



## THE AIR CAMPAIGN

The air campaign has a prominent position in military operations and forms an integral part of military campaigns conducted in the pursuit of national security interests. An air campaign is the controlled conduct of a series of related air operations to achieve specified objectives. The planning, execution and integration of air campaigns are complex functions and require the application of professional mastery of airmen for their success, as highlighted by our Air Force's air power doctrine.

ADF doctrine defines a campaign as a series of actions to achieve an operational commander's objective, normally within a given time or space. These operational objectives are selected to achieve the desired military strategic end-state. Although all ADF campaigns seek joint outcomes, they may be conducted as a single environmental campaign or as a coordinated combination of maritime, land and air campaigns. The environmental campaigns are defined by the medium in which they are primarily conducted, rather than the medium in which their effects are created. For example, air campaigns are conducted from the air and create effects both in the air and on the surface.

The ability of air power to conduct responsive operations over long distances may sometimes mean that the air campaign alone may be used to achieve the joint strategic or operational outcome sought. More often, joint campaigns will include orchestrated maritime, land and air campaigns, frequently conducted in an expeditionary manner throughout Australia's areas of interest, in the near region and beyond. In all cases, the air campaign will be a vital part of creating the desired joint effects.

Where a joint campaign is being conducted, the planning, conduct and effects of an air campaign must be considered within the larger context, and synchronised with the maritime and land campaigns. Air operations can be conducted simultaneously or in a sequence, as needed, to best harmonise with the campaign objectives and also to optimise the use of available forces. The Air Operations Centre (AOC) plans and executes air campaigns to ensure that their effects are tailored to achieve the desired objectives either independently,

or orchestrated with those of the other joint force components to create joint effects.



*Inside the Air Operations Centre*

The inherent characteristics of air power, such as speed, reach, responsiveness and flexibility, often make the initiation of an air campaign the first action in the joint campaign, especially where speed of response is critical. The requirement for air forces to obtain and maintain control of the air, provide persistent knowledge and shaping of the area of operations and to provide air mobility to support the deployment, manoeuvre, sustainment and redeployment of forces throughout the joint campaign also means that the air campaign is often the last to finish. Throughout the joint campaign, the AOC will be responsible for the assignment of air effort in accordance with the joint commander's priorities.

In a conflict, the air campaign begins with operations to ensure friendly control of the air, an essential prerequisite in any joint campaign. If an adversary chooses to contest control of the air, air forces will conduct a counter air campaign to win and sustain the required degree of control of the air for the duration necessary. Such a contest for control of the air may include air combat operations against airborne enemy aircraft in theatre and air attacks against enemy aircraft and facilities at their operating bases, possibly deep inside enemy territory. Control of the air is not an end state by itself. However, without the necessary level and duration of air control, in a joint campaign, even minimal threat from adversary air power can jeopardise the likelihood

of success of surface campaigns and also lead to unsustainable friendly losses.

Air campaigns can achieve outcomes that contribute directly to strategic and/or operational success. History shows that a successful air campaign is an essential precursor for the success of land and maritime operations in a contested battlespace. The Battle of Britain stands as testament to an air campaign where the British Government had to rely principally on air power to ensure the survival of the nation. This air campaign achieved an operational outcome that denied Germany the pre-requisite of controlling the air over the English Channel prior to invasion. The Battle of Britain made a critical contribution to the strategic outcome of securing the British homeland and the eventual liberation of Europe. Events such as the sinking of HM Ships *Prince of Wales* and *Repulse* in World War II and the 1982 conflict for the Falkland Islands are enduring reminders that control of the air is crucial for effective surface operations.



*F/A-18 Hornets*

With control of the air, air forces can leverage the flexibility of air power to conduct a wider range of operations including independent strategic attacks, shaping, reconnaissance and surveillance operations ranging through, around and beyond the theatre. It can also carry out precision attack and air mobility operations integrated with surface force campaigns. For example, after gaining control of the air, the air campaign in the 1991 Gulf War carried out air strikes that neutralised the Iraqi military's warfighting and C2 capabilities and prepared the battlespace for the land campaign while continuing to provide the massive air

logistics and air mobility effort that was needed for the surface campaign.

The effective, harmonised and timely execution of all the environmental campaigns is vital to the success of joint operations. This naturally places specific demands on personnel to demonstrate the highest level of professional mastery of their environmental capabilities and operations. This mastery must also encompass the ability to integrate and harmonise the three environmental campaigns to achieve joint outcomes.

The air campaign will continue to play a vital part as a first response to any national security crises. Throughout the range of operations, from high-end conflict to humanitarian assistance, the need to counter any adversary air threat and maintain control of the air in the theatre of operations remains the foundation for successful joint, inter-agency or coalition campaigns. Control of the air will be fundamental to other phases of the air campaign, just as it will be to any surface force campaign. The key for masters of air power is to fully understand the air campaign and the impact that it has on the wider joint campaign.

- *The planning, execution and integration of air campaigns are complex functions and require the application of professional mastery of airmen.*
- *Control of the air to ensure the freedom to conduct effective operations is a vital prerequisite for air and surface campaigns.*
- *The air campaign will continue to play a vital part as a first response to any national security crises.*

*The inherent capabilities of the three services can only be fully effective when brought together in cohesive, dedicated environmental campaigns. Air campaigns are coordinated air operations designed to achieve specific strategic objectives, either independently or as part of a larger joint campaign.*



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