

PATHFINDER

AIR POWER DEVELOPMENT CENTRE BULLETIN



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HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS OF AUSTRALIAN AIR POWER DOCTRINE: PART II

This *Pathfinder* examines Australian air power doctrine developments from 1945-2002 and identifies lessons that can be learned for future air power doctrine iterations. As the RAAF transforms to a 21st century air force, it is critical to have an effective and flexible yet robust doctrine to support this transition. This will significantly enhance our ability to realise the intended future Air Force.

Post-World War II plans for the development of the Air Force in the defence of Australia included an operational concept for the employment of air power that stressed air superiority as the first requirement for success. However, there were no formal doctrine publications developed. In a sign of future re-badging of another nation's air power doctrine, the Chief of Air Staff in 1945, Air Vice-Marshal Jones, forwarded an article written by the Commander, United States Army Air Force, on the future of air power to the Australian Secretary of Defence, requesting it be forwarded to the Prime Minister and Minister of Defence with a simple annotation noting its applicability to the RAAF.

While the delay in formalising doctrine was understandable between the World Wars when the fledgling RAAF was fighting for its very survival as an independent force, the inability of the RAAF to formulate doctrine post World War II is an anomaly. Although the RAAF was clearly in a state of demobilisation after 1945, there remained a core group of professionally competent officers who could have captured and codified the valuable lessons from World War II into a distinctive Australian doctrine.

It was only in the mid 1950s that the RAAF adopted the Royal Air Force Manual AP1300 *Operations* as its first formal doctrinal reference. The AP1300 addressed the theory of war, nature and components of air power, and force enablers such as intelligence, force protection, communications, command, leadership, and morale. It served as a doctrinal basis for subsequent RAAF operations

in the Malayan Emergency, the Confrontation with Indonesia and the Vietnam War.

In 1989-90, the RAAF identified the need to develop its own doctrine and produced the first edition of AAP 1000 *The Air Power Manual*. This was a major development, directed by Air Marshal Ray Funnell (the then Chief of Air Staff), who was particularly concerned with Air Force's inability to provide a sound conceptual basis for the role of air power in war.

The 1st Edition discussed the nature of air power and identified some tenets such as concurrent campaigns, unity, independence and balance as the guiding principles for the employment of air power. The document established

an air power hierarchy comprising campaigns, operations, roles, tasks and missions. The apex of the hierarchy, the air campaign, comprised control of the air, air bombardment and air support for combat forces. Six supporting operations—counter air, independent strike, aerial reconnaissance,

surveillance and electronic warfare, airlift, combat air support and sustainment—were identified. Air power roles supported operations through the conduct of missions and tasks. This framework was a logical way to portray the nested relationship between air campaigns, operations, and roles.

Published in 1994, the 2nd Edition was an evolutionary product. The three air campaign subsets were retained with air bombardment being renamed air strike. The six operations identified in the 1st Edition were restructured and separated into four generic air power roles—counter-air, strike and interdiction, anti-surface forces and force enhancement—and five air power support functions (command, control, communications and intelligence, logistics, ground defence, infrastructure, and personnel and training). The hierarchical nature of air power was retained.



There has been a steady evolution in air power doctrine since 1990

Produced in 1998, the 3rd Edition of AAP 1000 comprised only 57 pages (a notable decrease from the 250 plus pages in earlier editions). Like earlier editions, the 3rd Edition also focused on air power characteristics, capabilities, and roles. The edition introduced the notion of 'RAAF principles of air power' to augment the ADF principles of war. Such philosophical foundations for air power doctrine had not been stressed in earlier editions. The 3rd edition also introduced the three levels of air power doctrine that effectively mapped to the three levels of war: strategic, operational and tactical. The document noted that AAP 1000 presented strategic air power doctrine. Such changes reflected attempts to align to broader changes in the ADF such as the formation of Headquarters Australian Theatre in 1996.

Entitled the *Fundamentals of Australian Aerospace Power* and published in 2002, the 4th Edition was significantly reformatted, integrating historical vignettes in an attempt to provide a more readable publication. There was recognition that air power doctrine should be understood by all Air Force personnel. The title '*Australian Aerospace*' reflects a more expanded purpose in providing doctrine for the broader ADF rather than just Air Force. A significant change was the embracing of the term *aerospace power* as distinct to *air power*. The change in terminology reflected a brief period in which the RAAF, like the USAF, appeared to be somewhat captured by the term *aerospace*. Significantly, the 4th Edition does not acknowledge the change of term or note the difference between air power and aerospace power. In some respects, the introduction of the term *aerospace* could be seen as a return to rebranding doctrine without critical analysis, as had been evident prior to 1990.

The heart of the 4th Edition was the traditional discussion of aerospace (read air power) characteristics, aerospace power capabilities and roles and tasks. The air power hierarchy that was integral to earlier editions was changed. The notion of air campaigns as the apex of the hierarchy was discarded. Instead, four aerospace capabilities—offensive combat, rapid mobility, flexible combat support and surveillance and battlespace management—were identified as the strategic framework for Air Force capability management. The initiative was unusual as it was the first time a 'raise, train and sustain' capability aspect was integrated into air power doctrine. Although the air power roles were retained as the key to support operations, the number of roles performed by the Air Force

increased from 10 to 26! Interestingly, counter-air, the term that replaced 'control of the air' as an air power role was positioned uncomfortably within the offensive combat capability.

An examination of air power doctrine development since World War II reveals the process to have been robust and evolutionary since 1990. Although there has been an enduring understanding of air power characteristics and roles in all AAP 1000 editions, a tendency to incorporate changes that on hindsight reflect doctrinal misunderstanding can be seen. The attempt to replace air power campaigns with capabilities and the abrupt change of terminology to *aerospace* are examples. In some respects, such changes have reflected external influences and a tendency to cloud basic and enduring air power doctrine with policy and strategy aspects. Further, there has been a noticeable trend in increasing the number of air power roles. Noting that air power roles should be enduring core functions, there is value in maintaining the number of recognised air power roles to a minimum. The next generation air power doctrine should therefore be developed with a focus on the enduring aspects of strategic air power doctrine.

- *Australian air power doctrine has steadily evolved since 1990.*
- *The air power doctrine development process should be robust enough to avoid ad hoc changes.*
- *In some cases, there has been a tendency to cloud enduring basic philosophical doctrine with short term policy and strategy initiatives.*
- *Air power doctrine should be simple and clear.*

'The RAAF cannot fully discharge its responsibility to the nation until it can, through rigorous analysis, explain the best use of air power. The first step in this responsibility is the establishment of Australian air power doctrine.'

R.G. Funnell
Air Marshal, and former Chief of Air Staff



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