RAF Staff College Andover in 1938, served with an RAF bomber squadron in 1939 and attended both the RAAF School of Army Cooperation and the Senior Army Staff Course (Duntroon) in 1942.

⁸⁰ US Air Force Centre for Historical Research, Montgomery, Alabama. Anderson/Ahmann Interview, pp 186-87.

⁸¹ Craven, W., & Cate, J., (eds), *The Army Air Forces in World War II*, Volume IV, p 98.

⁸² AA. A1196/2, File 36/501/232. Emphasis in the original.

Even the US Army's official history records its overall disappointment with the quality and quantity of direct support in the Papuan campaign during late 1942.⁸³ Kenney's main effort during this period was, correctly, to obtain air superiority. As the Germans had demonstrated in Norway, France and Greece this was the necessary pre-condition for effective land/air cooperation. The development of a workable doctrine for direct air support for the SWPA would have to wait until 1943.

CONCLUSION

After many years observing the US armed forces, Roger Spiller believes that the development of doctrine is '... a continuing process of negotiation and reconciliation between interests within an armed service, the objective of which is the triumph of one over the other'.⁸⁴ Unquestionably, the events surrounding the development of the Manual of Direct Air Support confirm this view but, while it is easy to view them in an entirely negative light, the production of the manual under such conditions in only ten months can also be seen as a significant achievement. Nevertheless, the process would have been much easier without the problems created by two decades of inter-service rivalry. Friction between the services was the main reason that so many of the factors which General Starry believed necessary for change were almost totally lacking. Most notably absent in 1942 were a shared intellectual framework, the building of consensus and continuity of leadership. Not surprisingly, the manual produced under these conditions was a flawed, unworkable document.

After 7 December 1941, inter-allied frictions were added to the problems of inter-service rivalry. Australia's position within the wartime coalition with the United States has been compared to that of the British vis-à-vis the French in 1914 and 1939.⁸⁵ Certainly, the 'political' conditions for American dominance in the Pacific campaign had been decided by MacArthur's appointment as Supreme Commander SWPA. The Supreme Commander's personality only served to reinforce the long standing US policy of maintaining the independence of American forces within a coalition. As the dominant partner, the US dictated coalition policy in key areas. Kenney's creation of the Fifth Air Force was an example of this, as was his ability to prescribe the manner in which the Allied Air Forces would be employed.

What generalisations can be drawn from these events? Perhaps the most important point to make is that, as organisations, armed forces are particularly responsive to the force of personalities. This is both a boon and an affliction. The personality of the commander can inspire victory or bring defeat, create unity or dissension. In 1942, when senior Army and Air Force commanders and their staffs sat down to develop an air support doctrine, they were encumbered by attitudes that ensured they would approach the problem from vastly differing perspectives. Both sides found it

⁸³ Milner, S., *United States Army in World War II, The War in the Pacific: Victory in Papua*, US Army Centre of Military History, Washington DC, 1955, pp 375-76.

⁸⁴ Spiller, R., 'The Tenth Imperative', *Military Review*, LXXIX, April 1989, pp 2-13.

⁸⁵ Barnett, Correlli, and Terraine, John, 'Problems of Coalition War', Report of a Seminar held at the RUSI on 28 January 1981 and published in the *RUSI Journal*, September 1981, Volume 126, No. 3, pp. 3-14. The French in both WWI and again in WWII, during their short lived alliance with the British, could always claim that they were supplying the bulk of the forces in the coalition. Similarly, the Americans would supply the bulk of the air power employed in the SWPA.

difficult to put aside the conflicts of the inter-war period. The soldiers also recalled how air power had failed to support them in the early campaigns of the war, while the airmen retained their faith in an independent vision of air power. Each tended to see air support as a problem of control, rather than a question of cooperation. Very little in the training and experience of these men had prepared them for the unity of purpose they were now trying to achieve and, being instead very human, they remained unswervingly loyal to their original opinions.