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Reforging the sword: United States Air Force tactical air forces, air power doctrine, and national security policy, 1945–1956

Martin, Jerome Vernon, Ph.D.
The Ohio State University, 1988

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REFORGING THE SWORD:
UNITED STATES AIR FORCE TACTICAL AIR FORCES,
AIR POWER DOCTRINE, AND NATIONAL SECURITY POLICY,
1945-1956

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
School of the Ohio State University

By

Jerome Vernon Martin, B.S., M.S.

The Ohio State University
1988

Dissertation Committee:
A.R. Millett
W. Murray
J.R. Bartholomew

Approved by
A.R. Millett
Adviser
Department of History
Dedicated to my mother, Bernice A. Martin, and to the memory of my father, Vernon C. Martin
I am very grateful to Dr. Allan R. Millett for his patience, support and guidance during the research and writing of this dissertation. I am also indebted to Dr. Millett and to Dr. Williamson Murray for the insights they both shared during classes, seminars and discussions. I owe a special debt to Colonel Phillip D. Caine, Deputy Commandant of Cadets for Military Instruction, United States Air Force Academy, for providing me the opportunity to pursue this project and for his encouragement and support throughout. I also appreciate the encouragement provided by Lieutenant Colonel James Titus during particularly difficult periods. I am also grateful to the staffs of the Manuscript Division of the Library of Congress, the Eisenhower Library and the Office of Air Force History for their help in my research efforts. I am particularly thankful for the encouragement and suggestions from Dr. Dan Mortenson at the Office of Air Force History. To my wife Suzi, I give sincere thanks for enduring the pressures of graduate school and the dissertation with me.
VITA

4 March 1950 . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . Born - Valley City, North Dakota

1972 . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . B.S., United States Air Force Academy, Colorado

1972 . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . Student, Armed Forces Air Intelligence Training Center, Lowry Air Force Base, Colorado

1973-1974 . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . Intelligence Officer, Cannon Air Force Base, New Mexico

1974-1975 . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . Intelligence Analyst, United States Support Activities Group, Nakhon Phanom Royal Thai Air Force Base, Thailand

1975-1978 . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . Intelligence Analyst, United States Air Forces in Europe, Ramstein Air Base, Federal Republic of Germany

1978-1982 . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . Instructor and Course Director, Military Training and Military Studies Divisions, United States Air Force Academy, Colorado

1982-1985 . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . Graduate Student, The Ohio State University

1983 . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . M.S., Troy State University, Troy, Alabama

1985-Present . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . Assistant Division Chief and Division Chief, Military Studies Division, United States Air Force Academy, Colorado
PUBLICATIONS


FIELDS OF STUDY

Major Field: Military History
Professor Allan R. Millett
Professor Williamson Murray

Minor Fields: Russian and Eastern European History
Professor Allan K. Wildman

National Security Policy Studies
Professor Joseph J. Kruzel, Jr.
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The United States Army Air Forces emerged from World War II as a strong combat force and with considerable momentum behind its effort to achieve independence from the Army. By the time the United States Air Force (USAF) obtained its much desired independence in 1947, it had lost considerable combat power due to the post-war demobilization, which produced a low level of combat forces and capabilities in all four American military services. The Air Force shrank from a wartime high of 243 combat groups (the standard operational unit, later redesignated wings) to 48 groups in mid-1950. That combat capability which the Air Force was able to maintain was concentrated in the Strategic Air Command (SAC), while transport, air defense, and tactical air forces atrophied.1

Air Force tactical air power, which was largely assigned to the United States Air Forces, Europe (USAFE), the Far East Air Forces (FEAF), and the Tactical Air Command (TAC) in the continental United States (CONUS), had all but disappeared by 1950. Tactical bomber and fighter units were reduced from 108 groups in 1945 to 9 groups in June 1950. USAFE was reduced to only two fighter-bomber units equipped with World War II vintage aircraft, while FEAF retained a
tactical bomber group, three fighter-bomber groups, and two groups of interceptors. Within the United States, TAC was reduced to an administrative headquarters and its aviation assets were combined with those of the Air Defense Command (ADC) under the Continental Air Command (ConAC) in an effort to exploit the flexibility of air power and the advantages of centralized control to gain the greatest possible combat capabilities from the limited number of aircraft which were available.²

The stimuli of Soviet atomic power and the aggression in Korea caused a rapid expansion in American military strength, including considerable growth in air power. When the initial surge leveled off for the "long haul" under President Dwight D. Eisenhower's 1953 "New Look" defense program, strategic air power concepts and forces still tended to dominate national and Air Force plans and programs. However, during the 1950s, the Air Force tactical air forces also developed into a significant force in being within the standing military structure of the United States. The Air Force tactical leaders maintained many traditional operational concepts, while defining new roles for tactical aviation which justified and guided the development and deployment of a substantial combat capability built upon modern aircraft and missiles, with the ability to deliver a variety of weapons, including nuclear warheads, to virtually
any point on the globe. The Air Force and its tactical components were harshly criticized during the 1950s and into the 1960s, especially during the Vietnam War, for the nature of the tactical force structure which was deployed after Korea. However, these tactical air forces reflected the combined influence of national security policy and service doctrine which both justified and shaped the organizations, equipment and operational doctrine of tactical air power in the 1950s.

The reemergence and reshaping of Air Force tactical air power occurred in the midst of a wide ranging debate over the proper strategy and military force structure needed to provide adequate security for the United States. This debate was exacerbated by fiscal constraints that generated aggressive competition for resources between and within the military services. Tactical air power was frequently at the center of many of the key issues of these bureaucratic battles, and the tactical aviation leaders struggled to establish support for a substantial force in being. Although a sizable tactical air force was fielded to fight in Korea, the Air Force leaders recognized that they could not rely on this combat experience and the traditional tactical roles and missions to justify sizeable peacetime tactical air components.
The key to Air Force success in gaining support for tactical air power within the budget battles was linking these forces directly to the stated requirements in the national security policy. These policy statements provided guidance on critical security concerns, general military needs, the perceived threats to national security, specific security commitments, and the expected nature of future conflicts. Although the national security policy should shape and direct the overall force structure, in the American security system, especially as it existed in the late 1940s and 1950s, policy tended to provide the justifications for various strategies and force structures which were advocated by the individual services. The Air Force interpretations of the national security needs were strongly biased by the underlying assumptions of the emerging Air Force doctrine. The leaders and planners of the USAF tactical air forces tied their forces and capabilities, including newly defined missions and operational concepts, directly to critical national security needs, especially as viewed through the prism of the service's doctrine.3

The Air Force was not alone in developing its own interpretation of the national security requirements. During the decline and reemergence of tactical air power, the American military services vigorously advocated divergent military strategies and force structures that reflected service
interests and doctrine. The competing concepts generally accepted the fundamental national objectives of deterrence and containment. However, the specific proposals generated by each service tended to provide protection for the service's programs and validation of the service's doctrine. The competition for limited resources and the lack of a strong unified command structure ensured that interservice as well as intraservice conflicts over security needs would continue indefinitely.⁴

The service doctrines which formed the basis for much of the interservice conflict reflected the services' views on the optimal types of combat forces and the most effective means of employment. Several levels or types of doctrine influence combat forces such as the USAF tactical air forces. These include joint, basic (service), operational, and tactical doctrine. These different types of military doctrine exist in a rough hierarchy and in general have similar objectives and grow from similar roots.

Doctrine is defined in most dictionaries as "something that is taught" or as "a statement of fundamental policy." Doctrine is normally the officially approved guidance for military organizations. It serves to educate the members of the military and also to explain and justify military needs and decisions to outsiders. Doctrine provides guidance for decisions on weapons system development and acquisition,
organizational structure, force requirements, force composition, and combat techniques. Like strategy, doctrine must incorporate assumptions on the capabilities of a potential adversary and the likely nature of the next war. To ensure effective military operations, the doctrine of the military forces should be compatible with the strategy they are supposed to implement. However, a gap between strategy and doctrine may exist, as doctrine tends to reflect an optimized view of a purely military problem, while strategy must incorporate the political guidance of the government.\textsuperscript{5}

Formal doctrine, which is normally stated in manuals or regulations, states fundamental positions which will make it stable over a relatively long period of time. However, doctrinal theory recognizes the danger of prolonged stability and the potential that doctrine will become mired in tradition and become dogma. The military generally accepts the view that erroneous doctrine can lead to disaster in combat. Therefore, the need to evaluate doctrinal concepts and to be open to progress and change is incorporated into most official doctrine. However, even with this recognition, once doctrinal concepts become firmly established, they are difficult to change. Resistance to pressures from new or competing doctrines can be particularly strong, especially when different services are involved.\textsuperscript{6}
Although defined as an official position, doctrine is strongest when it represents the internalized attitudes of a broad segment of any military body. In some cases an organizational mind set or collection of beliefs may actually dominate the military decision process prior to the formalization of doctrine. This informal doctrine may be in conflict with the formal, written doctrine. The strength of informal doctrine grows from stated or unstated assumptions based on common experiences, organizational traditions, and/or the pressures of military expediency. The rise of strategic bombardment doctrine within the U.S. Army Air Corps in the 1920s and 1930s is but one example of the growth and strength of informal doctrine. Much of the formal Air Force doctrine of the late 1940s and 1950s represented the codification of widely held, well established attitudes and operational concepts which grew from the early theories and combat experience. In most cases, strong informal doctrine will eventually become formal doctrine, although this may be slowed by factors such as a potential conflict with the national security policy. Both formal and informal doctrinal concepts are important to all military organizations, and the post-World War II tactical air forces were tightly wrapped in the web of both forms of air power doctrine.

Joint doctrine should be the dominant doctrine within the modern military. This is especially true for forces
designed for theater operations, such as tactical air power. World War II demonstrated the fact that modern military campaigns require well coordinated cooperation between the individual services. In combat and preparation for combat, joint doctrine is required to coordinate the operations, training, development, and education of the individual services. Joint doctrine is also the best point for linking doctrine to national security policy. Joint doctrine can provide information on what is and is not possible militarily, and it can absorb the directives and constraints for dissemination to the services. However, during the period of the late 1940s and 1950s, joint doctrine did not fulfill its theoretical role and it was definitely not the strongest doctrine influencing the Air Force tactical air components or any other component of the American military. During the 1950s, the Dictionary of United States Military Terms for Joint Usage did not even include the concept of doctrine or of joint doctrine.®

The development of joint doctrine was inhibited by the lack of a strong joint command structure and the ongoing interservice conflicts. The joint doctrine which did emerge was often a compromise which was not formally stated, but implied in war plans, standing operating procedures, memorandums of understanding, or directives. Joint doctrine was also handicapped by the absence of a strong tradition of
joint operations in the American military, and it therefore lacked the broad foundation and acceptance of the service doctrines. Indeed, the strength and conflicting positions of the service doctrines inhibited the growth of joint doctrine. The extreme importance of basic Air Force doctrine to the tactical air forces exemplifies this situation.9

From the perspective of the Air Force, basic doctrine provides fundamental principles and concepts for the service as a whole. Basic doctrine serves as the foundation for the more flexible or adaptive employment concepts that are normally described in the operational and/or tactical doctrines. Service doctrines tend to be parochial, particularly in describing the nature of war, how it should be fought, and what the service's roles and missions should be in any future conflict. Disputes over service doctrines, such as many of the arguments involving tactical air power after World War II can become very intense.10

These conflicting service doctrines grow from a similar set of sources, including experience, technology, and the theoretical analysis of military problems. However, the interpretation of these sources is frequently narrowly focused and heavily influenced by service biases. The service doctrines also include assumptions on the nature of the enemy threat and the national strategy. The services often develop their own view of the threat and of what the
national strategy should be, rather than accepting the guidance contained in the national security policy.\textsuperscript{11}

The perspectives found in service doctrines draw heavily from military experience as either a source for or a justification of existing doctrine. In relying on experience, the military is searching for what worked or didn't work in combat operations or in free play exercises. Doctrine can be drawn from the examples of both success and failure. The principles of war which often are cited in American doctrinal pronouncements are an example of the very broad concepts which are taken from experience and implanted into doctrine.\textsuperscript{12}

Although experience is the core of most doctrine, substantial problems can develop from overreliance on this factor. Military commanders have frequently drawn incorrect lessons or interpretations from the experience of combat. This is an especially dangerous likelihood if preconceived notions, including existing doctrine, totally guide the interpretation. This can be a particularly strong tendency in the study of successful operations, as victory often obscures or trivializes problems which defeat clearly illuminates. In exercises, military planners too easily structure the activities to serve more as an example or demonstration than as a real test of the validity of the existing doctrine. In the post-World War II period,
interservice disagreements over the actual lessons of the war often dominated the planning, execution, and interpretation of joint exercises. Interservice conflicts were particularly intense in the preexercise posturing over the assumptions, scenarios, rules, and control of major exercises, as these factors could provide evidence which validated service doctrine and supported key service programs.\textsuperscript{13}

Tactical air power was often at the center of exercise disputes, and much of the argument over doctrinal interpretation of the impact of technology and its relationship to the lessons of the most recent combat experience. Technology is an important component of military doctrine and one of the strongest stimulants of change, although the interrelationship between technology and doctrine can become quite complex. New technology can be absorbed with limited or no doctrinal change; it may lead to an evolutionary shift in doctrine; or it may cause a revolutionary transformation in military doctrine. Much of doctrinal theory suggests that doctrine and appropriate military organizations should lead and guide technological progress and rapidly develop new concepts designed to exploit new technology as quickly as possible. Some critics claim that the military is too taken with advanced technologies. However, other critics of military doctrine often argue that military conservatism
inhibits the forward looking potential of doctrine and that
technology often pulls doctrine along in its wake.\textsuperscript{14}

Air Force leaders, when advocating service positions,
emphasized the technological nature of their service while
citing the failure of the other services to adapt to
technological advances. Air Force doctrine before and after
World War II emphasized the requirement to pursue advanced
technology and to appropriately adjust service doctrine to
any new capabilities. The Air Force also attempted to use
its emphasis on advanced technology to support its efforts
to become the preeminent American military service. During
the 1950s all of the American services attempted to incor­
porate new technology, especially the nuclear weapons which
were becoming available in increasing numbers. These efforts
to absorb new capabilities did not always go smoothly, and
the incorporation of advanced technology into the combat
forces was often shaped by or involved in intense internal
and interservice doctrinal disputes. While claiming to be
pursuing new directions to exploit technology, the services,
including the Air Force, often simply followed well
established service doctrine with only minor
modifications.\textsuperscript{15}

The tactical leaders within the Air Force embraced new
technologies, especially nuclear weapons. The improved
capabilities gained from advanced weapons systems allowed
new operational concepts and justified the enhanced role of tactical air power in the national strategy. Although the new capabilities allowed tactical aviation to perform some important new missions, the impact was not truly revolutionary. The foundations of these new concepts were directly linked to air power doctrine and the roles and missions of air power which the Air Force felt was validated by the experiences of World War II, and later of Korea.\textsuperscript{16}

The exploitation of technology and the evolving roles and missions of the USAF tactical air forces reflected the intimate link between these forces and the theoretical foundations of the basic service doctrine, with roots stretching back to the First World War and the work of interwar air power theorists. This doctrine established the organizational mind set for the Air Force, and, although it was strongly biased towards strategic bombardment, the informal and formal doctrine provided important logical justifications for maintaining Air Force tactical air power. The core tenets of air power theory and the works of post-World War II military theorists also provided a rational foundation for the argument that tactical air forces in being were necessary for the maintenance of American national security. While the tactical forces often had to fight for their existence within an Air Force dominated by a strategic bomber orientation, they could not separate themselves from
the Air Force experience, nor its basic doctrine.\textsuperscript{17}

The strategic bias of the Air Force grew from the air power theories of the 1920s and 1930s. These air power theories laid the foundation of the central employment concepts for air power during the Second World War, and for subsequent air power doctrine as well. The key theorists included Sir Hugh Trenchard in the United Kingdom, Walther Wever in Germany, Alexandr N. Lapchinski and Vasily Vladimirovich Khripin in the Soviet Union, William "Billy" Mitchell in the United States, and perhaps the most quoted of them all, Giulio Douhet in Italy. The emphasis in the theories of these individuals, with some modification based on national attitudes and political realities, was on the use of strategic bombardment in independent combat operations in future wars. Although emphasizing strategic operations, the underlying assumptions on the proper use of air power in these theories created a doctrinal perspective and organizational mind set which had a direct impact on the development of American tactical air power after World War II.\textsuperscript{18}

The central premise of most air power theory was that nations and their military forces must recognize and accept the fact that technology could cause revolutionary changes in the nature of war, that aviation had produced such a change, and that air power was now the decisive military
force in modern combat. Air power theory included three critical corollaries to the concept of decisiveness. Air power must be a force in being; it must be employed offensively; and it should be used independent of the existing surface forces.\textsuperscript{19}

American tactical air power was driven by the principle of offensive decisiveness and the first objective of air operations which Douhet described as gaining "Command of the Air" through offensive action. In Douhet's words, "To have command of the air means to be in a position to prevent the enemy from flying while retaining the ability to fly oneself." This situation is to be gained by destroying "all the enemy's means of flying," not by "seeking them out in the air," but by destroying "his airports, supply bases, and centers of production." After achieving command of the air, Douhet noted that objectives of air attacks might "include paralyzing the enemy's army and navy, or shattering the morale of civilians behind the lines," with the choice of targets being "guided by a great many considerations—military, political, social, and psychological, depending on the conditions of the moment."\textsuperscript{20}

The instrument for this offensive campaign was an independent air force. This organization was to be composed of bomber aircraft, although Douhet and other theorists also called for fighters or "combat units" to support the bombers
prior to the establishment of command of the air. While Douhet emphasized the decisive capability of air power and downplayed the role of surface forces, he also conceded, especially in his early works, that air forces would not be the sole forces and that the surface forces could have their own "auxiliary aviation," but only if funded from the budget of the surface force. Douhet also called for a joint command organization to properly coordinate the activities of the individual services. The principle of offensively employed air power under centralized control was the dominant doctrinal concept of American air power prior to World War II. Although this orientation drove American air power towards strategic bombardment, it also established the conceptual environment surrounding tactical aviation.21

The U.S. Army Air Corps of the 1920s and 1930s identified tactical air forces by the specific missions of individual types of aircraft, observation, attack and pursuit. The observation aircraft were tasked to directly support Army ground actions. Attack aviation was tasked to support surface and air force operations through attacks beyond the range of friendly artillery. The specific attack missions designated by the Air Corps were "the destruction of hostile aircraft on the ground" and "the immobilization of hostile reserves and reinforcements of personnel and materiel." Attack aircraft were also expected to suppress enemy
antiaircraft capabilities. Pursuit units were to "attack and defeat enemy aircraft in flight" and gain "aerial supremacy" in designated areas in support of surface or air force operations. Bombardment aviation was tasked with delivering ordnance against ground targets in tactical or strategical missions depending on the combat conditions. During the interwar years, the U.S. Army aviation community viewed bombardment forces as the decisive air component. By 1930 Air Corps Tactical School texts stated that "In air force operations the interests of bombardment aviation are paramount."\(^{22}\)

The strategic bombardment mission eventually dominated the American Army Air Corps/Forces community, both as a compelling doctrinal objective and as a justification for an independent air arm. The strategic orientation reduced the importance of direct support missions in the view of senior aviation leaders, although this perception was not unopposed. The Army and the Navy both resisted the emphasis on strategic bombing and the inherent implication that traditional military forces should be reduced or abolished. Within the air arm, advocates of attack and pursuit aviation argued for at least a more balanced air force. One of the more outspoken of these internal critics was Claire Chennault, a pursuit pilot who charged that,

These bomber generals had an inflexible orthodoxy all their own and were just as ruthless and
unfair in squelching opposition within the Air Corps as the Army and Navy were in attempting to smother the development of all airpower.\textsuperscript{23}

In spite of the efforts by the advocates of the other missions, strength of the bomber movement and the limited budgets of the 1930s generally inhibited tactical aviation developments prior to World War II.\textsuperscript{24}

The air combat of World War II produced a multitude of experiences which were subject to a variety of interpretations in the pursuit of truth in air power doctrine. The strategic advocates drew from both the European Combined Bomber Offensive and the Japanese air campaign to show that a strategic bombardment campaign conducted by both bombers and supporting fighters was indeed the decisive factor in modern warfare. The analysis of these strategic campaigns emphasized the need to first gain air superiority which could benefit both strategic and tactical operations. Strategic operations then could destroy the enemy war making potential, reduce the enemy's will to continue the battle, and participate in the reduction of the enemy's surface forces. These strategic forces must operate under an air commander who was subordinate only to the national military commanders. The strategic air advocates felt that their position was made even more secure by the atomic bomb.\textsuperscript{25}

The tactical portion of the air power equation and the importance of tactical operations were clearly demonstrated
in the China-Burma-India, Pacific, and European Theaters of Operations. These examples were cited by post-war advocates of a more balanced force structure who accepted the importance and decisiveness of air power, including both strategic and tactical operations, but believed that air power could not win a war alone. These individuals could point to the air-ground-sea teamwork which gained victories in major campaigns in all theaters of operation. The formal post-war doctrinal lessons of these campaigns tended to be drawn primarily from the experiences of the final drive in Western Europe, especially the cooperation of the Ninth Air Force and its associated tactical air commands with the Twelfth Army Group and its subordinate armies.26

For post-war Air Force leaders the European experience became a model for the traditional tactical roles and missions, especially when viewed within the context of air power doctrine. The doctrinal foundation of the European campaign was codified in Field Manual 100-20, Command and Employment of Air Power, which was written after the North African campaign. These concepts were reiterated in the after action reports of the major commands. The key element in these doctrinal statements was the acceptance of the coequal and independent status of air and ground forces. This included the acceptance by senior Army officials of the centralized control of tactical air power under air
commanders who would coordinate with, but not operate solely in support of, nor be subordinate to, ground commanders. Based on the World War II experience, tactical air power advocates viewed themselves as coequal members of a joint theater team.\textsuperscript{27}

The doctrine of the European Theater of Operations also produced a list of missions or phases of operations which remained in tactical doctrine after the war. These missions also were placed in a specific order of priority. In tactical operations, as with the strategic arena, the manual identified gaining control of the air as the most important mission of the air forces. FM 100-20 emphasized this by stating that "Air Forces must be employed against the enemy's air forces until air superiority is obtained." The second priority mission was the interdiction of enemy units and supplies before they could be brought to bear on the field of battle. As with pre-war theory, the air commanders believed that the most efficient use of air power was to destroy the men and materiel of war as far as possible from the front lines. The logical extrapolation of this concept was that strategic bombing was the most efficient use of air power, although interdiction was viewed as a decisive theater complement to any strategic air campaign. The final mission in this listing of priorities was the close cooperation with ground forces which were engaged in combat
with the enemy.  

This last mission, which is also known as close air support, was generally the type of mission preferred by the lower and middle level ground force commanders, while many senior ground commanders and the air commanders emphasized the need for air superiority missions and attacks on deeper targets. During the final campaign in Europe the Ninth Air Force had enough aircraft and the German Air Force had been so reduced by combat that considerable close air support missions could be flown. Some Air Force commanders felt that this experience caused Army officers who were later promoted to senior positions to expect more air support than was possible and to expect greater control over the allocation of missions than the established doctrine actually allowed.  

Air Force doctrine at the end of the war, as stated by senior commanders, emphasized the dominance of decisive, independent air operations in modern warfare. The preferred concepts for tactical or theater operations called for offensive action against the enemy's air power and other deep targets. The Air Force doctrine also cited the need for centralized control which would allow the selection of the most critical targets and the exploitation of the flexibility and responsiveness of air power. This included the concept that air power could be used to support American
interests anywhere in the world. Additionally, the Air Force leadership emphasized the need to incorporate advanced technologies rapidly into the air power instrument. In sum, senior Air Force commanders generally believed that air power would be the decisive element of the nation's military in the post-war world.

The Air Force tended to focus the concept of decisiveness on the justification of strategic air power, but decisiveness also dominated the service perspective of the value of tactical aviation in the theater roles and missions. As the United States became a more active player in the post-World War II world, the Air Force began to advocate the development and maintenance of both strategic and tactical air power as the foundation of deterrence and containment. The service presented the two types of air power as complementary and "indivisible." However, the strategic component was always given priority, and even the tactical advocates within the Air Force generally accepted the dominance of the strategic air operation in doctrine and in establishing priorities for the force structure. Therefore, during the post-war demobilization, Air Force doctrine caused the service to struggle to maintain a strategic force in being while allowing the tactical force capability to decline until adequate resources allowed its resurgence.
The size and orientation of Air Force tactical air power was directly linked to the national security policy, the associated commitments and the allocated resources. The security policy allowed little room for tactical aviation until the combat demands of the Korean War and the growth of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) created demands for traditional tactical air power. The tactical air force leaders went beyond these requirements to develop specific roles and missions which would support and solidify their position in the standing peacetime forces of the United States. This search for a long-term justification within the security policy and the service doctrine led Air Force tactical air power to participation in the strategic air offensive, new theater concepts for NATO, and new roles in various contingency operations which sprouted around the containment policy. The Air Force cited the inherent flexibility and decisiveness of air power, and increased combat and cost effectiveness to support the expanded security importance of tactical aviation. However, the difficulties of meeting the varying demands of these diverse missions created major problems for the Air Force and forced the service to make hard decisions and compromises on equipment, organizations, tactics and training which created the unique nature of the United States Air Force tactical air power which was fielded during the 1950s.
NOTES FOR INTRODUCTION

1. All figures extracted from Comptroller General of the USAF, United States Air Force Statistical Digest, 1947 through Fiscal Year (FY) 1960 editions (Washington: USAF, 1948-1961) (Hereafter Statistical Digest). The January 1949 to June 1950 edition of the Statistical Digest places the June 1950 strength at 46 groups; however, subsequent Digests all list the 1950 low point as 48 groups.

2. Statistical Digest, 1947 and FY 1950. In 1950 one of the fighter groups was assigned to the Strategic Air Command. Additionally, eleven specialized air defense groups were available to the USAF.


9. For the struggle over strong joint control, see for example Caraley, Military Unification. The struggle over


21. Douhet, *Command of the Air*, pp 34-35 & 70-76. On auxiliary aviation, Douhet emphasized that this must be funded by the individual services to avoid detracting from the independent air force capability. He felt that the other services would tire of the fiscal burden and would soon recognize that the independent air force could provide adequate air power for victory and that their auxiliaries were inefficient. The services would therefore drop their air arms and rely on the independent air service. (See for

22. Wolk, Planning and Organizing, p 1; Air Service Tactical School, Pursuit, (Langley Field, VA: ASICS, 1924), p 1; ASICS, Bombardment, pp 1 & 2; Air Corps Tactical School(ACTS), Attack Aviation, (Langley Field, VA: ACTS, 1930), pp 20-21, 36-38, 42 & 44.


CHAPTER I
TACTICAL AIR POWER'S DECLINE:
THE SEARCH FOR ROLES AND MISSIONS
1945-1950

From the conclusion of World War II to the beginning of the Korean War, the Air Force tactical components (U.S. Army Air Forces to 1947 and then U.S. Air Force) suffered through a decline which virtually eliminated their combat potential in the standing force structure. This situation reflected a national security policy which provided limited funding to the military services and made few specific military commitments which required tactical air forces. The emerging national strategy and the Air Force doctrinal orientation towards strategic air operations further limited any major allocation of resources to tactical air power. The tactical leaders within the Air Force generally accepted the importance of strategic bombardment. However, they also sought to justify an increased posture for tactical aviation within the U.S. force structure by integrating advanced technologies, especially nuclear weapons, into established doctrine and developing new roles and missions for tactical air power. The tactical community linked these improved capabilities and operational concepts directly to critical national security commitments. The developing roles and
missions and their relationship to national strategy and Air Force doctrine justified larger standing forces after the Korean War and created the unique shape of the tactical air forces during the 1950s.¹

During the late 1940s, the tactical community developed conceptual roles for tactical air forces in support of the strategic air offensive, as the decisive military force in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and as the critical U.S. component in support of any contingency operation required by the policy of "Containment." The Air Force presented these tactical forces as a logical complement to the strategic air forces within a security concept based on air power. The Air Force argued that adequate strategic and tactical air power could guarantee U.S. safety through deterrence, and if necessary the ability to fight and win either limited wars or major wars, whether nuclear or conventional.

Demobilization and Organizing for Security (1945-1947)

During the initial two years after the Second World War, the American military establishment demobilized the bulk of the substantial forces it had built during the war. Concurrently, senior military and civilian leaders attempted to develop an effective defense organization which could better plan and direct the forces which were required to support America's increased international responsibilities.
The Air Force leadership pursued a clear set of objectives during this period, with the first priority of gaining independence from the Army. The second and closely related priority was establishing the Air Force as the preeminent service and installing air power as the foundation of American national security.

The strategic warfare mission dominated the Air Force mind set during this time period. The atomic bomb and established doctrinal concepts promised decisiveness through strategic air operations. However, the service also wanted to retain the tactical aviation, air defense, and airlift capabilities under the doctrinal concepts of centralized control and indivisibility of air power. The Air Force leadership accepted the value of all air missions, but placed strategic warfare at the top when it established priorities. To ensure continued Army support for Air Force independence, the service leaders committed themselves to maintaining tactical air power and the ability to perform the close air support mission.2

During the pursuit of independence, Air Force leaders and other air power advocates continued the proselytizing campaign which they had been waging during and before World War II. They emphasized the role of air power as the decisive arm in modern combat, and the corollary that surface forces could not be successfully used in battle
without friendly air power first winning the air war. They also asserted that the early use of sufficient offensive air power might eliminate or substantially reduce the need for surface combat. ³

Air Force leaders and planners incorporated this logic into plans for a post-war strategy and force structure built around an air power "force in being." The service argued that if funding was limited, air power, especially the strategic component, must be kept strong. The Air Force proponents contended that surface forces could be mobilized under the protective cover of air power. The Air Force advocates noted that if adequate air power was maintained it would deter enemy aggression. If deterrence failed, air power, with its inherent mobility, flexibility, and striking power, could quickly react and extinguish the threats before they could damage the security interests of the United States. The atomic bomb amplified the importance of deterrence in both its punitive and war fighting forms. This emphasis on deterrence and the key role of strategic air operations provided little reason to maintain tactical air forces which were primarily tasked to support the ground forces. ⁴

The post-war plans developed by the USAAF during the latter portion of World War II emphasized bomber forces which could support the new American global
responsibilities, either in unilateral action or as part of a United Nations "police force." Although the plans included tactical components of light bombers and fighters, these units were not the critical elements. Air Force employment concepts assigned many of the fighter units to the escort or support of the long-ranged bombers until the strategic air battle was won and air superiority established. The tactical units would then perform the traditional theater air missions including cooperation with the ground forces.5

The initial, February 1944, plan for a post-war Air Force called for 105 combat groups. The offensive combat power was assigned to forty-two long-ranged bomber, forty-five fighter, and four light bomber groups. This plan was not constrained by cost or consideration for Army and Navy requirements. Subsequent iterations of the USAAF plans called for seventy-five or seventy-eight combat groups. These projections were countered by War Department plans which included as few as sixteen active duty groups within a mobilization oriented national security program.6

The Air Force aggressively resisted the inclusion of air power in any mobilization program. The service leaders continuously emphasized the need for an air force in being capable of immediate and decisive offensive action. Based on this concept, the Air Force proposal which gained the endorsement of the JCS in September 1945 was a seventy group
program. This plan reduced the long-ranged bomber force to twenty-five groups, while light and medium bombers dropped to four, and fighters to twenty-five units. The employment concepts and the allocation of manpower and equipment resources within this plan reflected a strong bomber bias.7

The proposed post-war Air Force organization was the subject of extensive internal U.S. Army Air Forces debate. The Air Force leadership wanted a structure which would optimize the strategic striking power. Many senior officers believed that this could best be accomplished by combining all offensive air power under centralized control in a "Combat Command" or a "Global Striking Force." This was similar to the original Eighth Air Force structure and employment concept in Europe during World War II. Early in the American air effort over the continent, the Eighth controlled both the bombers and fighters. After the Normandy invasion, the Eighth controlled the bombers and fighters which were waging the strategic bombing campaign, while the Ninth Air Force controlled the fighters and tactical bombers which supported the theater ground operations. The Fifteenth and Twelfth Air Forces had similar responsibilities in the Mediterranean theater.8

Air power theory clearly called for the single combat command and the strong centralized control of all air assets. The supporters of this position argued that the
terms strategic and tactical should describe missions and not organizations or aircraft types. Advocates of a single command claimed that splitting air assets by mission would inhibit the exploitation of the inherent flexibility of air power and degrade the combat strength of the Air Force. In support of this position, they also argued that during World War II tactical aircraft supported the strategic bombing campaign and bombers flew tactical support missions when needed. Some Air Force planners also felt that if the American military forces were kept at a very low level, the service could maintain the strongest possible combat capability only by consolidating all of the combat power into one command.

The single command concept was not popular among senior Army officers. Many of these officers accepted the concept of an independent Air Force, as they had been impressed by the air support which they had received from the semi-autonomous air forces during the war. The Army leadership also felt that air power was clearly a decisive factor on the modern battlefield. However, many Army officers were suspicious of the Air Force tendency to emphasize strategic bombing, often at the expense of tactical missions. This perspective was based on experiences such as the fight to gain additional air preparation from the long-ranged bombers prior to the Normandy invasion. Additionally, statements by
senior Air Force leaders often relegated the Army and Navy to secondary or tertiary roles in the post-war defense posture and in future wars. Therefore, some in the Army feared that tactical air support might disappear in an independent air service.\textsuperscript{10}

Air Force leaders recognized this problem and attempted to defuse it as a threat both to independence and to the concept of the indivisibility of air power. The solution developed by the Air Force was to reject the single combat command and form three combat commands based on the types of operations described in FM 100-20, \textit{Command and Employment of Air Power}. In March 1946, the War Department issued general orders forming the Strategic Air Command (SAC), the Tactical Air Command (TAC), and the Air Defense Command (ADC) within the Army Air Forces. Other Air Force combat units were also assigned to overseas commands in Alaska, the Caribbean, the Far East, and Europe. In addition to the symbolism of the command structure, Air Force leaders such as General Carl Spaatz gave Army leaders, including General Eisenhower, strong assurances that the Air Force would always remain committed to providing adequate air support to the American ground forces. These efforts were successful, as the Army supported the creation of the Air Force in the National Security Act of 1947, and accepted the Air Force retention of the tactical support mission in Executive Order 9877,
"Functions of the Armed Forces," as well as during the Key West and Newport meetings.\(^{11}\)

The tactical air leadership within the Air Force was committed to both independence and to providing adequate support to the Army in theater warfare. General Elmo R. "Pete" Quesada, the first commander of the newly created Tactical Air Command, wanted to build the new organization on the model of the Ninth Air Force in Europe. He wanted TAC to work closely with the Army and to emphasize the employment concepts of "mobility and flexibility." To stress the need for close cooperation between air and ground forces, General Quesada moved the TAC Headquarters from Tampa, Florida to Langley Air Force Base (AFB), Virginia, near the Headquarters of the Army Ground Forces at Ft. Monroe. General Quesada stated that his objective was to provide the Ground Forces with such superior air support that the Army would be forced to admit that the tactical air command forces under the jurisdiction of the United State Air Force was to their benefit.\(^{12}\)

The Tactical Air Command envisioned by Quesada was, however, stillborn under the fiscal constraints of the national security policy and the strategic orientation of the Air Force and national strategies. The seventy group Air Force and its five tactical bomber and twenty-five fighter groups would have provided a reasonably strong tactical force, especially if equipped with modern aircraft.
Although the Air Force activated a total of seventy groups by mid-1947, only fifty-five of these units were close to adequately manned with the rest being held in skeleton status. By December of 1947, only forty-seven groups were manned and equipped, and most of these were not fully capable of conducting combat operations. The Air Force lobbied for more funding and attempted to break the "balanced" approach to defense spending in favor of an air-dominated strategy and budget. The President's Air Policy Commission of 1947 supported the call for a stronger air power structure. However, the Truman administration clung to its concerns for fiscal security and neither additional funding nor a radical shift in its distribution were forthcoming. The fiscal restrictions intensified the interservice competition and caused the Air Force to emphasize its most critical priorities in its force development.\(^{13}\)

Air power doctrine and the atomic bomb led Air Force leaders to place their strongest efforts on building up the Strategic Air Command and its limited atomic and conventional retaliatory capability. In spite of the commitment to tactical air power which had been given to the Army, the tactical decline that began during the demobilization continued after the reorganization. While the slide in capabilities was not popular with tactical leaders, they tended to accept the need to give first priority to the
Strategic forces until increased funding was available. Air Force leaders rationalized the reduced tactical air force levels by noting that the forces were adequate to support the existing Army ground forces. The Army had shrunk from eighty-nine divisions at the end of the war to a 1947 level of twelve understrength divisions, ten of which were on occupation duty, with only two in the general reserve. To support these units, the Air Force could draw from twenty-four fighter and five tactical bomber groups in the United States. The overseas deployments included single understrength fighter groups in Europe, Alaska, and the Panama Canal Zone, as well as nine fighter and two tactical bomber units in the Pacific. The tactical leaders within the Air Force initially concentrated on maintaining the existing tactical force levels as the nucleus for any future mobilizations.14

The tactical community also worked to retain and solidify the established doctrine to ensure effective operations in the next war. This was complemented by tactical planners seeking and developing new roles and missions which would justify an expanded tactical aviation force in being under the service and national strategies. The first emergency war plans developed by the Air Force, MAKEFAST in 1946 and EARSHOT in 1947, provided little support for large tactical air forces. Both plans emphasized a strategic air offensive
waged by long-ranged bombers delivering conventional and atomic weapons. While these were unilateral plans, the concepts which they reflected also dominated the national planning process. The development of joint war plans was relatively slow in the early post-war years. In 1946 and 1947, the Joint Staff was unable to reach agreement and did not approve emergency war plans BROILER and PINCHER. Both plans mirrored the Air Force plans in their emphasis on the strategic air offensive, and this concept remained the foundation for subsequent joint emergency war plans. The strategic air offensive was also the center piece when the joint planning staff produced medium-ranged plans (projecting forward two years) for budgeting or mobilization programming, and long-ranged plans (8-10 years in the future) for guiding research and force modernization.15

Like the Air Force plans, the joint plans included limited justification for substantial standing tactical air forces designed for traditional roles and missions in support of a theater surface campaign. These plans incorporated the Air Force strategic air offensive as the critical U.S. action in a war between the Soviet Union and the United States and its allies. These early plans assumed the loss of Europe in the face of the enormous Soviet conventional forces. The plans also assumed that American forces could not profitably be committed to the Asiatic mainland.
During the initial phases of the planned war, the American military along with allied forces would secure the Western Hemisphere, important lines of communication (LOCs), and critical base areas. Additionally, the military was tasked with initiating a strategic air offensive as early as possible after the start of hostilities. The United States would also begin a massive mobilization program which would eventually allow the final defeat of the aggressor in a rather long war.\(^{16}\)

American tactical air power had a relatively minor role in these plans. The tactical air forces in being at the start of the war would conduct security operations and provide support for the strategic air offensive. When bases and capabilities allowed, fighters would escort the bomber force. Additionally, American tactical aircraft would help protect the forward bases needed by the strategic bombers in the United Kingdom; the Cairo-Suez area; Karachi, Pakistan; and Okinawa. The Air Force planned to develop the tactical forces required to support the surface counteroffensive during the mobilization period.\(^{17}\)

The prevailing national strategic concepts of the late 1940s, combined with the budget restrictions, forced the virtual elimination of tactical air power. The Air Force, the Truman administration, and key Army leaders generally accepted this situation. However, increasingly vocal
conflicts developed within the American government, including the military, over the need to react to growing Soviet aggressiveness with a stronger military and a more clearly defined, more firmly stated national security policy and military strategy. This conflict became increasingly intense between the end of the Unification battles in late 1947 and the beginning of the Korean War. While the Air Force emphasis on strategic bombing remained at the center of the struggle over strategy and funding, the critical corollary in many of the debates was the claim that the Air Force was not maintaining an adequate tactical capability.

**Attempting to Rebuild Military Strength (1948-1950)**

During the late 1940s, events such as the Czecho­slovakian coup, the Berlin Blockade, and the Soviet test of an atomic bomb stimulated senior American military and government leaders to advocate improved national security programs. The Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan were major statements that the United States intended to accept the responsibility of a major power and block Soviet aggressiveness in a policy which became known as "Containment." In November 1948, the President approved NSC 20/4 which emphasized "measures short of war" to resist Soviet aggression, reduce Soviet power and influence, and eventually modify Soviet behavior. NSC 20/4 cited the need to support this program with adequate peacetime military strength in
the United States and Europe. In the event of war, NSC 20/4 established basic objectives which lasted into the Eisenhower administration.18

The American military leadership warned that existing military strength, including the limited tactical air power, was inadequate to support these growing global commitments. The military services argued that enhanced combat forces were required to support American foreign policy and deter Soviet military aggressiveness. If a war began, the standing forces would at least prevent a quick Soviet triumph and provide the foundation for eventual victory by the West. While recognizing the importance of military support for American commitments, the Truman administration continued to emphasize a conservative fiscal policy and to severely limit the funds which were available to the military. This situation only intensified the interservice disputes over strategy and force composition. The Air Force continued to demand that funding priority be placed on air power, especially the SAC air-atomic capability, which was quite limited throughout the late 1940s.19

The Air Force continued to reduce its tactical forces under this strategic orientation. In addition to the decline in combat capability, the Air Force changed the Tactical Air Command, the symbol of its commitment to tactical aviation, to an administrative headquarters. TAC
retained responsibility for planning and doctrinal development, but it no longer controlled any operational aircraft. The assets of TAC were combined with those of the Air Defense Command and placed under the Continental Air Command (CONAC). Although SAC retained its separate status, CONAC was presented as a logical concentration of combat power and as a step towards a centralized combat command. However, Air Force leaders such as General Hoyt S. Vandenberg conceded that the service created the new command because the capabilities of TAC and ADC had declined to marginal levels. The Air Force felt that CONAC could exploit the flexibility of air power and gain the greatest capability from the forces which remained.20

The Air Force, through the creation of CONAC, the reduction of TAC, and the continued emphasis on the strategic forces created openings for increased political and bureaucratic attacks on the Air Force and its strategic concepts. The most intense manifestation of this conflict was the B-36 controversy and the "Revolt of the Admirals" with the associated Congressional hearings. The initial focus of this political feud was on the capabilities and relative merits of the B-36 and the super carrier as well as alleged overemphasis on the strategic air offensive. The testimony of Navy and Marine officers before Congress shifted much of the emphasis to the neglect of tactical air
support by the Air Force. This may have been an effort to attack what they believed to be the weakest link in the Air Force program, or the Navy may have intended to attempt to draw the Army to their side of the debate. While the Navy attacks scored some points, on the whole the effort foundered. 21

The Army testimony in the hearings generally backed the existing strategy and, with some reservations, the Air Force position. Senior Army officers such as Generals Omar N. Bradley and J. Lawton Collins indicated that although they did not believe that strategic bombing alone would win a war they accepted the importance of an established air-atomic capability for deterrence. The senior levels of the Army viewed the reduction of the tactical air capability as "a calculated risk which we have been forced to accept in view of overall budget limitations." The Army added that it expected the Air Force to give priority to tactical aviation in any future expansion. 22

Air Force leaders and supporters vigorously defended the service's force structure and strategic concepts before Congress and in public statements and articles. The Air Force formed a special task force to help it battle the Navy challenge and sell the service position. The service presented the TAC-SAC relationship as a zero sum game in which, given the absence of increased funding, any increase of
tactical forces would result in a decrease of strategic forces. In 1948, an internal Air Force board of senior officers confirmed the service commitment to strategic forces at the expense of tactical and air defense programs. Before Congress, the Air Force leadership stressed the importance of strategic forces for deterrence and for the initial strategic air offensive.23

The Air Force commanders emphasized that they retained a commitment to the air-ground team within the forty-eight group program. Although they admitted that the tactical forces were limited, they noted that these forces were no less capable than the Army ground forces which they were to support in combat. General Vandenberg stated that the Air Force was funding tactical programs to provide

The minimum tactical air force requirements which permit joint training with other forces for testing and improvement of new tactics, techniques and equipment, for some limited deployment during the early phases of a war, and for a minimum basis for expansion in event of war.24

The Air Force strategic perspective reflected the worst case situation, a general war with the Soviet Union. The U.S. military recognized that lesser conflicts were possible, but the requirements of the strategic mission severely limited the forces which could be made available for what would eventually become a major tactical mission, deterring and fighting peripheral or limited wars. In 1949, the Joint Army-Air Force plan for employing the general reserve in a
temperate climate reflected the limited combat capabilities of these forces. The plan, WORKDAY, assumed a police type action in a highly permissive environment. Under this plan, the Army would commit a regimental combat team by air and reinforce this unit by the sealift of two infantry divisions and an armored combat command. The Air Force support was provided by a tactical air force composed of a light bomber group, a fighter group, and a reconnaissance squadron. The planners considered a larger operation unlikely short of at least the mobilization of National Guard units. These limited tactical air forces and the associated ground forces clearly reflected the strategic orientation in both the national and the Air Force strategies.25

The national strategy formally emerged in the first approved war plan, HALFMOON, in May 1948. HALFMOON grew out of the BROILER concept and was itself further updated to FLEETWOOD and TROJAN during 1949. All of these emergency war plans continued the earlier, unapproved emphasis on the early initiation of a strategic air offensive against the "vital elements of the Soviet war-making capacity." Due to range limitations, the conventionally and atomic armed bombers would stage from forward bases around the periphery of the Soviet Union. The general concepts of these short-range plans were also found in the long-term plans such as CHARIOTEER, which projected a war fought in 1955-1956. The
1948 Air Force Short Range Emergency Plan, HARROW, and the intermediate plans DARK HORSE and FIRMER supported the joint plans, but also emphasized the growing Air Force perspective that the atomic portion of the strategic air offensive would be decisive and victory could be achieved without a costly surface campaign.26

The later versions of the joint emergency war plan series assumed the loss of the Middle East areas and added bases in Northwest Africa. Additionally, while continuing to assume the loss of Europe, the plans added an attempt to hold at the Rhine and failing that to hold a bridgehead on the continent. These approved war plans continued to include only limited requirements for American tactical air power in the initial phases of the war. A substantial American tactical air effort was not programmed until the theater counteroffensive during the second and third years of the war, and in the Air Force war plans this might not be necessary at all if the strategic air offensive was strong enough and could inflict a decisive blow on the Soviet Union.27

Neither HARROW nor the 1949 United States Air Forces Europe (USAFE), plan SUNDOWN called for extensive combat operations in Europe. In November 1948, General John K. Cannon, the USAFE commander, complained that his tactical units were "of very dubious value as a fighting force" and
could not even be considered adequate to support the limited commitments in HARROW. The plans called for the only two USAF fighter units to withdraw as quickly as possible from bases in Germany to the United Kingdom where they would assist the bombers involved in the strategic campaign. In subsequent Air Force plans, these units were also tasked with interdiction operations against the advancing Soviet ground forces. The Air Force expected these tactical forces to be eliminated through combat losses within the first month of the war. Neither the JCS nor the Air Force planned to deploy additional tactical units to Europe except as part of the final counteroffensive. USAF projections for other tactical operations restricted them to the support of the bomber offensive and the defense of critical peripheral base areas.28

In 1949, the JCS rewrote the short-term emergency war plan, renamed OFFTACKLE, and the long-range plan, renamed DROPSHOT with a target year of 1957. The direction provided by NSC 20/4, the Soviet atomic capability, the growing commitment to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and the continued internal debate over doctrine and force structure produced changes in the planning concepts which had significant implications for the future of tactical air power. However, both of the new plans continued the existing strategic concept, including the emphasis on the strategic
air offensive during the first six to twelve months of the war. The air-atomic capability also remained the key to the deterrence of Soviet aggression. 29

In terms of NATO, these two plans increased the importance of retaining at least a "substantial bridgehead" on the continent after an initial fighting withdrawal to the Rhine. Although this defense would require substantial ground forces and tactical air support, neither plan significantly expanded the American contribution to the early war effort beyond the activities which were described in the previous plans. The strategic air offensive was the primary American responsibility, and it was expanded to include targets that were intended to "retard" the Soviet advance in Western Europe. 30

The retardation mission implied a turn towards a more tactical or theater perspective in the use of air power. While Army and Navy planners desired this shift, the Air Force continued to emphasize the strategic aspects of the air operation. The initial retardation missions which were assigned to the Air Force were largely spin-offs from the existing strategic target list. During the first phase of the war the targets included military production facilities and the petroleum, oil and lubricants (POL) industry, including storage and transportation facilities. The objective of these attacks was to disrupt the Soviet
mobilization process, undercut military morale, and raise doubts in the minds of the Soviet military about their ability to conduct multiple far-flung operations. The planners hoped Soviet commanders would restrict their operations to avoid possible overextension in the face of the air threat.31

As the retardation mission developed and the American commitment to the defense of Europe grew, the planners added more tactical or theater level targets to the retardation program. Additionally, the plans called for an increasing commitment of the strategic bombers to theater missions as the war progressed and the allied counteroffensive was readied. After the initial phase of the war, the targeting priority for the bombers would include lines of communication (LOCs), supply depots, troop concentrations and remaining enemy air capabilities. In spite of this growing tactical commitment, Air Force plans and programs continued to emphasize the maintenance of a strong initial air-atomic offensive capability, which remained "the only means of rapidly inflicting shock and serious damage to vital elements of the Soviet war-making capacity" and of enhancing the "application of other allied military power with prospect of greatly lowered casualties."32

DROPSHOT and other JCS assessments indicated that even with the retardation mission, Europe could not possibly be
defended if the ground and tactical air forces were not increased in size and substantially improved. The JCS advocated expanding and upgrading the indigenous theater forces through an American military assistance program. General Vandenberg supported such a program which would emphasize building up U.S. strategic air power as well as the allied ground and tactical air forces, rather than expending scarce resources on American theater forces. The initial NATO planning document, DC-6/1, included this general division of responsibilities for peacetime forces and for combat operations in the early phases of any future war involving the alliance.\textsuperscript{33}

The nature of the early NATO commitments and war plans that envisioned up to a two year mobilization period continued to undercut the rationale for expanding the Air Force tactical air capability. Senior Air Force leaders generally accepted the assumption that tactical air units dedicated to supporting a theater campaign could be developed concurrently with the mobilization of the ground forces. The Air Force also argued that any increased American commitment to Europe should be tactical air units rather than ground forces. But, the service cautioned that even this should not be done at the expense of other Air Force programs. Some planners also warned that the complexities of producing modern aircraft and training pilots to fly them made it
likely that an air mobilization would require much more time than that required to field substantial ground forces. The Soviet atomic capability further distracted the Air Force from expanding the tactical forces. Air Force planners felt the production of fighter-type aircraft should be concentrated on interceptors which could help limit the damage of a Soviet air offensive, or on penetration fighters which could assist the bomber offensive. Many in the Air Force also felt that the U.S. had to improve and expand the strategic air capabilities, including the ability to knock out the Soviet atomic forces and production facilities in addition to the established target set of Soviet war-making potential. The Air Force leadership would not support increased tactical forces until the strategic requirements were met.

The Air Force clung to this strategic concept and cited the supporting joint war plans as it defended and explained its tactical air power program in the face of ever increasing attacks from critics both within and outside the service. The tactical leadership within the Air Force, although at the bottom of the service priority list for plans and programs, continued to work on tactical doctrine while they increasingly sought to convince the senior leadership of the Air Force of the importance of tactical forces. The tactical leaders also continued to develop a
concerted campaign aimed at explaining air power doctrine to
the Army and convincing the Army that the Air Force could
provide the best tactical support in any future theater
conflict.\textsuperscript{36}

While defending their service against external
criticism, Air Force tactical commanders also began to
internally voice concerns over the domination of the Air
Force by SAC and the strategic requirements. General Otto P.
Weyland stated that he supported the general emphasis on the
strategic forces, but he also felt that once the SAC leader-
ship gained most of the chips they weren't satisfied and
"wanted all of them." General Weyland indicated that the
tactical community had to fight "just to preserve a force
structure" which could be used as a nucleus for expansion.
Senior Army officers voiced similar criticism of the obvious
decline in tactical capabilities and the strong SAC bias in
the Air Force. In a May 1949 meeting with General Bradley
and thirteen other Army general officers, General Vandenberg
defended the Air Force tactical capabilities, and he also
promised that he would continue to emphasize joint training
and doctrine programs. General Vandenberg also pledged that

He would look into the problems of preventing
overenthusiasm, in certain elements of the Air
Force, for the power and capabilities of strategic
bombing at the expense of appreciation for the
importance of ground support aviation.\textsuperscript{37}
In mid-1949, the Air Force convened a review board chaired by General Quesada, the former TAC commander, as a partial response to the continued attacks on its tactical program. Both Army and Air Force officers were invited to testify before the board on issues related to tactical air power. The final report of this evaluation concluded that tactical aviation had indeed been inadequately supported by the Air Force. The board members also expressed concern that the Army could justifiably seek its own air support capability. The board's conclusions stressed the need to demonstrate Air Force sincerity and commitment to providing tactical air support for the Army. The suggested actions included redesignating penetration (strategic or escort) fighters as fighter-bombers and reestablishing TAC or a similar operational organization responsible for supporting the ground forces.

The Air Force tactical advocates, while accepting the importance of supporting the ground forces, also emphasized the broader responsibilities assigned to tactical air forces by Air Force doctrine and the existing strategic concepts. Major General Robert Lee, the commander of TAC, presented the official views and recommendations of the Command to the review board. He described the primary TAC roles as providing support for three types of military operations: the strategic air offensive, limited surface campaigns, and
major surface campaigns.\textsuperscript{39}

During the strategic air offensive, TAC believed tactical air could contribute considerably to the success of the aerial campaign by weakening the enemy air defenses and complementing the strategic forces in the battle for air superiority. Additionally, TAC argued that tactical resources could participate directly in attacks on critical targets of the strategic air offensive. This was particularly true for the retardation missions, as the disruption of advancing enemy ground forces was in essence the classic mission of interdiction. The support for limited campaigns was also linked to the strategic operations, and did not entail fighting limited wars, a mission which would eventually emerge for TAC. Rather, these limited campaigns involved the seizure or defense of forward base areas such as those needed for the strategic air offensive.\textsuperscript{40}

After the two strategically oriented missions, General Lee identified the support for a major surface campaign as the least likely tactical role. However, General Lee also emphasized that combat with the Soviet ground forces in a major theater campaign would only be conceivable with large scale tactical air support, and that the survival of the American ground forces would depend on air superiority and a successful interdiction campaign. This position represented a central theme of established air power doctrine and the
importance of the retardation mission to NATO. General Lee's presentation and statements by other tactical leaders such as Generals Quesada and Weyland emphasized a distinct set of doctrinal concepts, especially stressing the need to maintain centralized control of independent air power under an air commander. Additionally, the tactical theater perspective retained the basic concepts and mission priorities which had been established in World War II and written into FM 100-20. Air superiority remained absolutely the first priority. Interdiction was the second priority and the best way to influence the land battle. The final priority and, in the eyes of the Air Force, the most inefficient use of air power, was close air support for the ground forces.41

On several occasions, General Quesada noted that the proper use of air power could prevent "a long drawn-out surface conflict." Quesada thought that the strategic air campaign and complementary tactical air operations could eliminate substantial ground contact by quickly reducing the enemy's war-making potential as well as his will to fight, and by preventing his surface forces and their support from reaching the battlefield. Once a surface battle began, both strategic and tactical forces would work to effect the decision. For Quesada and the other tactical leaders, the decisive mission remained interdiction or the isolation of
the battlefield. The tactical air leaders were willing to provide close air support when it was needed, but they felt that the Army placed excessive demands on the limited air assets and failed to appreciate the greater impact achieved by attacking deeper targets. Quesada noted that if legitimate close air support missions consumed a substantial portion of the available sorties, this meant that tactical air power had failed to "perform its function in a convincing manner," that is, interdiction had not been properly performed.42

Air Force commanders recognized the unpopularity of their doctrine within the Army, especially in the middle and lower command echelons. The Army dislike for the doctrine was amplified by the clearly limited tactical capabilities which existed in the late 1940s. While generally supporting the Air Force before Congress and in public, senior Army officers carried their concerns about tactical support to the Air Force in memorandums and meetings. These efforts were complemented by articles in the professional journals and in the civilian press which increasingly echoed the harsh criticism leveled by Navy and Marine officers and supporters. The Air Force responded by citing the need to support national strategy with limited funding, and by attempting to educate the Army on the proper use of air power. Although the impact of this proselytizing campaign
was diminished by the limited tactical capability and the organizational symbol of TAC's absorption into CONAC, the Air Force used a concerted program of articles in professional and civilian journals, speeches, indoctrination courses, demonstrations, and exercises to market its position.43

The Tactical Air Command sponsored a prime example of this activity in the form of a series of demonstration programs in the late 1940s which were known as the "Air Indoctrination Course" or "Operation Combine." These programs were designed to spread the correct air doctrine and illustrate "the proper employment of Tactical Air Power to the various service schools." The audiences included "the entire student body of all the Army schools including Leavenworth, the Armed Forces Staff College at Norfolk, as well as the Air University." TAC also sponsored numerous demonstrations and indoctrination courses at other Army training activities and schools, such as the Infantry Center, the Armor School, and the Artillery School.44

Air Force participation in joint exercises prior to the Korean war generally emphasized practicing the established procedures and illustrating the proper doctrine to both Air Force and Army participants. The air activity during the exercises was often conducted in the three phases of air operations (air superiority, interdiction, and close air
support) described in FM 100-20 and the 1946 FM 31-15, Air-Ground Operations. This procedure was certainly useful in training small units and in developing effective procedures within and between staffs, and the severe shortages of equipment and experienced manpower may have limited the ability to do much more. However, these structured exercises lacked the free play aspect of true maneuvers which could provide a more realistic test of the doctrine and control systems and stimulate the commanders and their staffs to improve their performances. Although SWARMER, the last major joint exercise before the Korean War, demonstrated some serious deficiencies in the tactical support capabilities, little actual improvement was possible before the air-ground team and Air Force tactical air power were forced to rebuild under the pressures of combat in Asia.45

For the Air Force, the combat operations of the Korean War confirmed the well established doctrinal concepts, but also stimulated continued conflict with the other services over mission priorities and command and control issues. The Korean War was important to the Air Force as a stimulus for the reemergence of tactical air power and as an example of a new role for tactical air power, serving as a rapid response force against communist aggression. Although this new role was identified and perhaps verified by the Korean War experience, it was not clearly defined until after the war,
as it had to survive within the strategic orientation of the Air Force. Nonetheless, the Korean war was a direct reason for a major portion of the tactical air force expansion and it created an opportunity to build on the largely conceptual and bureaucratic experience of the late 1940s to develop the capabilities, missions, and doctrine which shaped the tactical air forces of the early 1950s.
NOTES FOR CHAPTER I

1. General Otto P. Weyland, later commander of TAC, presents the more accepting view of the post-war SAC dominance in Oral History, 19 November 1974, K239.0512-813, USAF Historical Research Center (hereafter USAFHRC) and Historical Documentation, 1971, K239.0512-798, USAFHRC. See also Robert Frank Futrell, Ideas, Concepts, Doctrine: A history of Basic Thinking in the United States Air Force, 1907-1964, pp 121-123. Some tactical leaders were more hostile to the neglect, and this also shows the comments in the Official TAC Histories of the late 1940s, K417.01, USAFHRC. For a brief, moderate critique of the strategic dominance see comments by Generals Quesada, Ferguson and Lee in Richard H. Kohn and Joseph P Harahan, eds, Air Superiority in World War II and Korea, (Washington: Office of Air Force History, 1983), pp 61-66.


4. Arnold, Third Report, pp 59-63; Spaatz, "Strategic Air Power", pp 394-396; Futrell, Ideas, Concepts, Doctrine,


13. USAF Stat Dig, 1947, pp 2–5; Wolk, Postwar AF, pp 215–18; Condit, JCS & Policy, pp 19 & 191–208; Mrozek, "Peace Through Strength", pp 180–86; Futrell, Ideas,


37. General Jacob L. Devers to General Vandenberg, "Tactical Air Support of Ground Forces," nd, M-36650, USAFHRC; Weyland, Oral History; Lt. Colonel Stanley R.


Robert M. Lee to Chief of Staff USAF, 17 August 1949, "Comparison of Tactical Support to Army Field Forces - 1947, 1948, 1949," Box 45, Vandenberg Papers; General E.R. Quesada to General Vandenberg, 8 October 1947 and 7 October 1948, Box 45, Vandenberg Papers. For Army public position see note 23 above. See also Caddell, pp 256-267, 286-310, & 324-327.


The Korean War was a major turning point for post-World War II tactical air power. The demands of combat forced a rapid expansion of Air Force tactical units, demonstrated the value of tactical air forces in being, and helped shape the subsequent tactical air developments of the 1950s. The Korean experience was an important test for the capabilities, procedures and doctrine which evolved during the 1940s. Air Force tactical leaders were convinced that Korean combat operations, while not a perfect laboratory, confirmed the validity of the World War II-based theater employment concepts for the reemerging tactical air forces. Additionally, the tactical community viewed Korea as a demonstration of the viability of a national rapid response role as an important new mission for tactical aviation. However, the strategic air power community and the senior Air Force leadership did not view Korean operations nor the suggested rapid response mission as an accurate image of the proper role of air power in support of American national security interests.¹
Throughout the war the Air Force emphasized the need to accurately follow its doctrine in Korea because of the belief that the combat operations would demonstrate the validity of that doctrine and illustrate the decisiveness of air power in modern warfare. Air Force leaders were also concerned that the proper doctrine be followed in Korea to avoid establishing erroneous, potentially dangerous precedents. Senior Air Force officers quickly realized that the budget restrictions of the late 1940s would continue into the war and beyond, and they understood that the experiences of the war would be used "to justify expanded service roles, mission and forces." They also thought "(t)he post hostilities period will be characterized by attempts to prove by the records who won the war." Although the expanded budgets briefly reduced overt competition for funding, the inter-service conflicts continued and in certain areas intensified, with an eye towards securing service positions in the emerging American military strategy and the expanding, but still constrained, military force structure.²

The Air Force leadership claimed that American air power was critical to the survival and success of the United Nations Command (UNC) ground forces. The Air Force emphasized the importance of air power in all phases of the Korean War. The service claimed critical roles for the Far East Air Forces (FEAF) in the defense of the Pusan perimeter
in the early weeks of the war, during the strategic envelop­
ment at Inchon, and during the retreat from the Yalu after
the Chinese intervention. The Air Force also claimed a
dominant position during the campaign of 1951, even though
the effectiveness of air power in this period was subject to
considerable debate.

The Air Force leadership contended throughout the war
and after that the service had provided effective combat
power within the constraints of the U.S. force structure and
the political and military restrictions which were placed on
combat operations in Korea. Although not prepared,
equipped, organized, or trained for a massive air support
operation at the start of the war on 25 June 1950, the Far
East Air Forces, supported by the rest of the Air Force,
successfully fell back on World War II experience and the
inherent mobility and flexibility of air power. The initial
rapid deployment of reinforcements from the United States
combined with the combat successes during the war served as
a solid example of the value of standing air forces,
although senior Air Force leaders in Washington and in the
Far East felt that air power could have been even more
effective and decisive if employed as described in USAF
document. Air Force officers were concerned that the unique
conditions in Korea obscured the true role and importance of
air power, and in some ways reversed the the priority of
missions, possibly creating a dangerously erroneous precedent.³

Air Force Doctrine and the Korean Experience

The informal Air Force doctrine of the late 1940s called for the use of strategic air power for deterrence and as the cornerstone of combat operations. As a corollary, the Air Force was oriented towards a nuclear dominated force structure. In the first post-World War II conflict involving the US military, the Air Force found itself facing a small theater or subtheater conflict without the option of nuclear weapons and with other severe restrictions on its use of air power. The most modern portion of the strategic component which dominated the standing Air Force structure were not committed to the theater. Older B-29 medium bombers were rapidly deployed to the Far East, but the bulk of the combat missions were performed by the tactical forces which were largely built up during the war. The combat situation, political constraints and planning by the United Nations Command staff drove air power primarily to providing support, both direct and deep, for the ground forces, with much more emphasis on the close air support mission than was preferred by the Air Force commanders. The allocation and control of air sorties remained a point of contention between the air and surface force commanders throughout the war, continuing the doctrinal debates of the late 1940s.⁴
The Air Force and FEAF leadership stressed the continued validity of the mission priorities which were doctrinally established during World War II. The preeminent concept in Air Force tactical doctrine was clearly the absolute dominance of the air superiority mission in theater operations, followed in order of priority by the interdiction and close air support missions. The FEAF commanders immediately implemented this doctrinal direction through offensive counterair operations which seized total air superiority from the poorly equipped North Korean Air Force (NKAF) in a matter of weeks. In keeping with established doctrine on initial air operations, FEAF units conducted aggressive fighter sweeps and attacked enemy airfields. For the remainder of the war, with the exception of periodically heavy action over the northern extremes of the peninsula involving enemy aircraft operating from bases in the Peoples Republic of China (PRC), the UN forces enjoyed virtually complete air superiority. Whenever communist forces attempted to reestablish operational airfields in North Korea, FEAF bombers and fighters performed preemptive offensive counterair attacks and quickly destroyed the new facilities.5

The relative ease of gaining and maintaining command of the air created serious concerns for Air Force commanders. Although air superiority was the first objective of air
operations, the lack of a substantial aerial adversary resulted in a situation similar to the latter period of World War II, in which Army commanders never experienced a serious threat of air attack and, therefore, did not appreciate the likely drain on available sorties which would exist in the face of a determined, well equipped enemy air force. Air Force assessments of the air effort cautioned that

... the very ease with which air superiority had been gained was the first of many unrealities of the Korean war, unrealities which must be kept constantly in view in any attempt to evaluate the Korean experience.6

Air Force leaders continuously trumpeted the warning that the offensive battle for air superiority would take precedence in any other war not dominated by the unique situation found in Korea. Air Force leaders were especially concerned by the related pattern of extensive commitments of FEAF assets to missions dictated by ground operations. In the view of Air Force commanders, while this was necessary in certain combat circumstances, an automatically ground oriented theater plan was the wrong way to fight a war. FEAF leaders also believed this situation helped raise already inflated Army expectations for close air support sorties to unacceptably high levels.7

FEAF and USAF leaders did not deny the importance of supporting the ground forces, including the need to provide substantial close air support sorties, and they were quick
to highlight the critical role air power played through these missions in Korea. However, tactical commanders complained that much of the demand for close air support in Korea was due to "the initial numerical inferiority" and "certain deficiencies within the ground forces," which "made it difficult for [the Army] to fulfill their part of the joint air-ground mission." FEAF leaders also noted that the Army failure to maintain its portion of the air-ground control system after World War II inhibited the effective application of available air power. In the Air Force perspective, ground force inadequacies caused the American forces to "substitute aerial firepower for tanks, antitank weapons, and artillery," without much effect.8

General George E. Stratemeyer, the FEAF commander and General Otto P. Weyland, the Vice Commander for Operations and eventually the FEAF commander, became very frustrated with this situation. They and other Air Force leaders believed that air power was being improperly employed in Korea. Generals Stratemeyer and Weyland felt very strongly that close air support was an important mission and that significant numbers of sorties should be committed to this activity during critical periods, especially during fluid surface operations or when friendly forces were threatened by overwhelming enemy surface strength. However, they felt that Army officers in Korea did not properly understand the
capabilities and limitations of air power, were becoming overdependent on close air support, and erroneously equated close air support to artillery fire. In criticizing the Army attitude on air power, General Weyland noted that to justify higher air commitments to troop support "the 'critical' situation was actually a normal situation in this theater."^9

General Weyland complained in an early formal report on air operations in Korea that General Douglas MacArthur's staff was not a true joint staff and that "the lack of air representation has made it difficult to realize the most effective and timely employment of air power in Korea." In particular, "The principles and criteria involved in the isolation of the battle area by air power were not well understood in this theatre(sic)." General Weyland viewed the employment of air power in Korea as contrary to well-established air power doctrine, especially complaining that in the first month of the war there was no proper air interdiction program underway, and North Korean front-line forces were being augmented rapidly with little interference. It was like trying to dam a stream at the bottom of a waterfall.10

General Weyland's concern over the interdiction mission reflected the Air Force commitment to deep operations as the key to victory in theater warfare. The Air Force continued to consider the interdiction mission the second priority
after air superiority in a properly executed theater campaign. The service argued that the Army and other critics of the Air Force failed to give interdiction activities enough credit for their impact on Korean operations, especially in the first months of the war. The Air Force also argued that strategic and tactical concepts imposed by the UN Command did not give adequate consideration to the role of air power and handcuffed the interdiction campaigns that were waged during the war.  

FEAF and senior Air Force leaders conceded that the interdiction campaigns which were performed in Korea during the period of stalemated ground operations were not as decisive as the service expected. Air Force officers explained the shortcoming by citing poor theater planning and the political constraints of the conflict which precluded many of the deep interdiction and supporting strategic missions demanded by service doctrine. The tactical air power leadership also explained many of the shortcomings of air operations in Korea by citing the national strategy and budget limitations of the late 1940s which virtually eliminated the standing tactical aviation capability. These conditions also produced a tactical force with limited night and all weather attack capabilities, major restrictions on the interdiction campaigns. Some senior officers, including General Vandenberg, also conceded
that the Air Force may have oversold the interdiction campaigns, especially given the existing conditions. However, Air Force commanders contended that air power inflicted serious losses on the communist forces, further arguing that the interdiction operations could only make more decisive contributions if the ground forces consciously integrated air interdiction operations with complementary surface campaigns, avoided overemphasizing close air support missions, and pressured the enemy with aggressive ground combat.¹²

The Air Force challenges to the ground oriented operational concepts combined with the service's doctrinal commitment to deep operations and to a coequal air commander pushed the existing arguments with the Army into a more open fight. The flames of this battle were fanned by the presence of Navy and Marine forces with their own tactical doctrine and command and control concepts. The Army coveted the dedicated air support which was provided by Marine aviation, and many Army commanders considered this the correct way to control air power. Army officers across the spectrum of command levels frequently cited the Marine example when attacking the Air Force position on centralized control of air power.¹³

The services waged the doctrinal debate over command and control and mission priorities in both the Far East and
the United States. Some Air Force leaders felt the ultimate Army objective was to regain control of tactical air power, or at least gain dedicated close air support aircraft. While the Army commanders generally stated that their service had "no intention of attempting to take over the Tactical Air Force, nor to form its own Tactical Air Force," they also argued in the strongest terms that "the requirement for adequate, effective air support for ground operations" was "not being met satisfactorily." General Mark Clark who had fought in the Mediterranean Theater during World War II with air units using FM 100-20 went so far as to charge that

the traditional Air Force doctrine, which provides for co-equal command status between ground and air at all but theater levels, constitutes a fundamental defect in command relationship.¹⁴

The Air Force recognized the Army concerns and worked to improve the control system, provide "adequate" close air support sorties and "educate" Army officers, while concurrently defending its doctrine. The Air Force attempted to parry criticisms by arguing that the deficiencies in combat were largely due to pre-war inadequacies stemming from funding limitations and the prevailing national strategy.¹⁵

Perhaps the most distressing aspect of this inter-service debate to Air Force leaders was the increase in articles critical of the service, not only in professional journals, but also in the civilian press. As early as July 1950, General Vandenberg complained that "the American
public has no appreciation of the fact that [FEAF] air action has been an essential factor in operations in Korea." The dispute over tactical air power made good copy, and the Air Force close support operations were often presented as inadequate, or, even worse, unfavorably compared to the Marines. The criticism in the war reporting often merged with resurgent charges of bomber infatuation within the Air Force.16

The Air Force, TAC, and FEAF all waged public relations campaigns which were designed to counter the negative image of the USAF and its operations in Korea, explain the reasons for the limited tactical capabilities at the start of the war, and create a better understanding of the proper use of air power. The Air Force also produced internal studies which were critical of Navy and Marine capabilities, especially when carrier operations were compared to land based tactical air power. The Air Force leadership blamed the other services for many of the biased news reports, responding with a public position which emphasized the joint nature of modern war and presented the Air Force as part of a theater team. Additionally, airmen made numerous speeches and presentations and wrote many articles to spread the service's view of air power doctrine. The public relations campaign was designed to solidify the service's claim to the preeminent position in the Defense Department
budget and the national strategy. To support that position the Air Force spokesmen continued to claim that air power was the decisive factor in modern war, including the ongoing conflict in Korea.\(^\text{17}\)

The Decisive Role of Air Power

Air Force leaders strongly believed air power was indeed the decisive military factor in Korea. Air advocates argued, however, that the true role of air power was not widely recognized and accepted due to the surface oriented military mind set which dominated the senior UNC staff. In the Air Force perspective, air power had been the primary cause of the collapse of the North Korean Peoples Army (NKPA). Senior Air Force officers believed the Inchon invasion, which would have been impossible without the dominant air superiority, was merely the straw that broke the NKPA's back. This situation generated a certain amount of frustration within the Air Force as many air officers felt that the glamor of the deep strategic envelopment had hidden the actual importance of air power in laying the foundation for the U.N. Command successes.\(^\text{18}\)

Air Force evaluations of the war argued that air power was relegated from the premier position in the theater to a purely supporting role. The heavy emphasis on the close air support mission was considered a testimony to this fact. The complaint that air power was not being accorded its
appropriate level of importance mirrored the Air Force challenges to the national strategy and the balanced force developments of the late 1940s. In Korea, the official Air Force assessments charged that the UN Command was fighting the war with "... traditional surface warfare concepts... despite the fact that [the] army forces were the weakest of the three military components..." In the view of Air Force commanders, this concept seriously hampered overall UNC power by binding the strongest force, the air component, to the weakest force as a firepower supplement, rather than designing the strategy and tactical concepts to exploit the true strength of the UN forces, FEAF.19

In spite of these contentions, the concept of decisiveness was not as clearly defined as the service's statements and doctrine implied. Given the political constraints and the military realities of the Korean situation, the air planners may have been hard pressed to develop a plan which would have actually brought decisive pressure to bear on the North Koreans and their allies. However, the tactical community wanted a stronger commitment to interdiction and a more direct link between this effort and offensive ground operations, with the air operations being the central planning consideration. As a corollary, the ground forces would have had to reduce the frequent distracting demands for the
air assets committed to deep attacks, such as routinely diverting medium bomber units to missions near the front against "towns and villages suspected to be hostile assembly areas." Those who argued for the dominant role for air power contended that a well prepared, better trained, properly equipped tactical force, possibly including the ability to deliver nuclear weapons, would have ensured the success of an air power based strategy, especially if surface operations were designed to complement and enhance air power. 20

Many Air Force leaders also believed that a more successful, possibly decisive, deep interdiction campaign would have required approval for an expansion of the effort into the People's Republic of China (PRC), possibly including strategic attacks on PRC industrial targets. The Air Force strategic community was particularly vocal on the need to strike targets in the PRC to win the war. Many of these officers argued that a bombing campaign against the true source of the war materials was the most efficient way to defeat an enemy's military forces. Additionally, strategic advocates contended that such strategic strikes would deter future local wars by demonstrating the US resolve to strike at the source of peripheral aggression. An implication in these strategic air power claims was that the expensive development the ground forces and associated tactical air
forces needed to fight a traditional, although limited, land war was a waste of national resources. However, the political and military realities of the Korean War muffled these strategic opinions. The strategic air position was further undercut by uncertainties over the use of nuclear weapons against strategic or even tactical targets. Additionally, as Chinese air defenses improved during the war, the Air Force backed away from the concept of strategic air operations against China as too demanding to risk. Such action would sap the strength available for operations against the Soviet Union, thereby reducing the strategic deterrence potential and the war fighting capability of the Strategic Air Command. The UN Command was also concerned that air attacks on the PRC would provoke retaliatory attacks on its vulnerable rear areas or lead to a wider escalation of the war. These conditions confined air operations, including those of the strategic air assets, to the largely tactical arena of the Korean peninsula.  

Even in the restricted environment of Korea, many strategic air power advocates lobbied for more decisive air operations to demonstrate the true value of their forces. Such an example would help show the minimal value of tactical forces of any great size, and especially demonstrate that substantial surface forces were superfluous to the American defense effort. The medium bomber units which were
deployed to the Far East from SAC bases in the US carried the intended mission of attacking strategic targets, including urban centers, industrial targets and transportation systems. The limited industrial base in North Korea and the inability to hit the real industrial base in the PRC (or in the USSR) severely limited the prospects for a truly decisive air operation based upon these targets. The strategic community further argued that political constraints and the military control exercised by the theater commander (rather than a centralized national-level strategic authority) inhibited the ability of strategic air power to successfully intervene on the Korean peninsula.22

Major General Emmett O'Donnell, Jr., the first commander of the FEAF Bomber Command, explained to Congress the strategic air power perspective that UN Command had not exploited the potential psychological impact of the rapid (nine day) deployment of medium bombers from the US to the combat theater. General O'Donnell contended that these bombers should have been used to apply "a very severe blow on the North Koreans," rather than using the aircraft for air support missions. He argued that the North Koreans should have been warned "that they had gone too far in ... an act of aggression ..." and if they did not halt and return to the thirty-eighth parallel "... there is not going to be anything left up in North Korea to return to."
General O'Donnell advocated a World War II style bomber offensive aimed at "burning five major cities in North Korea to the ground," and "destroying completely every one of about eighteen major strategic targets." Although North Korean industrial targets were eventually destroyed, the intense psychologically oriented bombing campaign was not attempted, except as part of the interdiction and support efforts intended to pressure the communist forces into an armistice. The strategic air advocates contended that in this environment they were merely an arm of the tactical air forces and were therefore unable to exercise the potentially dominant influence on the conflict. Due to the circumstances, especially the military and political decisions made at the national and UN Command levels, the Air Force strategic forces, like the FEAF tactical forces, were able to provide the desired undeniable decisive contribution in the Korean War. 23

Although concerned by this inability to be a clearly decisive force, the Air Force, especially the tactical air forces leadership, nonetheless felt doctrinally vindicated by the events of the war. Within the tactical community, the war confirmed the value of maintaining tactical air power in being. For the tactical commanders and the service leadership, the conflict reconfirmed the established tenets on the employment of theater air forces. However, the Air
Force interpretation of the war and its planning implications did not mesh with the view of the other services and did not terminate the interservice and intraservice battles which continued unabated during the war and on through the Eisenhower administrations. The Air Force reestablished the Tactical Air Command as a major operational headquarters, a move intended to signify a commitment to tactical aviation, but more practically driven by the need to prepare adequate air power for the expanded overseas deployments. Nonetheless, the Army continued to doubt the Air Force commitment to providing air support, and began to turn to internal means such as atomic weapons, rockets and guided missiles, and its own air capability, to enhance its firepower in future wars. Aviation leaders sought specific lessons on doctrine, tactics and equipment requirements from the combat in Korea. However, these lessons had to merge with the evolving roles of tactical air power and the needs of the national security policies. Therefore, the evolving strategic missions and the rapidly growing commitment to NATO were critical factors shaping the Air Force tactical air forces. However, many within the USAF tactical community also viewed the Korean War as a demonstration of the emerging importance of an air power based rapid response capability to deter and counter local aggression outside the NATO region.
The Emerging Intervention Role

The tactical proponents within the Air Force pointed with pride to the successes of Korea and to an increased force structure and combat capability; however, the tactical community was also concerned that after the war support for tactical expenditures would decline. As a partial justification for sustaining the new force levels, the tactical commanders cited the war as a demonstration of the need for a dedicated tactical organization which could respond rapidly and decisively to peripheral threats to the national interests. However, many in the senior levels of the Air Force, including Secretary of the Air Force Thomas K. Finletter and various strategic air advocates, while applauding the successful demonstration of the value of air power in Korea, were not as enthusiastic over direct lessons from the war, warning that it was a unique and artificial situation which should not automatically serve as the basis of future force planning. Many in the senior Air Force leadership were especially reluctant to embrace the new intervention mission which would distract from the build up of the critically important strategic air forces.24

Facing this attitude within the Air Force, and remembering the impact of the strategies and force levels of the late 1940s, the tactical air force leaders continued to pursue new roles and missions to justify their forces. This
was critical, as in spite of the increased status and improved funding during the Korean War, tactical air power continued to face strong criticism as well as the competing demands of strategic offensive and defensive forces within the Air Force. The tactical leadership recognized the need to tie their forces to the official Air Force policy and doctrine, as well as to the roles and missions which were budgetarily supportable by the requirements of the national security policy and military strategy. In this environment, tactical force planning was dominated by roles in the strategic arena and to complementary roles and missions in the evolving NATO strategy. However, outside the Air Force the Korean experience amplified existing opposition to the national reliance on strategic air power, and generated changes in the formal national security policies, providing a rationale for tactical air power as part of a more supportable containment policy. Arguments supporting this type of security requirement were further strengthened by the issue of the likely role of atomic weapons in future local conflicts.25

To many critics of the existing national strategy, the Korean War demonstrated the dangers of limited wars in the era of nuclear weapons. The American commitment to that conflict was totally conventional, although backed by the nuclear deterrence forces. This circumstance played a major
role in the rebuilding of the conventional tactical air capability as well as the conventionally oriented American ground forces. However, both the military and civil sectors generated strongly divergent interpretations of the lessons of the war for the post-conflict force structure. Many analysts and critics of government policy concluded that the war demonstrated the basic impotency of strategic nuclear forces, and many military planners seized on this interpretation to undercut the Air Force in the budget competition. Members of the USAF tactical community also found in this logic a possible tool for self preservation, presenting tactical air power as the ideal lower level complement to the strategic deterrence forces. However, throughout the war the tactical component could not easily exploit this logic as the Air Force leadership remained committed to a strategic air power capability above all else. The strategic air proponents defended the service position by arguing that the Korean War occurred because of American strategic air-atomic weakness, rather than an overreliance on these forces. Additionally, the strategic community contended that the Korean experience and demonstrated the inherent problems of waging of a conventional, surface oriented war against the masses which were available to the communist powers. The tactical air advocates, while accepting much of the analysis of the strategic supporters,
maintained that the conflict had much broader implications for air power. 26

Although the rapid response role did not become a primary responsibility for tactical air power until later in the Eisenhower Administration, the tactical community drew on the traditions of tactical mobility and the shifting emphasis within the national security policies to lay the foundation for the eventual emergence of this role. The Tactical Air Command was particularly interested in becoming the primary force designed to counter the growing threat of limited military aggression along the non-European periphery of the Communist bloc. The security policies of the early 1950s, while recognizing the great damage which was likely to occur in a general war, clearly identified local aggression as the major threat to American security. NSC 68 criticized the pre-Korea force structure by noting that "the only deterrent we can present to the Kremlin" against local aggression was the threat that the U.S. "may make any of the critical points which we cannot hold the occasion for a global war of annihilation." Attached to this was the danger that the U.S. would appear weak in the eyes of both its enemies and its allies if it could not react to challenges wherever or however they may develop. NSC 135/3 echoed these concerns in September 1952, stating that

Although there is continuing danger of general war, the most immediate danger facing the United
States is that a progressive and cumulative loss of positions of importance to the United States (either as a result of deterioration within the free nations or of communist cold war actions or a process involving both) could eventually reduce the United States, short of general war, to an isolated and critically vulnerable position.27

The security policies therefore established a specific requirement for an emergency rapid response role for the American military as a part of the counter action against Soviet expansionism and local conflicts. While identifying the problem, the security policies also continued to stress the U.S. role of providing the strategic air power umbrella while developing the strength of the peripheral states through political and economic measures. Additionally, regional security organizations and the Mutual Defense Assistance Program (MDAP) were designed to enhance the indigenous defense capabilities. The policy statements proposed that these measures be backed up by American "ready forces of adequate size and appropriate composition" which could be used unilaterally or as part of collective actions to "rapidly and effectively" counter local aggression. All of the services embraced this mission to help justify post-Korea force levels. Within the USAF the tactical air forces became the preferred option as the designated American response force to peripheral security problems.28
The formal Air Force position statements, while conceding the possible danger of local aggression, firmly resisted proposed allocations of substantial service and national resources to forces tailored for this type of conflict. The Air Force formally argued that the nation could not afford to field and maintain "... a military force capable of deterring the Soviets and of fighting local wars at the same time." Air Force leaders contended that the U.S. national strategy and the standing military forces had to be designed as "a survival force for peace," which could deter within existing budget constraints and "... provide maximum combat power in the event of war." A key aspect of the Air Force program was an assumed national inability "to create a force in being to take care of local wars." This formal service position meant that once the Korean War was over the USAF tactical air forces would be restricted from pursuing the local response role and would have their force levels determined by the roles and missions they could perform in the strategic arena and in the growing commitment to NATO. The senior Air Force leadership did concede that if necessary the service could field "mobile striking units available to go anywhere" if the resources were made available in the budget "without interfering with [USAF] major efforts." These "major efforts" were the Air Force program to build a nuclear delivery force structure as
The Air Force hierarchy rejected the example of Korea as the appropriate use of military forces, especially excluding from its planning considerations the conventional response force mission. This position, while seemingly contrary to the stated requirements in the national security policies, was clearly in line with the declaratory strategic positions and the force structures which were procured during the last phase of the Truman Administration, and the initial phase of the Eisenhower Administration. Therefore, although the Air Force tactical community felt that the Korean War had validated the traditional theater roles and missions, while also demonstrating a potentially important new role within the national strategy; the tactical air force leaders could not rely on these lessons to justify their force levels. Instead, the tactical community was forced to follow the trends established in the late 1940s, pursuing roles and missions within the strategic and NATO arenas and embracing the nuclear delivery capability which dominated Air Force thinking.
NOTES FOR CHAPTER II


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CHAPTER III
TACTICAL AIR POWER RESTORED:
AIR POWER AND EXPANDING SECURITY COMMITMENTS
DURING THE KOREAN WAR

The Korean War and its impact on U.S. national security policy transformed the U.S. Air Force tactical components from a token force in early 1950 to a potent and growing combat force by the first year of the Eisenhower administration in 1953. In January 1950 the active Air Force units included only ten fighter or fighter-bomber groups (wings) and one equipped with light bombers. Three years later, the force had undergone an initial modernization surge, new aircraft and weapons were under development, and the number of units had increased to fifteen fighter-bomber and four tactical bomber wings. The strategic forces also included five more escort fighter units, which had secondary fighter-bomber missions. The initial increase in funding and force size was, however, countered by renewed budget restrictions, forcing the tactical community to continue the quest for long-term justifications to maintain the restored tactical air forces. As before the Korean War, the tactical community tied itself to the emerging service doctrine and the evolving national security commitments, with emphasis on roles in the strategic air offensive and
the defense of Western Europe.¹

The lessons from the combat in Korea supported and guided some aspects of the tactical force development, but from the early days of the War, the Tactical Air Command recognized that long-range planning had to consider "... the essential differences between the 'localized' situation which prevailed in Korea and the 'all out campaign' which might erupt..." This orientation paralleled the general Air Force interpretation of the war, which viewed the experience through the perspective of traditional doctrine beliefs and the policy position that "... land-based air power is the keystone of American military power." The Air Force drew support in its position from aspects of the national security policy statements and from the national force structure decisions and security commitments which developed under the stimulus of the Korean War and the threat of further communist aggression. While the tactical air forces remained a subordinate element within the Air Force, the continuing debates over national strategy and the expanding security commitments ensured that tactical air power would not suffer the same fate it had endured during the late 1940s. The position of the tactical air forces was further enhanced by the development of new technologies, especially small nuclear weapons, which gave tactical aviation an exceptional increase in striking power, thereby
enhancing its claims of combat effectiveness in a variety of roles and missions.²

The basic USAF doctrine which directed the rebirth of tactical aviation continued to emphasize the dominance of the offensive, the importance of centralized control and the absolute necessity of independent air operations which were designed to exploit the firepower, mobility, flexibility, and responsiveness of the air weapon. The USAF doctrine and policy also argued that the standing military forces should be optimized for general war. The service believed that general war air forces were flexible enough to be used in lesser situations if needed. Additionally, given adequate resources, Air Force planners felt they could develop air forces which were well suited for a rapid commitment to local wars, but the service's first priority was fielding adequate strategic air power.³

The Air Force continued to highlight the dominant role of the strategic air-atomic capability in the American security policy statements throughout the Korean War. The growing Soviet atomic capabilities, the expected Soviet development of thermonuclear weapons, and the increasing vulnerability of the North American continent caused American policy makers to closely examine the offensively oriented, strategic air power-dominated force structure. These assessments raised the issues of mutual deterrence and
the appropriateness of atomic weapons for all situations and targets. However, the formal policy statements also continued to emphasize the need to maintain a secure retaliatory capability in the form of a large atomic delivery force. In January 1953, NSC 141 stated that

The U.S. ability to deter general war will continue to depend in substantial measure upon the acknowledged U.S. capability to deliver an effective atomic offensive against the USSR under all foreseeable conditions.4

The growing strategic requirements represented an even greater competition for the budget dollars for the tactical air forces. Beyond the expanding needs of the strategic air offensive, the growing vulnerability of the U.S. caused joint and USAF planners to add requirements for air defense and civil defense forces. These capabilities would protect the mobilization base and limit the damage inflicted by a Soviet atomic attack. Although the national security policies increased the competition for resources, they also provided support for larger tactical air forces within a stronger mobilization base. The formal policies stated specific requirements for expanded general purpose air, sea, and ground forces, including tactical air power. The policy statements reasoned that these forces would help the West survive an initial surprise attack and would form the foundation for the mobilization which would bring eventual victory. The policy statements all emphasized the deterrent
and war fighting advantages of larger conventional and nonstrategic atomic "forces in being," even though the long-term war effort would still depend on a massive mobilization effort. The senior leaders of the Air Force accepted the rationale for an expanded military structure, but, given the ongoing fiscal constraints, the service continued the trend from the late 1940s to develop strategic bombardment forces first, before all other needs, including tactical air power.⁵

The Continuing Air Force Strategic Perspective

The growth of the Air Force tactical components during the Korean war occurred within the context of the service's continuing strategic orientation. The Air Force leadership accepted the broad areas of security concern which the national policy statements identified, including the threat of local aggression. However, senior Air Force officers argued that the nation must identify the most serious threat to its security and give a higher priority to the defense programs which best deterred and countered that threat. The USAF force proposals were founded on this line of logic and were essentially another attack on the "balanced force" budgeting process of the late 1940s, which the Air Force thought was being continued in the JCS force requirements developed under the guidance of NSC 68 and subsequent national security policies.⁶
The Air Force argued that a security program which emphasized air power was not simply a continuation of the fiscally induced pre-Korea structure. To the youngest service, air power remained the most effective, most logical, and most efficient means of supporting the national security policy objectives. Additionally, the air advocates noted that the specific missions assigned to the Air Force by the JCS and the NSC required an air dominated program. The formal Air Force positions were presented as a fulfillment of the stated national objectives of deterring war and averting a disaster if war occurred. General Nathan F. Twining, in an internal Air Staff planning memorandum, cited these objectives in NSC 68, claiming that this logic demanded an expanded Air Force because

\[\text{Air Power is deterrent power \textit{par excellence}. Naval power and ground power are not. . . . I can conceive of air power of such dominating quality that it could win a war by itself; or less than this could be the power which could dominate a country and force its yielding to one's will.}\]

The tactical community had to find its "raison d'être" within this service concept of decisive, preeminent air power, if tactical air forces were to remain viable after Korea. Internal documents and statements submitted to the JCS by the Air Force left no doubt to the service view that strategic air power was the most important national military capability. Although this attitude was strongly rooted in Air Force doctrine, it also reflected the service's
assessment of available resources, the threat to American national security, and the relative urgency of the various military missions and programs. The service leadership strongly doubted that the country could support the total, balanced rearmament program. Although the logic undercut support for some of its own forces, including tactical aviation, the Air Force argued that

Short of war itself, the Armed Forces cannot and should not expect this nation to build and support indefinitely, a military structure fully prepared for all of the wartime tasks which are outlined in current war plans. . . .

Therefore, it is mandatory that we evaluate our military program in terms of national survival and calculated risk.8

The Air Force believed that of the various elements of the Soviet threat "one, AND ONLY ONE - pose(d) an immediate military threat of catastrophic proportions to the security of the United States"(emphasis in original). This force was the Soviet long-range air force with its atomic delivery capability. The Air Force contended that American resources had to be concentrated against this threat before being diverted to other missions. The Air Force viewed itself as the proper focus of a concerted effort designed to deter and if necessary defeat Soviet strategic air power. This strong service concern over the strategic problem drew tactical air power and its inherent flexibility and firepower into the offensive and eventually the purely defensive aspects of strategic operations.9
Tactical aviation involvement in the strategic arena was shaped by the Air Force perspective of two complementary "defensive" programs; an improved continental air defense and the substantial expansion of the strategic offensive forces. The strategic strike capability remained formally tied to the ability to conduct a massive "instant and devastating retaliatory attack," but, within the Air Force, the emphasis was on an offensive war fighting concept rather than a punitive attack. In the Air Force perspective, a perfect defense was not possible. Therefore, "an adequate air defense of the United States could only be achieved by the destruction of the Soviet atomic capability at its home bases." If this was not possible due to a Soviet surprise attack, the air defenses had to "blunt the power of the initial attack as much as possible" and the SAC counter-attack had to ensure that the Soviets were unable "to sustain operations or reattack the United States." This counterforce targeting concept emerged first in SAC war plans and then in revisions of the joint emergency war plans such as SHAKEDOWN. In early 1950 the Air Force leadership was already working under the presumption that the strategic air offensive target list would shift from the existing concept of first attacking Soviet economic centers to a first phase attack on the "Soviet air attack itself, with the attack on the economic centers following second."10
The Air Force included this counterforce emphasis in the statement of missions which was provided to Congress. In 1950, the Air Force informed Congress its first priority mission was cooperating with the Army and Navy in the air defense of the Western Hemisphere. In the next two years this mission shifted to defending the United States "by both offensive and defensive air operations... with particular emphasis against atomic attack." Air Force testimony before Congress presented the strategic air offensive as the critical defensive capability for the United States. The Air Force conceptually expanded the offensive battle for air superiority to a global scale. This first priority mission was followed by the other Air Force missions of attacking the "enemy war-making capacity," assisting "the direct defense of NATO and in the defense of critical areas in the Far East," and aiding the allies in "executing their responsibilities." The traditional tactical missions in support of theater operations placed tactical air power into the last two, lower priority roles.\footnote{11}

The Air Force argued that the two strategic offensive missions were the most important missions in terms of American survival, and because these forces must be in being at the start of the war, they had to be the foundation of any standing peacetime force structure. The service leaders contended that the other mission areas and security
objectives would benefit from the existence of this strong strategic offensive force and the enhanced protection which it provided to the American "production base." The Air Force noted that NATO depended on the survival of this base and also benefited both from strategic air power's deterrent effect and its contribution to the air superiority battle. General Twining also assured Congress that the flexibility of the long-range aircraft would allow them to contribute to the tactical battle in Europe beyond the retardation missions and the impact of the strategic air operations. However, this support for the tactical battle did not detract from the Air Force belief that

If, in the early days of the war we adequately blunt the enemy's air attack on our vitals, and if, concurrently, we destroy his vitals, OUR ULTIMATE MILITARY VICTORY IS ABSOLUTELY ASSURED.

It would be a hopeless task indeed to face in Western Europe the hordes of Asia backed by a secure and functioning production base... If the enemy is NOT denied his war sustaining base, the consequences to Western Civilization will be disastrous.(emphasis in original)

The Air Force linked American and Western European security to strategic air power as the key deterrent and the critical combat force. While accepting the need for other theater forces in Europe to defend the region until the strategic attack could defeat the enemy, and while recognizing the potential danger of local aggression, the Air Force strongly resisted the development of overly diverse military forces designed to meet all types of potential
threats. In Congressional testimony, Secretary Thomas K. Finletter stated that the U.S. "should not set up a military establishment capable of fighting local wars all over the place." The Secretary was concerned that such activities, including the Korean War, were distractions from the principle threat to American security. Air power advocates claimed that if local problems did develop, the response had to be conducted under the umbrella of strategic air power, and local interventions should be performed by the flexible air forces which were fielded to counter the main threat in general war. The formal service position which was presented to the Joint Chiefs of Staff decried any military program in which

priority in a build-up is given to forces designed to accomplish lower priority tasks equal to forces for the first priority survival tasks . . . the Armed Forces as a whole cannot afford to expend significant resources on forces with indefinite tasks at indefinite times until the specifically identifiable high priority survival tasks have been provided for.

This perspective had a strong impact on tactical air power within the Air Force program. The plans for the force expansions from the 48 to 143 wing Air Force emphasized the strategic forces, followed by air defense and then the clearly and specifically defined tactical and airlift requirements. The Air Force Council, the service's senior policy body, upheld this order of priorities on several occasions, especially when the Truman administration began
considering a "stretch out" of the expansion program. When funding could not support all of the objectives, the Council recommended that "SAC requirements be met at the expense of all other portions of the program, including Air Defense units if necessary." This did not mean that the other missions were to be abandoned, but when funding constraints affected the Air Force, the non-SAC units were to be equipped with "available and useable second line aircraft" in order to maintain at least minimal capabilities while modernization was deferred. The clear relegation of tradition tactical air forces to a tertiary position reinforced the late 1940s movement towards strategic roles for the tactical community.  

The incorporation of tactical aircraft into the strategic air offensive was not just a tactical community gambit designed to ensure the survival of substantial tactical air assets. The use of fighter-bombers in the air offensive was already a reality in the form of the escort fighters of the early 1950s. Additionally, the expanding Soviet target set amplified the need for more weapons delivery vehicles and the availability of larger numbers of smaller nuclear weapons allowed tactical aircraft to accomplish part of the strategic delivery requirements. The senior air force leadership was also concerned for political and cost effectiveness reasons that the Air Force and the
strategic air offensive not be tied too closely to just the big bomber. Although long-range bombers remained the key to Air Force plans, senior officials also believed the service had to be open-minded and pursue the most efficient and effective force structure options. A major Air Force policy statement expressed concern over

... a growing tendency on the part of certain segments of Congress and of the press to accuse the Air Force of big bomber mentality -- the new form of battleship mentality.\[15\]

The Air Force was facing the realities of a very expensive B-52 bomber program in the midst of fiscal constraints. One assessment noted that the impact of the high cost of the B-52 on the rest of the force structure could be seen in the fact that one B-52 was "... about the equivalent of three B-47s and about ten of the best fighter-bombers." The service planners noted the possibility that larger numbers of smaller aircraft which could have their range extended by the steadily improving capabilities in aerial refueling might favorably compare to the capabilities of smaller numbers of long-range bombers. Although the service remained committed to long-range bombers, the evaluation of cost effectiveness and the recognized need to deliver more nuclear weapons laid the ground work for substantial tactical operations as part of the strategic air offensive. The use of tactical aviation in the strategic arena also strengthened the Air Force claim that the two
terms identified missions and should not be used to identify types of aircraft. The service used this logic to defend its overall force structure, claiming that truly indivisible air power with proper centralized control could be used flexibly to perform a wide range of roles and missions. The strategic arena was therefore formally opened to the tactical community as a key planning consideration during the Korean War, although the primary justification for maintaining large standing tactical air forces was the commitment to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), which was solidified during the War.16

Theater Requirements and Tactical Air Power

The strongest link between the emerging tactical air forces and the U.S. national security policy which justified those forces was found in the military capabilities being developed and deployed to help defend Western Europe. The roles and missions required by this commitment served as the dominant consideration in the long-range planning of the tactical air forces in the early 1950s. The Air Force drew specific lessons on equipment and tactics from operations in Korea which could enhance the forces which were being developed for NATO, but it primarily molded its force development around established air doctrine and its belief in air power as the best means of ensuring Western European security. The Air Force perspective linked the defense of
NATO very closely with the strategic air offensive against the Soviet Union, and the Korean War era policy statements generally echoed this view, presenting a war in Europe as part of a general war with the Soviet Union.17

American planners and policy makers generally accepted the objective of assisting in the defense of Western Europe. However, they were not of one mind on the proper amount and nature of the American resources which should be committed to this effort. Many, especially isolationists and air power advocates, argued that the U.S. should avoid a ground force commitment to Europe. Some of those opposing U.S. surface involvement supported the development of indigenous strength through the Mutual Defense Assistance Program (MDAP). Air Force advocates supported the build up of these local military forces, contending that with backing from adequate American strategic and tactical air power these forces could deter and if necessary defeat Soviet aggression. This concept also envisioned air power as the primary American contribution to any war on the continent. This extended the logic in pre-Korea American war plans, identifying the primary American roles in the defense of Europe as the "immediate initiation and conduct of a strategic air offensive against the Soviets" and maintaining the security of the sea lines of communication. Some American forces would be deployed to the continent as soon as possible after
D-Day, although substantial forces would not be available until after full scale mobilization.\(^{18}\)

Opposition to the air power dominated security posture grew stronger during the Korean war and the concurrent commitment of substantial U.S. forces to NATO. Most analysts and planners generally accepted the importance of a strategic air power umbrella. However, opponents of the USAF/SAC dominated concepts argued that the threat to Europe was immediate and that the strategic air offensive alone could not halt the advance of the Soviet armies. The war plans at the start of the Korean War had conceded this point by describing the long-term combat actions in Western Europe as "liberation operations." This was considered an unacceptable situation by many senior officers, both for the implicit military problems and for the political reality that such plans could not generate adequate political strength and unity within NATO.\(^{19}\)

Many military officers also doubted the value of a liberation campaign which staged from off the continent. Military planners considered a World War II OVERLORD type of invasion exceptionally vulnerable to the growing Soviet atomic capabilities. The near-term Soviet nuclear capability clearly required NATO to defend as far east as possible to avoid over the beach operations. This necessitated a rapid build-up of adequate defenses, and this could only be done
with U.S. assistance and U.S. combat forces. Many senior American decision makers also felt that the commitment of American ground forces to Europe was an important message to the Soviets as well as a psychological boost to the Europeans. The Truman administration accepted this logic and increased the American commitment to Europe from two to six ground divisions and from two to seventeen tactical air groups with approximately 800 combat aircraft.20

The commitment of substantial tactical air forces to NATO established a solid justification for large standing peacetime tactical air forces. However, contrary to the evolving Air Force concepts on theater operations, the planning documents and the official explanations of the tactical air force expansion for NATO presented these assets as support for the ground forces. The Air Force was not content with simply implementing the traditional missions, especially if conducted solely in support of ground forces and ground oriented plans. The Air Force continued to develop new concepts for the decisive employment of tactical air power within the NATO theater or any other nonstrategic arena. The Air Force doctrine and strategic orientation pushed these tactical plans towards a coherent blending of forward deployed forces and the strategic air offensive. As in Korea, Air Force commanders emphasized the decisive potential of deep attacks within the European theater.21
The forces required by the U.S. military services to meet the expanding requirements of the defense of Europe and the strategic air offensive, as well as any additional development of a rapid response force were considerably greater than those in existence during the Korean War. All of the security policy statements recognized the high cost of producing these forces; however, the costs were considered a necessary and supportable burden, especially in the face of the perceived danger. NSC 141 suggested that the problem could be partially overcome by producing a flexible military capability which could serve as deterrent and combat forces for both general war and local war requirements. Additionally, the policy statements advocated the use of indigenous manpower as much as possible in building the free world combat capability. The Air Force leadership believed these policies paralleled and validated the service proposals on the best and most cost effective method of ensuring American national security, but this interpretation was not shared by the other services and the interservice conflicts of the late 1940s continued with the additional component of the debates over operations in Korea.  

Continuing Interservice Conflict

The Air Force view of strategic priorities and how air power should be deployed and employed often was at the heart
of interservice conflicts during the Korean war. The Army frequently joined the other two services in opposing the Air Force and its program priorities. The focus of these splits continued the battles of the late 1940s over the proper strategy and the correct balance of air, land, and sea power in the force structure. Joint war plans and national policy statements continued to provide support for the Air Force by identifying a strong atomic offensive capability as the decisive factor in deterrence and general war. However, the Air Force programs for this mission were frequently attacked as excessive and as detrimental to the other required forces, including Air Force tactical aviation. The other services were able to draw on the expanded American security commitments to make stronger and more logical attacks on the Air Force position than had been made during the late 1940s. The need to defend against these attacks also provided support for expanded tactical air power within the Air Force.23

Senior Army officers such as General Omar N. Bradley continued to support the critical need for a strategic offensive capability. But, the Army leadership also argued that commitments to NATO and other peripheral defenses demanded that the U.S. expand its readily available ground forces, further arguing that air power alone could not win wars and that in the end, only the ground forces with
adequate tactical air support would be the deciding instrument in any future war. The need for these surface forces was supported not only by the national security policy statements, but also by critics within and outside the government who argued that past reliance on strategic bombing was inadequate, and that the more conventional military capability of the U.S. must be increased. Many of these critics cited the Korean War in claiming that an atomic stalemate was likely in the future and that a series of small wars was the most probable threat to American security. 24

The Army and civilian advocates for the expanded ground forces also continued the criticism of the Air Force tactical air power program. These complaints, magnified by Korea and the associated debates on air power, continued to focus on the issues of doctrine, force size, and aircraft design. The ground force expansion required support from a tactical aviation expansion, and the Army remained unsure of the Air Force commitment to ground support and to a "balance between strategic and tactical" air power. Reacting both to the problems of combat in Korea and the needs of the future roles, the Army was actively searching for supplemental firepower which could reduce Army dependence on the Air Force. However, Army leaders also felt that the importance of tactical air support would remain high for the
foreseeable future and they continued to pressure the Air Force to improve its capabilities.25

The Navy joined into the criticism of the Air Force strategic position and presented itself as the service which, along with the Marine Corps could make the a substantial contribution to all three types of combat operations. By presenting a force concept which could support strategic, European, and local military operations, the Navy could hope to regain the dominant position within the defense budget. While criticizing the strategic overemphasis of the Air Force, the Navy was also expanding its own contribution to strategic air warfare. The Navy advocates argued that the carrier based aircraft were less vulnerable to Soviet preemption and more flexible than the Air Force heavy bombers.26

The fiscal constraints made the flexibility of the Naval carrier battle groups a major selling point. The Navy claimed that it could provide tactical air support to ground forces committed to NATO without an expensive, extensive, and vulnerable base system on the continent. The early strategic defense concept which General Eisenhower proposed for Europe included strong naval tactical air support from the northern and southern flanks. Early NATO exercises such as MAINBRACE also attempted to demonstrate the potential contribution of sea-based air power in Western Europe. For
local war reactions, the Navy proponents bragged of the ability to quickly deploy floating airfields that did not depend on local bases which, if available, were expensive and vulnerable to political or unsophisticated military attack. The Navy noted that the carriers could support indigenous ground forces, the Fleet Marine Forces, or the U.S. Army.

Some critics of the Air Force carried this argument even further. They proposed that since the Navy had demonstrated a strong interest in tactical air support and the Air Force had not, the Army should turn to the Navy for tactical firepower and the Air Force should be allowed to pursue its strategic air options without concern for the tactical missions. The proponents of this type of arrangement felt that it provided a clearer assignment of roles and missions which would enable the Army-Navy-Marine team to develop the doctrine and forces to handle the NATO and peripheral missions without tactical air support being degraded by the strategic requirements which dominated the Air Force. The Air Force responded to these challenges by contending that its tactical forces could exploit the inherent advantages of air power and provide key contributions to the strategic air operation while also serving as the decisive component of any form of theater conflict.
Evolving Tactical Air Forces

The challenges from the other services compelled the Air Force to better explain and support the tactical forces which were being developed in the oppressive shadow of the Strategic Air Command. However, this defense of tactical air power did not include deviations from the established service programs and doctrine. Although the NATO roles and missions provided strong justification for tactical air assets, as well as critical planning parameters and assumptions for tactical developments, the implied dominance of the traditional air support missions was not accepted by the Air Force. The Air Force approached the NATO commitment through its well-established strategic perspective, service doctrine, and the core belief that properly employed air power was the only way to successfully defend Western Europe. The service leaders emphasized the need to develop and deploy tactical air power in Europe under the guidance of Air Force doctrine and the service's strategic concept.  

The demands of NATO and Korea combined with the interservice, public press, and Congressional criticism of the Air Force tactical capability to stimulate the elevation of the Tactical Air Command first to an operational subordinate of the Continental Air Command (CONAC) and then to an independent major command. The elevation was symbolically important, but it was also made possible by the force and
funding expansion which removed the "efficiency" argument. Some senior CONAC officials resisted TAC's restoration, renewing the argument for an Air Combat Command, which would provide better centralized control of all air power assets. The CONAC proposal was not acceptable in light of the pressures on the service to demonstrate its commitment to tactical aviation.  

The reborn TAC filled more than a symbolic role for the Air Force. The units and personnel committed to Asia and Europe first had to be raised and trained in the U.S. TAC performed this mission while also serving as a reserve pool that allowed rotations between stateside and overseas units. Additionally, the reinvigorated tactical strength and the difficulties of Korea called for much doctrinal development work. The advancing technology also had to be examined and new applications explored. TAC also provided the forces and the point of contact for training with the Army Field Forces. This interface at times became the focus of intense conflict over doctrine and procedures as TAC was the leading agency in the effort to sell the Air Force tactical system to the other services.

The Air Force waged a concerted campaign to calm the Army and to justify its overall program to Congress. While strategic oriented positions dominated the Air Force presentations at the national level, the service formed a series
of boards to study and better justify its tactical air program and doctrine. Two formal Air Force boards and a Korean Evaluation Group studied the support provided in Korea. Additionally, an Ad Hoc Committee on the Employment of Tactical Aviation was formed in early 1952. General Twining tasked this group with "preparing an Air Force case on tactical aviation," for use if the service had to defend itself before Congress or another body. Twining also asked the Committee to recommend "remedial actions . . . regarding relations with the Army on the subject of tactical aviation." 32

The Ad Hoc Tactical Aviation Committee built on the activities of the 1949 Tactical Air Power Committee, including the assumption that "there is and will continue to be a substantial requirement for tactical air operations." However, staff studies noted that tactical air doctrine was not well understood, not only by Army officers, but even by many officers in the Air Force. This judgment was shared by senior officers in operational commands. The Air Force leadership recognized that the service needed to both solidify and standardize its own internal thinking on tactical air power and at the same time continue to lobby for Army acceptance of the Air Force operational doctrine. 33

A Committee staff study on the problem of "the effectiveness of air-ground operations" made a number of
recommendations which roughly paralleled ongoing Air Force activities. The first priority was the development of adequate intelligence on the threat. The Air Force believed that documenting the massive Soviet tactical air capability would highlight the need to emphasize air superiority as the most important tactical as well as strategic air mission. To improve the overall Air Force tactical capability the study recommended improvements in the dedicated tactical organizations, training and indoctrination, and in a variety of combat capabilities. The study also merged with the general trend of Air Force doctrinal thought by emphasizing air power as the key to defeating numerically superior ground forces and by suggesting that tactical air forces should be capable of decisive independent operations without being tied to a strictly surface oriented theater of operations.  

The concept of independent tactical air operations reflected the long standing Air Force preference for deep missions and the underlying belief in the predominance of air power in modern warfare. While building the existing tactical doctrine on the experiences of the air-ground team in World War II and Korea, Air Force theorists also sought a stronger air orientation in future joint doctrinal developments. The Air Force was particularly concerned that the existing joint perspective, as demonstrated in Korea and in
field exercises, tended to equate tactical air power to close air support, which the service continued to view as the least desirable and least efficient tactical mission. Some doctrine writers within the Air Force wanted to redefine theaters, orienting them towards air objectives as well as those of surface operations. They noted that existing war plans which tasked the ground forces with seizing and defending bases for the strategic air offensive essentially reflected this new perspective. Some Air Force officers wanted to take the concept even further and focus tactical doctrine on engaging and defeating enemy surface forces before they could even come into contact with friendly ground units. Associated with this expanded view of tactical air missions was a movement within the Air Force to drop the term tactical and its associated implications and refer to the nonstrategic air forces as "theater air power."³⁵

A parallel development within the Air Force was the growing emphasis on the concept of the "indivisibility of air power." The Air Force used this concept to amplify the long standing position that the terms tactical and strategic referred to missions and should not be rigidly applied to organizations. The service argued that "a clear differentiation between strategic missions and tactical missions is neither desirable nor possible." Air Force leaders used this
concept to explain that the service force requests supported a carefully tailored package of complementary capabilities designed to perform all of the needed and specifically identified security tasks at the least cost.\textsuperscript{36}

The concept of indivisibility allowed the Air Force to down play its limited tactical resources by claiming that the strategic forces could and would contribute to the traditional tactical missions. However, the opposite was also true, and the Air Force increasingly drew the tactical forces into the conduct of strategic operations, or at least into strongly complementary combat activities. The tactical involvement in the strategic air campaign was designed to both support the strategic forces and, by assuming some of the shorter ranged strategic missions, free additional strategic aircraft for the rapidly growing counterforce targets. This position had been foreshadowed by the TAC position presented to the Tactical Air Power Board in 1949 which identified the support for the strategic air offensive as the most important tactical mission. This was not a radical shift in service doctrine, as tactical air power operations in the strategic air offensive were primarily expected to contribute to the efforts to defeat the enemy air force and retard enemy surface forces -- variations of the already preferred tactical missions of air superiority and interdiction.\textsuperscript{37}
The Air Force viewed this operational concept of complementary strategic and tactical air forces as the key to the defense of Western Europe. Air Force leaders continued to emphasize the strategic air offensive as the foundation for eventual victory, while conceding that a theater defense was also needed to force enemy materiel consumption and to allow allied survival until the bombing could take effect. The Air Force acknowledged the dangers of the large Soviet ground forces, but argued that the West should not "become preoccupied with the sheer weight" of this threat and allow it to obscure the fact that "the Red air forces would be the principal source of danger to our ground forces." Therefore, the Air Force believed that tactical air units in Europe should

join with the Strategic Air Command in the overriding priority task of defeating the Soviet air forces and gaining the control of the air without which the NATO armies could not function.  

The Air Force believed that after the air superiority mission was accomplished by offensive action, the tactical and strategic air forces could concentrate on operations to attack the Soviet armies in the field; to destroy their lines of communication and their supply centers; to deny them freedom of movement; and at the same time supplement the organic firepower of our own ground forces through close air support. Of these missions, the Air Force continued to emphasize the deeper targets while viewing close air support as the least
effectual use of air power. The service was concerned that the U.S. Army and the NATO commanders would attempt to tie air support to the Western ground forces in a conventional strategy designed to directly engage the Soviet ground armies. The Air Force felt that the West could not field enough tactical air forces nor enough ground forces to carry out this traditional, surface oriented strategy. Instead, as they had argued for in Korea, Air Force leaders continued to seek an air-oriented strategy which could exploit Western technological advantages and provide a means for decisive victory against a numerically superior adversary.  

This did not imply that the Air Force rejected the close air support mission, but rather that the specific missions should be placed into a priority system guided by the national security needs and the demands of new theater strategies. The service did work to improve its close air support capability within the overall tactical buildup and through programs such as Project HIGHTIME and the Air Support Weapons Evaluation Project. These programs were designed to improve air support for the ground forces without degrading the air superiority and interdiction capabilities. The Air Force also began to accept the possibility that a specialized close air support aircraft might be needed to placate the Army. However, this would be procured
only if additional funding was available beyond that needed by the established Air Force Program. Unless such increased funding was available, the Air Force wanted its aircraft designed to conduct the more decisive deep operations while using their inherent flexibility to provide close air support when the sorties were needed and the aircraft available. The primary measures taken by the Air Force to counter criticism of the tactical aviation program were to clarify the existing doctrine, improve the control system, and enhance the capabilities of the available tactical assets.41

The Air Force leadership continued to believe that much of the difficulty concerning tactical air doctrine was due to the lack of understanding of the basic principles of air operations and to improper and inefficient use of the tactical air control system. Air Force senior officers frequently complained that the Army commanders had forgotten the lessons of World War II and did not know or understand the doctrine in Field Manuals 100-20 and 31-15 which remained the only joint doctrine manuals throughout the Korean War. This lack of understanding was also a problem within the Air Force. In late 1950 the Commander of the Ninth Air Force complained that only a "small percentage of officers" could "be considered as well versed in Joint Air-Ground Operations and Joint Doctrine." He also observed
that "an even smaller percentage of officers are even interested in the subject." To the Air Force leadership, this suggested that the problems which existed were not in the doctrine per se, but in the understanding and ability of those using it. The service sought solutions through more clearly defined joint doctrine and regulations, the establishment of liaison officer positions, and better education and training for responsible personnel.42

The question of formal doctrine was debated throughout the Korean War. The major doctrinal accomplishment of the period was the development of the Joint Training Directive (JTD) for Air-Ground Operations by TAC and Army Field Forces. The Joint Training Directive project was begun in late 1949 and published in September 1950. It did not replace the existing manuals, but provided a supplemental guide for training. The Army accepted it as a doctrinal statement, but it was only accepted as an interim doctrinal statement by the Air Force, and then only after much internal debate. The main objection within the Air Force was that the Joint Training Directive continued to portray air power in a support role, with theaters being based on surface operations. While the theater mission statements did tend to emphasize support for surface forces, the Directive also conceded other tactical responsibilities in its first paragraph which stated that
at the outbreak of hostilities, United States air power will be faced with two vital missions. First, to protect the United States from air attacks; and second to carry the offensive immediately to the enemy. Tactical air power in being at the outbreak of hostilities may supplement or support either or both of these missions.43

Beyond this statement, the Joint Training Directive generally confirmed the established tactical air missions of air superiority, interdiction and close air support. While labeling air superiority of "primary importance," the directive stated that "no degree of relative importance" could be attached to the other two missions, and that either "may assume a major role in a given situation." This generic statement was a compromise on the major doctrinal difference between the Army and the Air Force, although both services interpreted it with parochial emphasis. The Joint Training Directive provided a starting point for air-ground operations, but it was never officially approved at the highest levels of either service. The Joint Training Directive continued most existing Air Force doctrinal concepts, including the establishment of coequal ground and air commanders cooperating under the direction of a theater commander. The Joint Training Directive remained the most current joint air-ground doctrine source during the Korean war, as other interservice and interallied efforts to create a more formal statement foundered on the issues of mission priorities, force allocation, and control procedures.44
While the Joint Training Directive and more formal doctrinal statements were being debated, the services worked to improve the use of the existing tactical system by the air-ground team. The main proselytizing instruments of this effort were the Air Force controlled Air Ground Operations School (AGOS) and the Joint Air Ground Indoctrination Teams (JAGITs) which were formed in 1950. The AGOS had two levels of courses, a general indoctrination program that presented an overview of the proper use of tactical air power and a course for the specialists who would run the tactical air control system. The Air Ground Operations School was designed to create a more standardized view of "doctrine, techniques and procedures" for planning and integrating air and ground activities in theater operations. The Commandant of the school believed that "its unwritten and possibly most important mission (was) that of advancing the art of inter-service cooperation." Since the Air Ground Operations School had limitations in student slots and scheduling, the Joint Air Ground Indoctrination Teams were formed as traveling teams which could fulfill a "missionary function" in explaining the proper use and control of air power.45

In addition to the efforts to clarify the formal doctrine statements and to teach the correct concepts in formal courses, the Air Force sought to spread its perceptions in the joint exercises in which it participated. Since
these exercises could establish precedents, they became natural points of conflict in the debate which grew out of the Korean experiences. The Navy declined invitations to participate in the two largest joint exercises, SOUTHERN PINE in 1951 and LONG HORN in 1952, largely because of the Air Force system of centralized control. The interservice posturing severely limited the ability for free play by forcing highly structured pre-exercise agreements and plans. Additionally, the ability of the services to adequately support major exercises was limited by the demands for units, equipment, and manpower in Europe and Korea. These many limitations caused the major exercises to become largely set piece training experiences with limited opportunity to actually test doctrinal concepts. Nonetheless, the Air Force viewed exercises as important vehicles for making doctrinal statements, demonstrating the proper techniques and improving the proficiency of the air-ground team.⁴⁶

The Air Force structured the air portion of the exercises around its view of the proper flow of the air battle; beginning with emphasis on the struggle for air superiority, blending into an interdiction campaign, and then concentrating on close air support. However, much of this was often simulated and had little effect on the Army, which preferred to concentrate on the close air support missions and the functioning of the tactical air control
system. The Army also experimented with organic aviation, which generated a strong negative reaction from the Air Force. The Air Force was also frustrated by the feeling that the joint exercises were structured so that the air power was forced "almost entirely into supporting roles to the other services." To counter this trend and emphasize the air power perspective, in late 1953 the Air Force began lobbying for the opportunity to sponsor a "Grand Joint Maneuver," so that the service could "insure that (its) true air missions and doctrines were employed." Under these circumstances of interservice competition and limitations in resources and experienced personnel, it was unlikely that innovative developments could occur until major decisions were made at the Joint Chiefs of Staff level to clarify the interservice conflicts which affected tactical air power operations.47

The problems of the major exercises of the early 1950s reflected the general issues surrounding tactical air power. While the exercises emphasized existing service positions, they also included some early and very controlled efforts to integrate advanced technologies, including atomic weapons. The technological advances suggested the need for major adjustments in tactics and doctrine in the near future. For the Air Force this new technology served to strengthen the value of tactical aviation as part of the central instrument of the national security policy, increasing the growing
overlap and blending of tactical and strategic air power. The Air Force devoted much of its efforts in the early 1950s to the development of the new technologies, fitting them into existing doctrine, and slightly modifying the doctrine to exploit the new capabilities. Although the experience of Korea stimulated the development of some new technologies and their integration into the Air Force tactical air structure, the Air Force exploitation of the growing tactical capabilities was guided by service doctrine and the service's interpretation of national security policy needs. The service realized that the new technological advances were expensive, but when combined with the enhanced combat potential, this amplified the service belief that air power and therefore the Air Force must be the preeminent feature of the U.S. military force structure and the national strategies. The Air Force leadership found a fertile environment for its air power oriented strategies in the defense programs of the Eisenhower administration, but the fiscal constraints continued to influence the development of the roles and missions of the tactical air forces within the Air Force and national military force structure.
NOTES FOR CHAPTER III


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CHAPTER IV
SHAPING THE TACTICAL FORCE:
TAILORING MEANS TO ENDS
1950-1953

The restored importance of tactical air power in the early 1950s was in large part founded on the rapid advances of technology. Tactical aviation might soon have the capability to perform the tasks demanded by the national security commitments and the Air Force air power strategy. The most critical of the technological advances was the development of tactical nuclear weapons, which provided all of the services with greatly increased firepower. However, the value of these weapons was tied not only to military utility, but also to the willingness of the political leadership to use these weapons and to integrate them into the national security policy. The individual services attempted to link their nuclear oriented forces to specific national security requirements, making the development and availability of smaller, powerful nuclear weapons a major factor in the continuing interservice conflicts over strategy, doctrine, and force structure.

The tactical nuclear weapons merged with other technologies, such as improved aircraft performance, aerial refueling and guided missiles, to make the relatively small tactical air component a very potent combat force. Tactical
aviation was increasingly able to perform the missions demanded by the Air Force tactical-strategic theater concept, traditional tactical roles, and the whole spectrum of commitments required by the national security policies. The major drawback for the advanced technology was its high cost, which amplified the competition for resources within the Air Force and between the services. The tactical air advocates continued to emphasize the ability of flexible tactical air forces to provide critical support to both Air Force strategic concepts and all other national security commitments.

**Integrating Atomic Weapons Into American Policy and Forces**

A critical element in the rise of tactical air power was the integration of nuclear weapons into the American security policy and the military force structure. Atomic weapons, while critical to American security policy and war plans in the late 1940s, were actually quite scarce until approximately 1952. This was due to conscious limits on production, the pursuit of international limitations, and technical difficulties. The first Soviet atomic explosion stimulated the first of a series of increases in American production of fissile material and nuclear weapons. The atomic weapons tests of 1948 and 1951 demonstrated the potential of smaller and more efficient designs which when
combined with the production increases promised a coming "age of nuclear plenty." These nuclear advances merged with the increasing demands of the national security commitments and fiscal constraints to create an expansion of the roles and importance of nuclear weapons beyond strategic deterrence and retaliation.¹

The potential military primacy of atomic weapons could not occur, however, without a clear and supporting national policy on the use of atomic weapons. As early as September 1948 NSC 30 attempted to clarify the status of atomic weapons within American security policy. This document confirmed the existing deterrent role of atomic power, especially in offsetting the Soviet conventional masses. NSC 30 also indicated that this capability must be maintained for use in war, unless diplomacy produced international limitations with adequate safeguards. The policy statement emphasized that, while targets should be determined by military considerations, the actual use of atomic weapons must be guided by political factors and the final decision on release must remain in the hands of the President. NSC 30 highlighted the difficulty involved in predicting the actual circumstances of a future war, as well as the potentially negative domestic and international political reactions to clear statements on the use of atomic weapons. The document therefore recommended that no formal policy be
developed on whether to "use or not use atomic weapons in any future conflict," nor on the specific "time and circumstances under which atomic weapons might or might not be used."\(^2\)

The military leadership was concerned and somewhat frustrated by the ambiguous nature of this policy statement. The military feared that a slow decision during a crisis could negate the one advantage which the U.S. forces held over the Soviets. However, military planners also used the ambiguity in NSC 30 to justify the extensive integration of nuclear weapons into the force structure. The document specifically stated that the U.S. position should not "prohibit beforehand the use of any particular weapons." NSC 30 also noted that it might be "futile" to expect that existing weapons would not be used during a war. The military emphasized the conclusion

\[\ldots\] in the event of hostilities, the National Military Establishment must be ready to utilize promptly and effectively all appropriate means available, including atomic weapons, in the interest of national security and must therefore plan accordingly.\(^3\)

The ambiguous position on nuclear weapons was gradually clarified in subsequent national policy statements. In 1950, NSC 68 confirmed the need for atomic weapons as a strategic deterrent and as an offset for the "relative unpreparedness in conventional forces." However, this policy paper also advocated building up the conventional
forces and reducing American dependence on atomic weapons. During the following two years, while the security statements continued to emphasize the strategic value of atomic weapons and to advocate "appropriate" forces for all levels of threats, the military program decisions steadily expanded the tactical role of nuclear weapons by the American military. In 1951 the NSC 114 series projected continued Soviet quantitative superiority and specifically identified Soviet "forces in the field" as targets for atomic weapons. These policy statements doubted that even the tactical employment of these weapons would

make it possible to hold all of Western Europe by mid-1953. However, the expected increase in the availability and deliverability of atomic weapons for defensive operations will materially assist in offsetting the preponderance of Soviet forces over U.S., allied, and friendly forces in Europe. Taking account of terrain factors, Soviet logistical problems and atomic developments, it is expected that areas of major strategic importance in continental Europe can be held by mid-1953.4

This confirmed the national commitment to use tactical as well as strategic nuclear weapons in the defense of Europe. The American military considered this a critical policy position and also pushed for a clear statement on the use of atomic weapons in peripheral conflicts. While the military leaders emphasized their commitment to final presidential control of any employment decision, they also advocated the formal acceptance of nuclear weapons as "an integral part of the general arsenal of the United States."
The JCS argued that if U.S. combat forces were used in response to a peripheral aggression, "the United States must retain its freedom of action to employ atomic weapons in such a localized conflict if the military situation should dictate."\(^5\)

Produced during the final months of the Truman administration, NSC 141 expanded the potential use of tactical atomic weapons from general war and European theater operations to peripheral missions as well. The document maintained the objectives of countering threats at all levels, but conceded that the nation for "reasons of economy" could not maintain two separate forces designed for either general or limited war deterrence and combat. Therefore, NSC 141 emphasized the need to develop multipurpose forces which could respond to either threat. In this respect the paper stated that

> It remains imperative that the U.S. continue to build up and improve its striking power and to develop the greatest possible flexibility of means for delivering its offensive weapons both in general war and in local actions short of general war. In this connection the use of tactical atomic weapons warrants careful consideration.\(^6\)

The acceptability of nuclear weapons within the national security policy was matched by the growing commitment of the military to atomic firepower. Even before NSC 30, military planners had been evaluating the likely impact of the new weapons and in certain circumstances
incorporating them in operational and force structure plans. The military perspective generally paralleled the sentiments of Dwight D. Eisenhower, who wrote in 1947 that without "international agreement and effective safeguards . . . such weapons will be used by one or both sides in a major war."

The military expectation that atomic weapons would be used in a war with the Soviets was only strengthened after the Soviets gained an atomic capability. The emergency war plans of the late 1940s and early 1950s all relied heavily on atomic weapons, although the limited numbers of bombs would mostly be delivered in the strategic air offensive. The plans projected for the mid-1950s maintained this strategic bias, although they also increased the importance of the retardation missions. The retardation missions, while initially flown by strategic aircraft and largely directed at fixed targets, were the first major step towards tactical or theater nuclear employment.7

The strategic retardation missions, like the strategic air offensive in general, were initially a mix of conventional and atomic sorties. As more nuclear weapons became available, both missions shifted to nuclear delivery. The strategic forces also were complemented by the deployment of the new, smaller atomic warheads delivered by shorter ranged, tactical systems. Tactical nuclear weapons were a legitimate military consideration by 1950, and their numbers
blossomed during the Korean War expansion. In 1951, the Chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission announced that adequate weapons existed to allow tactical use without degrading the strategic forces, and by 1952, the country was stockpiling nuclear weapons for tactical use. The American military also began planning for weapons requirements based on perceived combat needs rather than on projections of weapons and fissile material availability. Military officers and defense analysts who had previously had to concede atomic weapons allocations to the requirements of SAC began lobbying for much broader use.  

The primary focus of the military planning for tactical atomic employment was the defense of Western Europe. Both the Truman and Eisenhower administrations considered using atomic bombs in Korea, but the weapons were not used due to a combination of political and military factors. In Europe, the NATO concept of conventional defensive forces backed by the largely U.S. strategic air offensive quickly gave way to heavier reliance on tactical nuclear weapons. The British made the major European push for an atomic strategy in 1951 and 1952. While the U.S. was not yet overtly committed to this course, the security policy and military attitudes clearly supported the battlefield use of atomic weapons in Europe.
Senior Army officers began lobbying for tactical nuclear use in the late 1940s. They stressed the value of the weapons in the defensive. The Navy joined the Army advocacy for smaller tactical atomic weapons for more efficient naval participation in strategic strikes as well as in theater support or at sea combat missions. Many defense analysts supported the development and use of tactical atomic weapons as a means of restricting the damage to the battlefield area and avoiding escalation to a destructive strategic exchange. This argument was also used to oppose the development of the "Super" or thermonuclear bomb, but the JCS countered that even this "weapon of mass destruction" would "have a high tactical value in special situations for use against such targets as [the enemy's] massed forces might provide."

A major concern of the military was that the availability of atomic weapons might lead American political leaders to substitute atomic firepower for manpower and reduce the size of the military. A JCS study warned that this was a dangerous conclusion and that no reduction based on nuclear capabilities was possible, as modern "war might drag out longer than otherwise in a battle of weapons supported by men rather than of men supported by weapons." The Army was particularly concerned over the possibility of force reductions, and senior officers argued that strong
ground forces were still required to compel the enemy to concentrate, thus becoming more vulnerable to atomic attack.\textsuperscript{11}

The Army viewed nuclear weapons as an important firepower counter to the Soviet masses, but not an "absolute weapon." The developing Army doctrine on atomic firepower was published in Field Manual 100-31, \textit{Tactical Use of Atomic Weapons} (1951). The Army doctrine was relatively conservative, and generally incorporated atomic weapons into the existing force structure and operational concepts with the addition of the need for dispersion and protective positions. The service leaders continued to emphasize that the ground forces remained the ultimately decisive factor in any war, regardless of technological advances.\textsuperscript{12}

Army officers also viewed the use of atomic warheads by Army artillery, rocket, and missile units as the best way to overcome what the service believed to be inadequate Air Force tactical air support. In terms of atomic support from the strategic air offensive, the Army argued that it needed the firepower immediately at the start of combat and could not wait for the "cumulative effect" of the retardation missions and the attacks on the Soviet homeland. The Army field commanders desired immediate support from Army controlled atomic weapons. The artillery and missile delivery systems promised to provide accurate night and bad weather
firepower which was not available from existing tactical aircraft. The Army also continued to lobby for tactical air power for both conventional and atomic support, especially for deep targets, but hoped to reduce the dependence of ground force commanders on Air Force controlled close air support. While pursuing atomic firepower, the Army stressed that this capability was not a substitute for adequate ground forces, only a valuable complement.\(^\text{13}\)

The Air Force agreed with the need to maintain an adequate force structure composed of all services. However, the Air Force leadership generally believed that the service's bombers and tactical aircraft were the best, most flexible and most logical delivery vehicles for the expanded atomic stockpile. Air power advocates believed that the increased numbers of atomic weapons enabled the Air Force to conduct an even more efficient, effective and decisive air campaign. Senior Air Force officers were concerned that the other services would only incorporate this atomic firepower into costly "plans and preparations" based on the "strategy and tactics of the last war." General Hoyt S. Vandenberg warned Congress that the U.S. may have "underestimated the inherent capability of the atomic weapon not only as a deterrent, but also as a war-winning instrumentality."\(^\text{14}\)

Project VISTA, formed in mid-1951, examined many of the key issues involving tactical atomic weapons. The VISTA
study was conducted by civilians, but the group made numerous visits to military facilities and demonstrations. Additionally, experienced officers such as General Elwood R. Quesada and military representatives from TAC assisted in the program. The report emphasized the importance of tactical nuclear weapons in offsetting numerical advantages. The study suggested that these weapons could significantly enhance deterrence in Western Europe, and indeed might be the only way to conduct a successful defense of the region. The analysis indicated that the use of atomic power could enable a smaller ground force to defend a given location. The VISTA report also projected the use of tactical atomic weapons to deter peripheral wars. The study was never formally adopted, as it collided with political issues such as dividing the available fissile materials between the services and the various missions. The report also was unacceptable to Air Force senior leaders, especially to SAC, which had an increasing warhead requirement due to its counterforce targeting program.15

The theater atomic concepts in VISTA were not totally out of line with the Air Force perspective. However, in addition to the anti-strategic implications in VISTA, the service felt that the study was too tied to the traditional surface oriented strategies. Therefore, many Air Force officers believed that VISTA did not go far enough in
examining the potential military impact of numerous tactical atomic weapons in theater operations.\textsuperscript{16}

These tactical nuclear developments strengthened the Air Force commitment to an air power oriented national strategy. Air Force leaders believed atomic capable tactical aircraft could contribute to the strategic air operation and be the decisive factor in theater conflict. Some also believed tactical atomic strike forces could be the key to American responses to limited wars. The Air Force program drew continued support from parallels with the national security policies, such as the NSC 141 emphasis on American technology complementing indigenous manpower. The Air Force argued that the best approach to limited (even European theater) warfare was local troops backed by American air power using the increased firepower of tactical atomic weapons. This perspective dominated Air Force planning throughout the 1950s and caused tactical programs to emphasize air-delivered atomic weapons in strategic, theater, and peripheral operations.\textsuperscript{17}

Air Force Tactical Nuclear Capabilities and Doctrine

The Air Force tactical nuclear program developed from virtually nothing in 1950 to a formidable and growing capability in early 1953. The development of tactical weapons was initially slowed by the strategic orientation of the
service and its doctrine, as well as the limited numbers of weapons. These restrictions were compounded by rigid security policies which kept many planners from gaining access to critical information on weapons availability, production rates, nuclear effects, and new developments. However, once the numbers of weapons grew and the smaller bombs became available, the service quickly developed a strong tactical nuclear program which was complemented by other technological developments.\(^{18}\)

The Air Force air power strategy and interpretations of the needs of the national security commitments molded the service's new nuclear capabilities. However, other factors also contributed to the rapid progress. The competition generated by the Army and Navy embrace of tactical nuclear weapons undoubtedly contributed to the speed of the Air Force developments. The Air Force did not wish to concede the theater support missions nor the formation of theater strategy to the other services. Within the Air Force, the tactical community aggressively pursued the tactical nuclear capability both as a means to compete with the strategic forces and as a means to enhance the combat capability of the relatively limited tactical air forces. Additionally, with the larger stockpile of nuclear weapons, the Air Force viewed tactical aircraft as a way to deliver more weapons than was possible with just the strategic forces.\(^{19}\)
The early tactical atomic weapons grew out of the SANDSTONE tests of 1948. By mid-1950 the Tactical Air Command was notified that a weapon, the Mark 7, would soon be available for tactical aircraft. TAC established a staff organization manned by trained personnel from the Armed Forces Special Weapons Project (AFSWP) and tasked it with developing the training, organizational structure, and doctrine for the tactical use of atomic weapons. TAC also assigned students to the special weapons courses and dispatched representatives to the AFSWP to assist in the development of the new weapons. The Command initiated a series of internal studies on atomic warfare and, with the Air Force, tasked the RAND corporation with analyzing the problems of tactical atomic combat. The view of TAC on the value of the new capability was expressed by General John K. Cannon, who described atomic armed fighter-bombers as "one of the most devastating striking forces." 20

The tactical delivery capability was formed in 1951 when the 47th Bomb Wing (Light) and the 20th Fighter-Bomber Wing began training for atomic delivery. The Republic F-84s of the 20th would carry the light (1700 pounds) Mark 7 and the North American B-45s of the 47th would carry the Mark 5, which was essentially a scaled down strategic weapon (3000 pounds). In 1952 these two wings deployed to the United
Kingdom as the 49th Air Division. This organization was
described as having a "one hundred per cent" nuclear
mission. While Europe received the first tactical atomic
capability, the Air Force also assured the commanders in the
Far East in July of 1952 that they would support the deploy­
ment of a "fighter A-Bomb capability" as soon as possible.
TAC also formed a unique transport unit to move "special
weapons" to the overseas combat units, as the actual weapons
were initially only delivered when needed. This transport
unit also supported the TAC mobility concept by being able
to move special weapons to any location worldwide as
required by national commitments.21

The Air Force planners fit the growing atomic
capability into the existing air power doctrine and the
established air support missions, but at the same time
worked to redefine some missions and clarify some aspects of
the doctrine itself. The Air Force believed that the large
numbers of nuclear weapons only increased the vulnerability
of the ground forces. General Lauris Norstad in the Supreme
Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE) an opponent of the
VISTA report, argued in 1951 that the growing atomic ca­
pability had to be carefully examined. Norstad noted that
most previous studies had "started out with the idea of
proving some conviction already held. The result [had] been
consideration of atomic weapons as little more than heavy
artillery..." The general noted that "an objective and comprehensive study" would likely affect "the size and composition of forces of all services" and this made it difficult to escape the "the inhibitions and limitations which govern our thinking as long as we remain within the boundaries of conventional tactical doctrine." General Norstad forcefully asserted that the military "should work on the basis of new concepts... with minds completely free of the strategy and tactics which frequently cloud our thinking." Although this implied a search for new concepts, within the Air Force the more numerous atomic weapons merely amplified the existing belief in independent and decisive air operations conducted within the framework of an air oriented theater strategy.\textsuperscript{22}

The focus of American defense planning, the European theater, was also the center of Air Force doctrinal developments on the application of air power. The service continued to emphasize the importance of the strategic air offensive, but the greater numbers of weapons allowed the service to talk of shifting from primarily "war winning tasks" to also performing "campaign winning tasks." This shift involved first the strategic forces and then tactical components. The first atomic weapons designated for tactical delivery and targetted by the theater commander were carried by Strategic Air Command B-29 medium bombers. These
were soon complemented by fighter-bombers in both SAC and tactical units. The strategic fighters, also known as escort or penetration fighters, pointed the way for the employment concepts of tactical aircraft both in the support of strategic operations and in theater missions.23

The escort fighters had emerged from the experiences of World War II, when fighters had to protect the bombers to prevent an unacceptable level of attrition in the offensive force. While initially used as protective cover for the bombers, the long-ranged fighters eventually began conducting more offensive operations such as sweeps aimed at enemy aircraft and attacks on enemy airfields. The post-World War II escort fighters lacked the range to accompany the bombers all the way to targets deep inside the Soviet Union from the available bases. Additionally, the Air Force lacked the numbers of fighters which would be need for close protection. Therefore, the escort fighters contributed to the strategic air offensive by screening the bombers as they penetrated the perimeter defenses; conducting diversionary strikes and feints; and attacking enemy airfields, radar sites, and command and control facilities.24

The availability of tactical atomic weapons significantly enhanced the effectiveness of the penetration fighters. By 1952, the Air Force shifted these fighters to "strategic strike" missions and made them an offensive
component of the strategic air offensive rather than just an escort or support force. The strategic fighters continued to aid the penetration of the bombers by attacking enemy defensive facilities, but the fighters also had a target list which included airfields (strategic as well as defensive), retardation targets, and other strategic targets when suitable and within range. The Air Force also considered using the fighters on armed reconnaissance missions, a truly flexible use of atomic firepower.25

The atomic capable tactical aircraft were initially tasked with many of the same missions as the strategic fighters, especially attacks on the enemy airfields and retardation targets. These theater forces were justified both as part of the strategic air offensive and as the core of theater combat forces, and most of the missions fell into both categories. General Cannon described the forward deployed tactical aircraft as the earliest committed element of "a carefully planned immediate retaliation, followed by the sustained campaign against hostile air and surface forces." Tactical planners claimed that the smaller size and better performance characteristics of the tactical aircraft made them more survivable and more effective in penetrating the extensive Soviet air defenses in the early phase of the war. In addition to this practical aspect, tactical advocates argued that beyond simply assisting in
the strikes on strategic target, the use of tactical resources would complicate the Soviet defensive planning and relieve the strategic arm of the theater related targets, allowing SAC to concentrate on the enemy strategic forces and homeland.26

The use of forward deployed tactical units could provide an early disarming attack as part of the strategic counter air offensive. Additionally, this preemption of the enemy air component was critical to success in the theater conflict. Air Force doctrine strongly argued that air power must first win the air battle before anything else could be accomplished, and the best way to defeat any enemy air force and gain air superiority was through attacks against his bases. The first allocation of tactical atomic bombs was therefore largely designated for attacks on enemy airfields.27

The tactical air forces also promised an early contribution to the retardation missions. The tactical involvement in retardation operations actually expanded this phase of the strategic air offensive into more flexible deep interdiction operations. The Air Force tactical air forces also worked on the adaptation of the new weapons to close air support, but interservice doctrinal disputes combined with Army concerns over delivery accuracies, availability of aircraft and weapons, and Air Force responsiveness slowed
the development of this mission. The Air Force strongly believed that air-delivered atomic strikes on the enemy ground formations were the key to holding Europe until the strategic air offensive and the deep interdiction missions could have their decisive impact.\textsuperscript{28}

The Tactical Air Command conducted several studies which attempted to define the best targets for atomic attack. These studies sought not only improved combat performance, but also the best cost effectiveness for the available force structure. While TAC accepted the broad missions which had developed, the command wanted to further exploit the flexibility of tactical aircraft by seeking clearly established target priorities which would allow pilots to conduct nuclear armed reconnaissance missions and make on the spot decisions on what targets should be struck. A 1952 study which did not contain final firm conclusions identified the key tactical targets as airfields, supply dumps, troop concentrations, armor formations, front line fortifications, and bridges.\textsuperscript{29}

The atomic targets and operational concepts, while outgrowths of established Air Force tactics and doctrine, were still new and untried. Therefore, testing under simulated combat conditions was important. The Air Force performed many tests, especially of the delivery tactics. However, to integrate these concepts into theater operations and to
properly coordinate Army and Air Force activities, the atomic doctrine and tactics had to be tested in joint exercises, preferably in the form of free play maneuvers.

The joint exercises or maneuvers of the early 1950s slowly incorporated atomic weapons play. However, as with the issues of the command and control of air power, the introduction of the tactical use of nuclear weapons was marked by interservice doctrinal disputes. The exercises, therefore, tended to become more demonstrations of preferred service techniques and less efforts to test existing concepts and develop new, more effective ones. The first use of atomic weapons within an exercise was SOUTHERN PINE in August 1951. The atomic play was not, however, part of the overall exercise plan, but rather an add-on command post exercise (CPX) which was performed concurrently with the actual field activities. The CPX demonstrated that many key personnel lacked training in atomic weapons effects. The post-exercise reports recommended more training and the integration of atomic weapons into future exercises. The most specific tactical lesson was the need for improved intelligence to allow more rapid delivery of weapons on fleeting targets.30

Exercise SNOW FALL, in January and February 1952, was the first joint exercise with simulated tactical atomic weapons integrated into the field play. The aggressor force
used an atomic weapon to halt a friendly attack and the friendly forces used one to destroy an enemy reserve force. Although Air Force involvement was relatively limited, the exercise clearly illustrated that a joint doctrine was needed and that the services were still struggling with the actual impact of the new weapons. The exercise play was, in fact, largely designed to create an awareness in the troops and especially the commanders of the atomic potential. The SNOW FALL after action reports called for further exercise use of atomic weapons and cited the need to develop realistic and better defined atomic procedures.31

Exercise LONG HORN, in March and April 1952, included the first substantial use of atomic weapons in a major joint maneuver. The Army designed the exercise to include widespread indoctrination in atomic effects and "full atomic play." The stated objectives included joint training in large-scale offensive and defensive operations involving chemical and atomic weapons. (Bacteriological defenses were also planned, but dropped due to the Chinese and Soviet charges of germ warfare in Korea.) One of the main concerns of the Air Force after LONG HORN was the lack of adequate joint planning and coordination of atomic strikes, especially in close support of ground forces.32

The observers from TAC were concerned that the Army was beginning to operate independently with its atomic forces.
The formal Air Force history indicates that only eleven weapons were used, and ten of these were air-delivered while one was delivered by the new atomic cannon. However, the TAC trip reports claim that the Army used close support atomic strikes on a wider scale without adequately analyzing the targets for real justification. The Air Force reports suggested that the Army attempted to show off its atomic capability and justify the 280mm atomic cannon, and this led to "a degree of indiscriminate use of the weapon." The real issue behind these charges was the concern that the Army was delegating release authority for its atomic artillery to the army and corps levels of command. The air delivered weapons were controlled by the theater commander, which the Air Force believed was the proper point of control for tactical atomic weapons. The issue for the Air Force was broader than just atomic weapons, as the Army decentralization of atomic control was viewed as part of the effort to decentralize the control of air support in general.33

The Air Force observers were concerned that erroneous precedents could emerge from such unrealistic exercises and recommended that the service quickly establish clear formal doctrine and procedures. The Air Force delivery of atomic bombs in the exercise followed service doctrine and emphasized the counter air mission. Of the ten air delivered weapons, seven were used by the friendly air force
against the aggressor air fields to gain air superiority and to preempt the enemy atomic capability. The other three were used by the aggressor forces in close air support missions. The Air Force criticized the target selection procedures and noted that the ground forces failed to exploit the opportunity created by the atomic blasts; however, while blaming overly tight control by the maneuver director, the service also conceded that lack of experience and the absence of doctrine were important restrictions.34

The Air Force was at a certain disadvantage in the doctrinal conflict with the Army over tactical atomic weapons. Although the Air Force attempted to work the weapons into the existing doctrine and control system, the Army had published a formal manual, FM 100-31. The Air Force objected to some aspects of the Army document, especially the decentralized control of atomic firepower. However, the service had failed to produce its own doctrinal statement, although such a manual had been under consideration throughout 1951. A clear joint doctrine on tactical nuclear weapons employment was held hostage by the continuing struggle over tactical support in general. In an effort to clarify the issue, the Air Staff recommended that the exercises be conducted, using the agreements between the commander of SAC and the Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR) as guidance. This would establish the
The concept of centralized control of atomic strikes and the priority of counter air and other deep targets.\textsuperscript{35}

The value of tactical atomic weapons in theater operations substantially enhanced the status of tactical air power within the Air Force and the national force structure. This atomic capability meshed smoothly with the doctrinal commitment to deep and decisive air operations and to the role of tactical air power in supporting the national security policies. The Air Force tactical forces did attempt to maintain a flexible force structure, including improved conventional capabilities. However, the dominant factor in Air Force tactical planning in the early 1950s was the delivery of nuclear weapons in all types of potential conflicts.

**Tactical Force Developments**

The Air Force interpretation of national defense needs, air power doctrine, and the power of small atomic weapons shaped the development of the tactical forces of the early 1950s. These factors guided the planning, development and procurement of tactical aircraft, although the realities of scientific and engineering limitations and the budget constraints restricted what was actually possible. The atomic weapon was the most important planning consideration, but the combat in Korea added to the interpretations of
traditional tactical doctrine and the established tactical missions, generating additional requirements in the procurement process for tactical aircraft.

Tactical atomic weapons quickly dominated the three key tactical air missions of air superiority, interdiction, and close air support. The development of tactical aircraft and of tactics was dominated by the nuclear weapons. Air Force tactics for tactical nuclear strikes generally envisioned a single aircraft flying maximum range penetrations at high altitude and at high speed. The fighter-bomber delivery of the nuclear weapons was initially performed by high altitude dive bombing. This was eventually complemented by the low altitude bomb system (LABS) which allowed the aircraft to penetrate at low altitude, below weather or defenses, and loft the bomb onto the target. Both methods required daylight conditions and reasonably good weather. A limited night/bad weather capability was provided by the tactical bombers and the strategic medium bombers which were delegated to theater support missions.36

The Air Force commitment to tactical atomic forces was highlighted in 1951 when the Air Force Council determined that by 1954 all of the service's offensive tactical aircraft would have the ability to deliver nuclear weapons. The aircraft also maintained a conventional capability, but the dominant consideration was atomic delivery. The aircraft
used for atomic delivery were initially drawn from the existing inventory, with some modification and improvements. The first fighter-bomber selected for the atomic missions were the Republic F-84E Thunderjet. The first tactical atomic bomber assigned to tactical units was the North American B-45A Tornado, assuming the deep, night—all weather strike missions which previously had been assigned to SAC B-29 Superfortresses. In 1950 TAC provided F-84Es and B-45As to the Special Weapons Command for testing and for training of the first contingent of tactical atomic crews.37

The tactical commanders committed themselves to the fighter-bomber as "the backbone of tactical air, the workhorse of each of the three combat tasks." This applied to both nuclear and conventional operations. Given the relatively small size of the tactical air forces, the tactical leaders emphasized the flexibility of a multi-role aircraft with long range and the capability to hold its own against enemy fighters. The tactical components were dissatisfied with the early nuclear fighter-bombers, and continually lobbied for improvements to existing models and for new aircraft. The tactical commanders attempted to gain the long-range penetration fighters which were designed for SAC. TAC also established the requirements for a supersonic, long-ranged nuclear fighter-bomber which developed into the Republic F-105, Thunderchief.38
The major challenge to the Air Force emphasis on the multi-role fighter-bomber came from the Army, which was dissatisfied with Air Force close air support concepts and performance in Korea. Although the emphasis in this dispute involved command and control, the Army also pushed for specialized close air support aircraft. The Army had been impressed with the early performance of the WWII vintage F-51 Mustang and the Marine F4U Corsair in Korea. Therefore, the service leaders pressed for a light close air support aircraft which could operate from forward fields and respond directly to requests from the ground commanders at the corps level or below.39

This proposal was totally unacceptable to the Air Force. The service's position emphasized the lack of flexibility in such a specialized aircraft citing this proposal as an unacceptable drain on the defense resources. The service also noted that the aircraft would be less survivable in a hostile environment and would require additional high performance aircraft as escorts. Some officers in TAC believed that the Army proposal was largely an effort to coerce the Air Force into restructuring the air support system along the Army concept and providing dedicated close air support sorties. Although the Air Force resisted the concept of a light close air support aircraft, by 1952 service leaders were planning to develop a close air support
aircraft in order to placate the Army. However, any such specialized procurement would not involve a reduction in the other established Air Force programs. The Air Force remained committed to the long-ranged multi-role fighter-bomber which could perform close air support missions as well as interdiction and offensive counter air strikes.40

The tactical community within the Air Force also wanted sufficient tactical bombers to supplement the fighter-bombers and to eliminate the need to task strategic medium bombers with tactical missions. The tactical commanders argued that the bombers were critical to the "immediate retaliation" and to the decisive theater air operations. The bomber force was needed to strike deep theater and strategic support targets beyond fighter bomber range and to deliver of heavier concentrations of conventional ordnance. Additionally, given the technology of the period, the bombers could provide some night and bad weather delivery capability when the fighters were grounded or unable to locate the target. The importance of gaining a night/bad weather capability was clearly demonstrated in Korea, but in 1951 the tactical bomber force was almost nonexistent. The B-45, although the first all jet bomber in the Air Force, was inadequate in terms of performance and was available in limited numbers. The only other light bomber was the WW II B-26 (formerly A-26) Invader, which was useful primarily as
a night intruder.  

The tactical leadership lobbied hard for the tactical bomber, but the Air Force senior leadership resisted the aircraft. Part of the problem was the growing overlap between strategic medium bombers and tactical bombers. The Air force did not wish to be charged with fielding redundant systems. The service leaders preferred to stress the flexibility of the strategic forces and use them in the tactical role when needed. This position also reflected the ongoing concerns over the high cost of all of the many different weapons systems. General Vandenberg, along with other senior Air Force officers, strongly resisted the tactical bomber on the basis of economy and the belief that the fighter-bombers with aerial refueling, projected avionics advances and atomic weapons could match the performance of the light bombers. Eventually the Air Staff suggested that the tactical forces form several wings of the B-47 Stratojet medium bomber which was being purchased by SAC. The tactical community was not enthusiastic towards the B-47 option nor the fighter-only option, and in mid-1952 the Air Staff finally surrendered and approved the selection of the Douglas B-66 Destroyer (a modified Navy A3D) as an interim tactical bomber.  

Although a small bomber purchase was approved, TAC planners recognized that the future was obviously going to
be dominated by fighters. The tactical leadership therefore concentrated on getting the most from the fighter forces. A key factor in optimizing the striking power and flexibility of the fighter-bombers which would assume the tactical bomber responsibilities was aerial refueling. SAC had developed aerial refueling for its penetration fighters as well as its medium bombers, and TAC had advocated a tanker force to support its tactical aircraft in 1949. However, funding limitations restricted the development of the tactical refueling program until the Korean War, when air-to-air refueling was used to deploy fighters to the theater and to support fighters flying combat missions. To the tactical planners, this demonstrated capability was critical for the use of high performance fighter aircraft for long range delivery of atomic weapons. Within the theater, refueling allowed strike aircraft to operate from bases further from the front and to hit deeper enemy targets. For close air support missions, a refueling capability allowed aircraft to take off with heavier payloads and to conduct extended operations near the front lines. The tankers also allowed TAC's combat aircraft to deploy rapidly from the continental United States to trouble spots anywhere in the world, an important aspect of the fledgling rapid response role.
The Korean experience also was used by some Air Force planners to justify two types of specialized combat aircraft; the day fighter and the night intruder. Day fighters had carried the burden of the air superiority effort in Korea as the enemy airfields were off limits to offensive attack. Some officers viewed this experience as an example of what could happen in the future against even larger numbers of enemy aircraft. The day fighter, which was initially called an air superiority fighter, was designed to destroy "airborne enemy aircraft in the Tactical Air Force-Field Army area." The fighter also was expected to perform deep missions, either protecting fighter-bombers or participating in attacks on enemy airfields as a secondary role.44

The air superiority fighter concept faced opposition from studies which indicated that in a major conflict "the air battle is relatively unimportant as a cause of [aircraft] loss," and that "the most important single source of loss is bombing and strafing of aircraft on the ground." This conclusion was amplified by the availability of tactical nuclear weapons for airfield attacks. The day fighter advocates emphasized that not all of the enemy forces would be eliminated by offensive action, especially in the initial phase of a war. This situation was particularly likely if the United States did not use atomic weapons immediately.
However, the dominance of the fighter-bomber and funding restrictions limited the size of the day fighter force. Because of this situation, the day fighter became embroiled in a classic quality versus quantity debate.45

The Air Force and TAC planners argued for a specialized aircraft which would have a qualitative edge in air-to-air combat involving large numbers of Soviet aircraft. However, a faction within the Air Force argued that the qualitative superiority of the F-100 Super Sabre, the day fighter for the mid-1950s, and its planned follow-on made them too big, complex, and expensive. This further reduced the numbers which could be procured and maintained. To somewhat redress the expected imbalance with the Soviet fighter force, these individuals advocated a "lightweight" cheap fighter which could provide additional numbers of air-to-air fighters and establish a base for vastly expanded production in the event of a war. This concept eventually produced the F-104 Starfighter. However, the lightweight fighter was widely resisted within the Air Force, and it did not become a major factor in the force structure of the 1950s. Many officers felt that while lightweight fighters might be fun to fly, the concept ignored the importance of offensive counterair, sacrificed too much quality, and, most importantly, reduced the flexibility which was required in the small tactical air forces.46
The Korean Conflict also stimulated the development of a specialized night intruder aircraft in addition to the existing requirement for a tactical bomber. The Air Force assessments of the interdiction campaign all pointed out the problems associated with locating and attacking enemy targets at night. The service used a variety of systems including medium bombers guided by ground beacons and the B-26 operating at low levels. None of the solutions were adequate, and the Air Force leadership sought an aircraft which could "proceed to a given area, harass and attack either known or suspected targets, or attack opportune targets as the occasion may arise." In addition, the service wanted an aircraft which could operate from rough airfield to provide forward support in large scale conflicts or during limited wars. Although the choice was not popular with TAC, the Air Staff proposed the British designed Martin B-57 Canberra for the specialized night intruder mission, with a secondary mission as a conventional light or tactical bomber.47

The night and bad weather delivery problem was one of the dominant concerns of the tactical air planners in the early 1950s. The Air Force explored a wide variety of solutions, including improved avionics and ground based guidance systems. One field which was viewed with great anticipation was guided missiles. The first squadron of the tactical
Matador missile was activated in 1952. This weapon system was basically an unmanned aircraft and a predecessor of the modern cruise missile. The Matador was initially designed to carry a variety of warhead types, but its accuracy was such that it was limited to atomic delivery. The accuracy problem also limited its potential targets to large interdiction sites or airfields.  

The Air Force guided missiles were originally designated pilotless bombers (or interceptors). The tactical Matador was initially programed to be deployed in single squadrons attached to fighter-bomber wings. The missile squadrons were intended to provide the night and bad weather capability that the fighters lacked. Eventually, however, due to budget restrictions and the growing emphasis on nuclear delivery, the Air Force shifted the deployment pattern to full wings of missiles. The Air Force planned to use these pilotless bomber wings to replace programed fighter-bomber units. This would allow the Air Force to maintain its desired number of wings while reducing the number of the more expensive, although much more flexible manned fighters.  

The tactical forces also sought a wide variety of other improvements which would enhance the ability of the available aircraft to fulfill the demands of combat in Korea and in any future conflict. Perhaps the most important area was
the improvement of communications equipment and the command and control system for tactical air power. Much better command and control as well as reconnaissance and intelligence were needed by the nuclear strike forces. The Air Force also examined a wide variety of advanced technology proposals. Although munitions development was overshadowed by the nuclear warheads, reports from Korea pointed towards the need to improve on the available conventional munitions. This included delayed action mines for interdiction and better versions of the RAZON and TARZON guided bombs. The tactical studies suggested television, infrared, and radar guidance systems for precision delivery against heavily defended high value targets. Due to technological problems and the emphasis on nuclear delivery, the precision guided air-to-surface munitions did not mature until the pressures of the Vietnam conflict stimulated a growth in conventional ordnance.50

The tactical air forces of the 1950s developed a largely nuclear orientation, although the specialized designs for day fighter and night intruder aircraft represented internal balances to this trend. The tactical leadership attempted to maintain and improve the conventional capabilities and flexibility of the aircraft as well as the overall tactical force structure. As President Eisenhower assumed the Commander in Chief role, the Air
Force was fielding tactical forces designed around atomic firepower and a doctrinal focus on the decisiveness of air power in any type of conflict. During the Eisenhower administration the tactical forces continued to follow this course under the continuing service and national commitment to strategic air power. Although still a secondary force, the tactical community exploited its growth during Korea to gain a firm position in the national military structure by linking its combat capability to the major requirements and commitments in the national security policies, and by identifying tactical air power as the doctrinal and operational complement of strategic air power, with a combined capability of deterring or fighting war at any level under the guidance of an air power oriented national strategy.
NOTES FOR CHAPTER IV


2155-57; Omar N. Bradley and Clay Blair, A General's Life, (New York: Simon & Schuster), pp 515-57; Director of the Policy Planning Staff, memo to Secretary of State, 17 Jan 1950, FRUS, 1950, vol I, pp 13-17. See also discussion of war plans in Chapter I.


the First Meeting of the Policy Planning Staff on the


135-37; Frank Pace, Jr., "Your Army in the Atomic Age," Vital Speeches, 1 Jan 1952, pp 505-7. See also note 12 above.


16. AEC, Oppenheimer Hearings, pp 446-48, 498, 521-22, 594, 747-50, & 758-60; Chief of Staff, USAF, memo to JCS, 6 Sep 1951, Reel 13, JCS/Strat Issues. See also the discussion of theater air power in Chapter 2 above.

17. "Nsc 141," 19 Jan 1953, WHO/OSANSA, Presidential subseries, Box 1, DDEL.


25. Lieutenant General Thomas P. White, memo, 8 Sep 1952, Box 34, Vandenberg Papers; Senate, Ground Forces to NATO, p 338; General N.F. Twining to George H. Mahon, 12 Mar 1952, Box 56, Twining Papers; Schilling, "SAC's Little Fighters," pp 108-119.


34. TAC, Record and Routing Sheet, 16 Apr 1952, K4347, USAFHR; Major General William S. Lawton to CG, TAC, 14 Oct, 1952, K4341, USAFHR.

35. General Twining, memo to General White, 14 Feb 1952, Box 56, Twining Papers; Colonel Sykes, Memo for Colonel Parish, 7 Mar 1952, K1268, USAFHR.

36. Lieutenant Colonel Jack R. Brown to Cmdr, 20th FBW, 15 Apr 1952, K4341, USAFHR; Bishop, Oral History; Stevenson, Oral History; "Status of the National Security Programs of the United States of America in Relation to


41. Major General Glenn O. Barcus to CG, ConAC, 6 Oct 1950, K4336, USAFHRC; General N.F. Twining to George H. Mahon, 12 Mar 1952, Box 56, Twining Papers; General John K. Cannon to CoS, USAF, 12 Feb 1952, Box 56, Vandenberg Papers; TAC, Record and Routing Sheet, 11 Jul, K4337, USAFHRC.


43. Brigadier General Eaton, memo to Secretary of the Air Force, 25 Apr 1951, Box 61, Vandenberg Papers;
Schilling, "SAC's Fighters," p 111; Colonel James O. Guthrie to CG, TAC, 11 Jan 1951, K4337, USAFHR; Capt. Clyde L. Sawyers to Dir of Plans, USAF, 24 Jul 1951, K4337, USAFHR; Lieutenant Colonel Ray S. McClung to CG, TAC, 18 Apr 1952, K4349, USAFHR; CG, TAC to Dir of Requirements, USAF, 11 Jan 1951, K4337, USAFHR.


50. Weyland, "Lessons of Korea;" Major E.E. Ebel to CG, ConAC, 12 Aug 1950, K4336, USAFHR; TAC, "Tactical Requirements for Controlled Bombs," 13 Jul 1951, K4337, USAFHR.
The tactical air forces of the United States Air Force were at a post-World War II high point, and the momentum of a continued build up seemed secure when General Dwight David Eisenhower was elected to the presidency. Although the Korean War extended into his administration, the security policies and the military program decisions generally focused beyond the end of the war. The Air Force leadership expected the new President to continue the national security commitments which provided the evolving justifications for the tactical air forces. The service also considered the President to be friendly towards air power. However, although the national security policies continued to provide a strong rationale for maintaining and expanding tactical air power, the actual defense programs placed severe pressures on the tactical air forces and amplified the existing competition for resources between the services and within the Air Force itself. The tactical leadership in the Air Force fought to retain an adequate, modern standing capability by continuing to emphasize the value of tactical striking power and flexibility in supporting varied national
security commitments. The strongest justification for a substantial standing tactical air component was the contribution of tactical air power to deterring and fighting a general war with the Soviet Union.

The Air Force tactical structure at the end of 1952 was developing an impressive, highly flexible combat capability based on new jet aircraft, aerial refueling, and the increasingly available tactical nuclear weapons. The tactical forces were gaining the capability to participate in the strategic air offensive, and many of the weapons systems and a portion of the tactical force structure were justified by this particular mission. However, the tactical leadership also placed increasing emphasis on the demands of other two commitments which helped resurrect tactical air power in the later years of the Truman administration – the defense of Western Europe and the Korean War. Both of these commitments required a more traditional type of tactical air power, although the Air Force was developing new doctrinal concepts for theater conflicts. The Korean War experience also suggested the importance of a highly mobile, rapidly deployable capability to respond to small wars or limited aggression, a mission which gained a more important position in tactical doctrine and force justification during the Eisenhower years.
The security commitments associated with these three mission areas; strategic, theater, and what became known as limited, "brush fire," or peripheral warfare, had provided the rationale for the Joint Chiefs of Staff approval of an overall Air Force program of 143 wings (126 combat and 17 airlift). This was a reduction from the Air Force proposal of 155 wings. When completed in 1956 this planned force would have contained a tactical component of seven tactical or light bomber wings, twenty-two fighter-bomber wings, six fighter wings, and four reconnaissance units. Both the JCS and the Air Force leadership believed that the requirements for this program continued into the Eisenhower administration. However, although the national security commitments remained essentially constant, the President's revised defense programs threatened the continued development of the tactical air forces.1

**Air Power And National Security Policy**

President Eisenhower advocated the exploitation of air power in the new defense programs. However, his security policies also emphasized economic considerations much like those which had dominated defense planning before the Korean War and which had begun to return as a major influence near the end of the Truman administration. This economic orientation was driven by the President's belief
that the threat to the United States and its allies was not just military. The economic concern was identified with the phrase "security with solvency," which translated into restraints on military manpower and funding. These restraints were the dominant considerations in the two major force structure modifications during President Eisenhower's first term, the "Interim" and "New Look" defense programs.\(^2\)

The first major task given to the military services by the Eisenhower administration, pending the development of new formal policies and programs, was to evaluate the effect of a balanced budget on the national defense. This evaluation lead to the "Interim" defense program, the initial step towards a new national security policy and a modified force structure. Although the President and Secretary of Defense Charles E. Wilson insisted the "Interim" program did not represent "budgetary" planning, the primary effects were reduced defense expenditures and emphasis on exploiting quality, especially "new technology," to reduce the importance of raw numbers. The "Interim" program caused an immediate and extensive cut in the planned tactical air forces. However, the emphasis on advanced technology also provided a key argument for the tactical air power advocates in their struggles to retain a stronger force structure.\(^3\)
The President and his spokesmen routinely identified "modern air power and modern weapons" as the critical components of the new approach to the defense problem. However, this did not imply an unrestricted commitment to air power, especially the specific plans advocated by the Air Force. The President and his Secretary of Defense justified a reduced Air Force program by claiming that the existing program was wasteful and producing obsolescent forces. President Eisenhower and Secretary Wilson argued that the Air Force had more money appropriated than it could effectively spend. The President was particularly critical of the Air Force emphasis on numbers of units and aircraft and, in his opinion, a relative lack of concern for maintenance, logistical support, bases, and trained personnel.\(^4\)

Although the reductions threatened the tactical air structure, the President provided an opening for tactical air power advocates. Throughout his two terms, he emphasized the view that "national air power," including strategic, tactical, naval, and civil aviation, was a more appropriate gauge of air strength and potential than just the numeric strength of the Air Force or the Strategic Air Command. Nonetheless, the fiscal restrictions, national strategy and service doctrine led directly to a drop in the tactical component. The "Interim" program slashed the Joint Chiefs of Staff approved Air Force plan for 143 wings by the
target year of 1956 to 120 wings. As part of this reduction, the tactical component dropped from forty combat wings to twenty-three. These cuts could have been even more substantial, as the initial JCS balanced budget plan included an even more drastic reduction of the Air Force to seventy-nine total and thirteen tactical wings.5

The cut to 120 wings provoked a strong response from the leaders of the Air Force and other supporters of air power. Generals Hoyt S. Vandenberg, Nathan F. Twining, and Thomas D. White had all initially believed that the established Air Force program would be secure under President Eisenhower if the service demonstrated that it was more efficiently managing the force expansion. The senior Air Force leadership argued strongly that fielding the 143 wing program was a matter of "national urgency" and that the 120 wing program was, in fact, a threat to national security. Both General Vandenberg and Secretary of the Air force Harold E. Talbot firmly presented the position that the "force of 143 wings was accepted [by the JCS] as the minimum adequate to perform the basic missions for National Security assigned the Air Force." The Air Force reclamas to the force cuts also noted that the "radically reduced force and industrial base" of the new program would severely hamper wartime expansion.6
The Commander of the Tactical Air Command, General John K. Cannon, reacted to the heavy cuts in tactical forces by criticizing both the overall defense reductions and the allocation of the cuts within the Air Force. General Cannon suggested that the cut in tactical air strength left the country in a position of having "no choice but to revise national policy" and drop the security commitments which the military could not hope to support with the new force structure. The general also warned that Air Force acceptance of reductions in tactical air power would create openings for both the Army and the Navy in the ongoing competition for military funding. In response, General Twining, the Vice Chief of Staff (soon to assume the top position), conceded certain short-term tactical deficiencies, but he asked for patience in anticipation of a "forthcoming review of strategy and force requirements by the newly-appointed Joint Chiefs of Staff [which] should reaffirm the requirement for 143 wings."?

The review proposed by General Twining was the same review which Secretary Wilson had promised both as a response to criticism of the "Interim" program and as part of the development of a new, efficient, long-term defense policy. Secretary Wilson had described the need for a "new look at the entire defense picture," an evaluation which produced the New Look defense program. The New Look program
and the associated national security policy stated in NSC 162/2 continued the general trends and commitments of the "Interim" program. The New Look concept stressed the underlying security concept of economic stability and continued to emphasize new technology and air power as the foundation of the security of the United States and the rest of the Free World.

The Air Force did not gain all that it wanted in the New Look program, but the number of programed wings rose from 120 to 137 as part of the "integration of new weapons" into the national strategy. Although the Air Force leadership continued to lobby for more units, they generally accepted this increase as the best that could be achieved under the existing circumstances. The service attempted to limit the effect of the new program on combat units by making the largest cuts in the airlift capability. The tactical component of the Air Force was programed for thirty-one combat wings, an increase of eight, but still nine below the initial Joint Chiefs of Staff approved allocation. The Air Force Chief of Staff and the Secretary of the Air Force emphasized that the reduction from the 143 wing program was only tolerable because the service could exploit advanced technology to offset the quantitative loss with increased quality. The improved combat potential of the tactical air forces was directly linked to the increased
availability of nuclear weapons and the willingness of the President to authorize their use in a growing variety of combat situations.9

The growing reliance on nuclear weapons, "new weapons" in the language of the 1950s, was driven by a combination of the military desire to exploit the improved combat capabilities, the requirement to reduce cost and manpower, and President Eisenhower's belief that these weapons must be incorporated into the plans and force structure of the United States. His administration relied on these weapons as the foundation of deterrence and as the key element in defense planning. His policies also helped increase the tempo of the integration of nuclear weapons into the defense of Europe. The formal national security policies reflected this orientation and incorporated the possible use of nuclear weapons at all levels of combat. The President and his spokesmen publicly emphasized the commitment to nuclear weapons by stating that these systems should be "regarded as conventional" by military planners.10

The emphasis on nuclear weapons and the associated air power orientation provided strong support for the Air Force and the Navy in the competition for larger shares of the Defense Department budget. Within the Air Force the nuclear emphasis was a major consideration in the justification for and shaping of the entire force structure,
including the tactical air forces, throughout the 1950s. This perspective was not accepted by all military planners, and the value of a nuclear oriented force structure in supporting the national security commitments was central to intraservice and interservice conflicts throughout both terms of the Eisenhower Administration. The Air Force attempted to deflect criticism of its nuclear orientation by claiming a strong conventional potential based on the flexibility of air power. However, the rapid adaptation of nuclear weapons and associated tactics set the trend which dominated the tactical air forces throughout the Eisenhower years. The striking power of nuclear weapons and the inherent flexibility of the tactical aviation in support of varied security commitments combined with the emerging Air Force doctrine to justify the expansion of the tactical air component to thirty-eight wings, seven above the original plan, in the full implementation of the 137 wing force early in the President's second term. A dominant planning factors in this tactical force expansion was the air power needed to deter or fight a general war.\textsuperscript{11}

**General War Requirements, Air Doctrine And Tactical Air Power**

The Air Force planners in the early years of the Eisenhower administration programmed tactical air forces for a wide variety of missions, but primarily justified these
forces by directly linking the capabilities of tactical air power to the roles and missions needed in a general war, direct conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union. This rationale grew from the national strategy and the basic and operational doctrine of the Air Force. Both sets of directives pushed tactical air power towards direct participation in the strategic air offensive, while also defining and shaping the theater requirements of a general war, especially in Europe. Additionally, the tactical air force advocates and the senior Air Force leadership increasingly emphasized the value of the flexibility of these general war forces in supporting the other national security commitments which were inherent to the deterrence and containment of Soviet/Communist aggression and expansionism, regardless of the level or type of conflict.

The President and his security policies placed the primary deterrence responsibility on the nuclear retaliatory force structure. President Eisenhower believed that should deterrence fail, the next general war would certainly involve nuclear weapons and would be fought in two phases. He frequently described the first phase as a period lasting from one week to a month, during which the bulk of the modern nuclear weapons would be expended. He stressed that the standing military force structure must be oriented towards this period of combat and the need to protect the
nation from the expanding threat to its very existence.12

From NSC 153/1 and the watershed NSC 162/2 policy statements in 1953 throughout the yearly restatements of policy in the remainder of the first term, the national security policies roughly mirrored this perspective. The policy statements emphasized the preeminent need for a strong nuclear retaliatory force which could deter war and "provide a reasonable initial defense and an adequate basis for victory in the event general war [was] forced upon" the United States. This posture required forces which "could not be neutralized by a surprise Soviet attack," `could "inflict massive damage on the Soviet war-making capacity,"
and which could lay the foundation for and contribute to eventual victory through the military campaigns which would be needed to eliminate the Soviet presence outside the Soviet Union.13

Given the fiscal constraints, the requirements of the critical first phase of the war provided the strongest justification for the tactical air forces. The President specifically stated that the first priority of the standing forces was ensuring the national existence by being able to "blunt the enemy's initial threat--by massive retaliatory power and ability to deliver it; and by a continental defense system of major capability." The key objective of the standing forces was to avert disaster and allow the
country to retain the core of its economic strength. This would allow the major build up for the final phase, a long-term fight leading to ultimate victory. President Eisenhower variously described this final phase as having a potential time span ranging from four years to a decade, and even to periods of time and destructiveness on the scale of the Thirty or Hundred Years Wars. Within this strategic perspective, any tactical air forces justified solely by the traditional support missions would be built up at the same time the ground forces were raised for the extended final campaigns. Such tactical air forces, as with the army components, would clearly not be needed as part of the standing force structure.14

The President's view of the likely nature of the next war roughly coincided with the perspective of the senior Air Force leadership, although the service position stressed the probable decisive nature of an immediate, powerful strategic air offensive. The growing Soviet nuclear capability was a dominant consideration for both the President and the Air Force leadership. The expanding Soviet threat increased the already well established Air Force emphasis on a strategic oriented force structure. This situation threatened to produce even greater reductions in the tactical force levels. During the cutbacks of the Interim program General Twining bluntly informed the tactical community that
under the current Air Force philosophy of priority of wartime tasks, our survival forces, namely, air defense and counter-atomic, must be maintained at an adequate level at all costs. Consequently, a major share of any force reduction must be absorbed by tactical air units. 13

In the face of this service position, the tactical air power advocates had to argue that their forces would not only support the critical national security commitments and perform the traditional and evolving tactical roles, but also would enhance rather than degrade the strategic defensive and offensive capabilities of the Air Force as a whole. This position was directly supported by President Eisenhower, who resisted several Air Force proposals and Congressional pressure to expand the Strategic Air Command by noting that the national air power capability included tactical and naval assets which could substantially enhance the already considerable strategic forces. 16

The Air Force resisted any suggestion that the service cut its strategic forces based on the capabilities of the tactical component. However, the service and its basic and operational doctrine, which were first published in the form of Air Force Manuals in 1953, did recognize the value of the tactical air forces in the strategic arena. Although this was in many ways a practical position, it also reflected the traditional doctrinal emphasis on the flexibility of air power and the indivisibility of all air assets and capabilities. The Air Force doctrine and its public presentation
in speeches, interviews, articles, books, and Congressional testimony reflected the well established concepts which had guided the service leadership during the late 1940s and the Korean War period. The foundation of the doctrine manuals was Air Force Manual (AFM) 1-2, United States Air Force Basic Doctrine. Additionally, beginning in 1953 the service published new manuals on tactical/theater employment, strategic air power, and the use of nuclear weapons. The Air Force designed these doctrinal statements to guide both the development and employment of Air Force air power and to create a common perspective within the service based on officially approved positions.\textsuperscript{17}

These doctrinal manuals retained consistency with the formal security policies by stating that the primary purpose of the U.S. military was deterring war. However, the real emphasis in the manuals was on the Air Force view of how any future war should be fought. The doctrine emphasized strategic air operations and the belief that air power was most effective when employed offensively. Additionally, the new doctrinal statements revolved around the core concept that air power was now "... the dominant force in war." Within this doctrinal context, the Air Force formally viewed tactical air power as part of a strong "air force in-being" capable of immediate offensive action.\textsuperscript{18}
The newly published Air Force doctrine stressed the need to incorporate all air assets into a global strategy, which the service believed had to be air oriented. The most critical concern of this strategy was the growing Soviet nuclear threat. To counter this threat, the Air Force leadership argued that the most critical action in any future general war would take the form of a global battle for air superiority. The critical objective of this battle was the destruction of the enemy's air-atomic capability and the general defeat of the opposing air force. The Air Force claimed that only after the battle for global air superiority was won could the nation be considered secure and other military operations effectively conducted. The service doctrine labeled the air power battle of the first phase of a future war the "decisive phase," while terming all subsequent action part of the "exploitation phase."¹⁹

Several of the doctrinal manuals expanded the "control of the air" concept into the peacetime as well as wartime context. The Air Force concept of peacetime aerial superiority was based on the need to improve the deterrent forces and provide stronger backing for the country's foreign policy. Additionally, stronger peacetime forces provided the capability required for the initial, decisive battle for air superiority. The service doctrine helped justify the standing tactical air forces by incorporating them into the
The defensive requirement was a particularly strong challenge for the tactical air forces. The Soviet hydrogen bomb and an expanding Soviet bomber fleet created a recognition in the United States of growing national vulnerabilities. This situation provided considerable support for an expansion of the air defense forces during President Eisenhower's first term. The Air Force generally supported the growth of the defensive forces, but not at the expense of the strategic offensive capability. The service doctrine stressed that "purely defensive measures are incapable of insuring immunity from attack." The service doctrine identified the most critical function for the air defense forces as inhibiting the "shock effect" and the potentially decisive impact of a surprise air attack on the American homeland. While the air defenses could limit damage to critical industries, the most important function was warning and protecting the strategic retaliatory force so it could not be destroyed on the ground. Air Force doctrine directly linked the defensive mission to the offensive forces, which the service continued to view as the only way to gain true national security.
Within a finite budget, the Air Force would not allow the strategic offensive forces to be reduced to create an increase in the defensive force. Therefore, the expanded defensive capabilities had to come from the airlift and tactical components. The tactical leaders resisted the threatened reductions by highlighting the flexibility of their forces, including the ability to perform both defensive and offensive missions. Some planners within the Air Force, especially in the air defense field, denigrated the defensive value of the tactical fighters, and stressed the need for specialized interceptor aircraft. However, the Air Force leadership viewed the use of tactical aircraft in the defensive role as a means to improve overall force options. Therefore, the service, while building a dedicated air defense structure which included specialized aircraft, also officially assigned the mission of augmenting the air defense force to the Tactical Air Command.22

Air Force Regulation (AFR) 23-10, The Tactical Air Command, ordered the command on notification "that an attack upon the United States is imminent" to "make available for operational control of the Air Defense Command" those tactical forces "which have an air defense capability." The regulation also directed the command to conduct appropriate training for the units capable of performing the defensive mission. These tactical assets would fight on the defensive
during the first phase of the general war and then, along with a portion of the air defense force, shift to support the theater needs of the exploitation phase. This mission served as additional justification for maintaining a substantial standing tactical force. However, the most critical role for the tactical air forces within the service doctrine remained offensive operations, especially in concert with the strategic forces to gain global and/or theater air superiority which the service viewed as the key to victory in any future war.  

The first generation of Air Force basic and operational doctrine manuals placed offensive air operations into two categories, "heartland" and "peripheral." The doctrine described heartland missions as "attacks against the vital elements of a nation's war sustaining resources, including the enemy's long-range air force." The service presented these missions as the key to victory and the most critical mission for air power due to the "conclusive effects obtained by attacks on the heartland targets, which represent the greatest threats." This counterforce concept meshed well with the President's belief that the priority mission if deterrence failed must be the "blunting of the enemy's initial threat."  

The heartland missions were largely the province of the strategic striking forces, while Air Force doctrine
specifically tasked tactical forces with conducting the peripheral missions against deployed enemy forces. However, the Air Force's doctrine, force structure, and combat concepts clearly stressed the interdependence of the two types of operations. Combined with the concept of the indivisibility of air power, these factors clearly and specifically guided tactical forces to a role in the strategic air operation. The growing size of the Soviet air-atomic forces, the counterforce/global air battle concept, and the recognition that the strategic force could not be expanded enough to cover the probable targets, all amplified the requirement for tactical involvement in the strategic arena. Air Force leaders, while defining specific tactical roles, directly linked tactical air power to the "instant retaliation" concept as a complement to SAC at the onset of any general war.25

The tactical forces brought several valuable capabilities to the strategic air offensive and the global battle for air superiority. The first was the forward deployed nature of a major portion of the tactical air force structure. The bulk of the Strategic Air Command assets were based in the Continental United States. Although this was in part due to concerns over the vulnerability of forward bases, this basing mode forced much of the strategic strike force to deploy to forward bases or conduct long missions
supported by aerial refueling in order to attack the enemy air forces. Air Force doctrine stressed that the air force which was able to hit its adversary first and destroy the bulk of the enemy air forces before they could leave the primary air fields would most likely emerge as the victor. The tactical forces could strike much more quickly than the strategic forces because of the forward base locations and the relative high speed of the tactical aircraft. The increased range of the tactical aircraft and the general availability of nuclear weapons made these rapid offensive attacks on enemy air facilities a practical consideration.

The tactical forces deployed overseas in peacetime could serve as the first wave of the strategic air offensive, the mission which some tactical planners had been advocating since the late 1940s. General Twining informed Congress in 1954 that the forward deployed tactical air forces would likely "take and give the first blows should war occur." The tactical forces could destroy enemy air capabilities within the range of the tactical aircraft, and hit other shallow targets on the strategic air offensive target list. These strikes by the tactical forces against selected strategic targets also allowed Air Force planners to concentrate the longer-ranged bombers of SAC on the expanding number of targets deep within the Soviet Union. The smaller, faster, and generally more agile tactical
aircraft also had an advantage in their ability to penetrate
the full strength enemy air defenses at the start of the
war.27

The strategic planners within the Air Force did not
totally accept the potential of the tactical contribution to
the strategic air offensive. The strategic leadership did
not consider the tactical forces fully committed to the
strategic campaign. Therefore, SAC was reluctant to accept
the availability of either Air Force or naval tactical
forces as a key element of its operational planning. SAC
planners also expressed concern that the overseas tactical
bases, because of their proximity to Soviet airfields, might
be more vulnerable to enemy preemptive attacks. Based on
these concerns, the Air Force doctrine on strategic opera­
tions decreed that the strategic component had to have
"sufficient forces to accomplish the primary task." None­
theless, the service doctrine and public statements by Air
Force leaders, such as General Twining, frequently described
the value of the tactical arm as an augmentation force for
the strategic air offensive. By 1956, Air Force testimony
before Congress described Air Force tactical air power as an
important part of the nation's "instant retaliatory power"
and a force which rivaled the Strategic Air Command as a
"great and flexible striking power."28
In addition to augmenting SAC by assuming a portion of the strike responsibilities within the strategic air offensive, the tactical air forces aided the SAC bomber force by degrading the enemy air defenses prior to or during the penetration of the enemy homeland by the strategic forces. The tactical strikes on enemy airfields as part of the global battle for air superiority directly contributed to this mission. The use of the tactical aircraft also complicated the defensive problem for the enemy and made the deep penetration force more difficult to identify and destroy. AFM 1-8, *Strategic Air Operations* specifically tasked the peripheral or theater air forces and naval air forces when available with "diverting, dispersing, and turning aside of the enemy counter air force" to give "freedom of action to the main striking force." These missions were very similar to those assigned to the strategic fighter force assigned directly to SAC and equipped with the same fighter-bombers flown by the tactical air forces.29

The similarity in equipment and overlap in missions, especially the delivery of nuclear weapons, caused some Air Force planners and outside critics to suggest that the structure of separate tactical and strategic forces was obsolete. Thomas K. Finletter, Secretary of the Air Force under President Truman, proposed that the offensive capability of the artificially separated TAC and SAC should be
consolidated "under one single command which might be called STAC, or the Strategic-Tactical Air Command." The senior Air Force leadership, including General Twining, considered combining SAC and TAC into a single "Combat Command" which could offer greater combat and fiscal efficiency. This concept could trace its roots to the discussions on the proper structure for the Eighth Air Force in World War II and the postwar debate over the proper structure of the newly formed USAF. The single combat command was further justified by the doctrinal concept of the indivisibility of air power. Although enough strong logical support existed to justify a single command, bureaucratic and political realities prevented the concept from moving beyond the discussion phase.30

Within the Air Force, the advocates of both communities resisted the combined command concept. The leadership of the Strategic Air Command firmly opposed any merger of the strategic and tactical forces, fearing that any combined force structure would inhibit the necessary growth of the long-range forces and could result in the strategic striking force being diverted to less than decisive targets, a danger which the service doctrine specifically warned against. The tactical leadership feared that their interests would become even more subordinated to those of the strategic forces. The tactical leadership also warned
that the Army was unlikely to accept such an arrangement unless allowed to build its own close support forces. Some elements within the Air Force were willing to accept this situation if it meant that the decisive forces, especially the strategic striking arm, were allowed to grow even stronger. However, the senior Air Force leadership could not accept any allocation of perceived Air Force responsibilities to the Army, especially given the descriptions of the roles and missions of tactical air power which were presented in the new service doctrine.31

The new manuals, AFM 1-3, *Theater Air Operations*, and AFM 1-7, *Theater Air Forces In Counter Air, Interdiction And Close Air Support Operations*, were the first formal manuals on tactical air power published by the Air Force since FM 100-20 was written during the Second World War and updated as FM 31-35 in 1946. These doctrinal statements attempted to balance the traditional missions of tactical aviation with the overarching Air Force doctrinal emphasis on the decisiveness of air power, centralized control of aviation assets, the importance of the global battle for air superiority, and the concepts of heartland and peripheral combat operations. The manuals maintained the important linkage of theater air power to deterrence and the strategic retaliatory forces, while describing the possibility of and the proper operational concepts for independent
theater level operations. The Air Force doctrine provided a rational for the maintenance of a strong tactical air force structure linked to the requirements of the national security policy. 32

Theater Requirements And Air Power Doctrine

Beyond support for the strategic air offensive, the specific demands placed on tactical air power by the national security policy at the start of the Eisenhower administration included the ongoing Korean War and the increasing commitments to the defense of Western Europe with involvement in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). As the Eisenhower years progressed, the tactical forces also became linked to the other containment oriented alliances and to various ad hoc military actions and security commitments. All of these military requirements were also tied to the strategic striking forces within the national strategy which was somewhat publicly oversimplified by the term "Massive Retaliatiion." In spite of the strategic dominance and the strategic missions assigned to tactical air power, the Air Force tactical air forces were developing their own independent identity within the context of service doctrine and the theater requirements of the national security commitments.
The Korean War had been the central critical stimulus to the reexpansion of the tactical air forces. The combat which continued into the first year of the Eisenhower administration and the security requirements which remained after the truce placed demands on the tactical air forces, but the strongest justifications for maintaining these forces came from other commitments and associated operational concepts. The Air Force generally interpreted the experiences of the war as supporting existing doctrinal concepts or demonstrating the results of failing to follow the proper doctrine. The war had some influence on tactical concepts and on perceived equipment needs. However, the Korean lessons were largely overwhelmed by the influence of increasingly available nuclear weapons and the evolving service doctrine on theater warfare, which focused on a less constrained environment than had been experienced in Northeast Asia. This emerging tactical doctrine also easily meshed with the emphasis within the U.S. national security policy on the European theater.  

The strongest justification for tactical air power within the strategic perspective of President Eisenhower and the formal National Security Policy was the military contribution of the United States to the NATO. The President and his military planners believed that these forces represented both a psychological and a physical contribution to the
deterrence of Soviet aggression in Western Europe. The commitment of forces to Europe also provided a justification for higher force levels during a time of tight fiscal constraints. This was particularly helpful in the context of the interservice struggle for increased shares of a shrinking budget pie. However, considerable disagreement existed within the American government over the exact shape of the American commitment. The Air Force leadership linked its new theater doctrine and the ability to deliver tactical nuclear weapons to both the strategic air offensive and the national commitments to the defense of Western Europe.34

The President’s perspective, although dominated by the strategic retaliatory concept, readily supported the Air Force theater doctrine. His overarching security concept focused on the survival of the United States and the maintenance of American economic strength. He believed that the Allies, especially in Europe, could best be protected by the deterrent strength of American strategic retaliatory power combined with their own deployed field forces. Furthermore, he believed that only the paralyzing impact of the American strategic strike on the Soviet homeland and the survival of the American production base would allow victory in any war with the Soviet Union. Although frequently confronted by the theory of possible mutual or self deterrence in Western Europe, the President emphatically claimed that any future
conflict which directly involved the United States and the Soviet Union would be fought with nuclear weapons, with the ultimate results determined by the strategic exchange.\textsuperscript{35}

President Eisenhower was more sensitive to the charge that overreliance on strategic striking power would allow Europe to be occupied before the Soviet military collapsed from the weight of the strategic air offensive. The U.S. Army and its advocates attempted to justify a larger ground force component by embracing the mission of defending Western Europe, or at least rapidly deploying from the United States to help defend the region. The Army drew support from the growing American and NATO military view that even with the tactical application of nuclear weapons, the defense of Western Europe would require more rather than fewer troops. However, although the President was unwilling to withdraw American combat units from Europe due to the political and psychological realities, he was also firmly convinced that American ground units were too expensive and too great an economic burden to be used as the key element in the defense of NATO. He also believed that given the probable nuclear nature of a general war, the United States would have great difficulties in transporting additional ground forces to Europe once the war actually started. The President also believed that during "the initial stages" after a strategic nuclear exchange, "the Army would be truly
vital to the establishment and maintenance of order in the United States," and that the heaviest combat role for the ground forces would come during the latter phase of the conflict after the nation had been mobilized.36

The President's negative view towards an expanded U.S. Army role in Europe was compounded by the difficulties associated with developing an adequate European defense force. The President and senior defense planners recognized that the European allies suffered from economic restrictions and an associated inability and apparent unwillingness to provide the needed combat units required to defend the NATO region until the strategic air offensive had an effect. The American military and political leaders sought to bolster the European defenses with aggressive Military Assistance Programs. American and NATO planners sought a strategy and a force structure which "could be supported by NATO and yet be sufficient to deter or defeat Soviet aggression."37

The solution which emerged with the most support from European and American political and military leaders was the formal expansion of nuclear weapons from the strategic arena into the theater environment. Although the decision to convert the American New Look into a NATO "New Approach" was not totally accepted by all military and civilian leaders on both sides of the Atlantic, the nuclear based planning concept offered the easiest response to a very difficult
political and military problem. The rapidly expanding nuclear stockpile made such an option possible. The widespread political and military opinion, in spite of growing evidence to the contrary, that nuclear weapons would provide a cheaper defense while offsetting the numerical problem, and the view by many military leaders on both sides of the Atlantic that nuclear weapons were now a fact of life also made the theater nuclear option much more acceptable. The emphasis on nuclear weapons offered a clear opening for the Air Force theater concept while providing the service with leverage in the funding battles with the Army and the Navy.38

The Air Force tactical air forces, as the initial primary delivery capability for the smaller nuclear weapons, gained a substantial boost in mission responsibilities and force structure justification. Although the President would have preferred to give nuclear weapons to the allies and withdraw most of the American field forces, political restrictions prevented this course of action. The administration, in fact, had to fight in Congress to gain permission to provide nuclear planning information to the Allies. The nuclear warheads committed to NATO were initially delivered by American weapons systems, later complemented by allied delivery systems with warheads controlled by American officers.39
The dedicated use of tactical nuclear air power in NATO demonstrated the American commitment to the alliance and promised some hope of effectively defending the region. The emphasis on tactical nuclear air power also meshed well with the Air Force perspective of the tactical forces contributing to and complementing the strategic air offensive which remained the core element in the President's perspective and in the formal U.S. policy towards the defense of Western Europe. The tactical nuclear strikes in Eastern Europe supported the theater defensive operations, while relieving the strategic forces of a portion of the counterair (Codenamed Bravo) and retardation (Codenamed Romeo) missions. The tactical community believed that SAC could not execute the deep missions in the strategic air offensive while simultaneously and effectively contributing to the defense of Western Europe. The tactical planners also believed, as the doctrine stated, that the tactical air capability in Europe might also force the Soviets to commit forces to the theater battle which might otherwise "be disposed for homeland defense."\(^{40}\)

The new Air Force theater doctrine, the NATO operational concept, and the American military strategy all included similar requirements for nuclear armed theater air forces as the key to victory in any future theater conflict. The Air Force manuals stated that the availability of nuclear
weapons had changed the nature of war, especially by enhancing the impact of air power on the battlefield. The new doctrine adopted the term theater rather than tactical air power to emphasize the belief that air power was not just a support force. AFM 1-7, the Air Force manual on theater air forces, explained that

> the advent of mass destruction munitions has vastly increased the capability of air forces while concurrently decreasing the capabilities of surface forces. It follows, therefore, that air forces are the primary, predominant, and decisive forces.

Air Force doctrine called for the use of theater air power in independent operations when such operations held the promise of producing a decisive victory. The Air Force did not contend that all air operations had to be totally independent, and AFM 1-2 stressed that modern wars by nature required joint operations. However, the service believed that the theater commander had to break free from traditional, surface oriented operational concepts and select the best possible combination of forces to exploit the new combat capabilities. Specifically, AFM 1-2 noted that in joint operations: "The force of dominant interest should be identified as having the primary role with the others in supporting roles." The service manuals also argued that the theaters could now be defined not by geographic regions, but by the mission of defeating specific deployed enemy field forces, either independently or in concert with the
strategic air offensive. The Air Force doctrine and articles in the professional press argued that the pursuit of victory might well include a reversal of certain traditional roles. The doctrine on theater air power suggested that the surface forces may now act to enhance the impact of air power.42

The use of ground action to assist or amplify air power was a long standing concept in the aviation community. Air power theory had long stressed that the impact of interdiction was most effective when friendly ground pressure forced the enemy forces to expend their resources more rapidly than the logistics system could support while under the pressure of the interdiction campaign. In the case of the new Air Force doctrine, especially its application in Europe, the service believed that pressure on the deployed Soviet field forces would extend back to the Soviet production base and enhance the impact of the strategic air offensive. Additionally, the emerging service concept of theater air operations noted that with the enhanced combat power of nuclear equipped air forces, the

surface forces can, by appropriate maneuver and tactics, create situations favorable to the application of air weapons against the opposing surface forces. 43

The use of ground maneuver to create targets for the air forces implied an expanded doctrinal interest in close air support and a possible wide ranging shift in the Air
Force concept of combat missions. However, the new Air Force manuals on theater operations only reinforced the well established traditional emphasis on the decisiveness of centrally controlled air power, while continuing to describe the "three basic combat tasks" of air superiority, interdiction, and close air support. The manuals also emphasized that the impact of nuclear weapons placed even greater importance on maintaining the proper priority between the three missions, especially during the initial, "decisive" stage of combat operations. The importance of the theater air commander establishing the proper allocation of the air effort was reinforced by the recognition that the available resources would likely be insufficient "to conduct extensive operations in all tasks at once."\footnote{44}

The theater doctrine manuals stressed that the flexibility of air power allowed the commander to redirect the air effort based on theater priorities which could "shift frequently with changing conditions." Within this fluid environment, the air campaign was doctrinally directed to pursue the task or tasks which could produce the greatest positive impact on the "theater mission and the overall war strategy." More specifically, AFM 1-7 argued that the mission priorities had to be based on the required "neutralization of the enemy threat posing the greatest threat to the accomplishment of the theater mission."\footnote{45}
This logic implied a greater degree of flexibility than was actually reflected in the service doctrine. The greatest threat to the theater forces was by definition air power, the decisive force in modern combat. The doctrine stressed that surface forces "are vulnerable to air action," and that any sustained air or surface action within a theater was impossible or at best unlikely to succeed in the face of an enemy air capability which could still deliver a "devastating air attack." Therefore, the new manuals maintained the long standing air power law that "(t)he predominant factor in planning theater air operations is the transcendent importance of gaining and maintaining control of the air."46

The Air Force described the theater air superiority mission in terms similar to those used to describe the need for a global battle for air superiority. If the strategic campaign was being conducted at the same time, the two efforts would overlap and complement each other. In the theater situation, Air Force leaders believed the "all out battle to gain a position of dominance over the enemy air force" during the initial phase of the war would require as much as ninety per cent of the available sorties. While the air battle was ongoing, the service believed that surface operations and other air operations would probably have to be restricted in scope. Except in emergencies which
threatened the overall theater situation, the Air Force relegated the other two combat tasks to splitting the remaining ten per cent of the sorties until the air forces had gained an "ascendancy" over the opposing air force. 47

The Air Force maintained the long held belief that the only way to gain air superiority and to allow other effective air and surface action in the theater was "by offensive air operations" which were "decisive in nature." The service doctrine described the importance of seizing and maintaining the initiative, as well as the value of surprise as a key element in the success of offensive operations, especially at the start of the war. Although these concepts had been a part of air power theory since the First World War, the new theater doctrine drew on the impact of nuclear weapons to enhance the strength of the argument. The key targets for air operations during the initial, decisive phase of the war were airfields, support capabilities, and combat aircraft, whether on the ground or airborne. The focus of the mass of theater air power on these targets, especially if complemented by the strategic air offensive and the offensively waged global battle for air superiority, offered the best means of achieving the "destruction or neutralization of the enemy's air power." 48

The service remained concerned that the surface oriented theater commander and especially his surface component
commanders might not understand the significance of the initial battle for air superiority. For this reason, the doctrine stressed the need for all theater air assets to remain under the theater air commander at least until the decisive phase transitioned into the more fluid exploitation phase of combat. The manuals argued that the offensive counter air effort could only be successful if it were given adequate resources and sustained until the decisive results were obtained. The manuals specifically warned of the tendency to use air assets for "piecemeal employment" in localized actions which are "limited in effect and magnitude" or against "unrelated targets of only local significance," which undercut the effectiveness of air power and at best can produce only "inconclusive results." 49

The Air Force doctrine argued that only when decisive results were obtained in the theater and/or global battle for air superiority could the air assets be effectively turned to the other tasks. The service stressed that all of the missions were being performed all of the time, but the emphasis had to remain on the task with the greatest payoff in terms of the theater mission. The service doctrine stated that after the priority objective of general air superiority was established in the theater of operations, the theater air forces would "launch a sustained campaign to inflict maximum attrition on enemy forces which may or may
not be directly committed to battle."\textsuperscript{50}

Although this tasking implied an equal relationship between interdiction and close air support, the new theater concepts continued the well established Air Force preference for interdiction operations. The doctrine manuals argued that through these deep missions, the theater air forces, especially when complemented by heartland operations, could best support the theater mission by "neutralizing the enemy's deployed forces by interdicting his battle sustenance." The Air Force doctrine claimed that the enemy combat forces and their required logistical support were most vulnerable when on the lines of communications rather than when deployed for combat. The service also contended that a successful interdiction effort would inhibit the maneuver capability of the engaged forces. In the view of the Air Force, the availability of nuclear weapons substantially enhanced the effectiveness of this mission. In the European environment the Romeo target set for the strategic air offensive was essentially a nuclear interdiction campaign by strategic aircraft, although the tactical forces were absorbing a growing portion of the responsibility under the New Look concept.\textsuperscript{51}

The service believed that if the theater commander properly integrated offensive surface operations with the interdiction campaign, the combined effects would produce a
more rapid and decisive victory than would be possible with a surface oriented plan which emphasized ground attack sorties in reaction to the surface firepower needs. The Air Force stressed that the impact of interdiction actions was not instantaneous, but that it had a cumulative effect which could be enhanced by the actions of ground forces. The Air Force warned against wasting air resources on scattered surface targets when a concentrated and concerted joint theater campaign was the only way to get decisive results. This warning supported the contention that interdiction operations had to be planned to support the "theater mission and its requirements" and not isolated and inconsequential combats.52

This last Air Force concern was valid for all missions, but was most directly aimed at the close air support mission, which remained last in the service priority list. The Air Force theater doctrine manuals conceded that these actions were the "most apparent to surface force." However, the manuals noted that these attacks on enemy forces directly engaged with friendly units "contribute less to the furtherance of surface actions than do the gaining and maintaining of air superiority and the interdiction of the enemy's lines of communications." The Air Force contended that within a theater, "the tactical situation must always be viewed as a whole and the application of the force must
therefore be made accordingly.\textsuperscript{53}

The doctrine manuals did not deny the value of close air support missions. However, they placed these missions into very specific tactical situations. The manuals stated that in most cases the organic firepower of the surface forces should be used to engage targets of "immediate concern" to those forces. Theater air assets could be used for these targets when the organic weapons either could not hit the targets or could not produce the desired effect. Additionally, the Air Force expected to provide firepower support when the surface forces were deployed without adequate firepower, such as in amphibious and airborne assaults.\textsuperscript{54}

Air Force doctrine contended that close air support was best used during the exploitation phase of any war after "the enemy threat from the air has been neutralized by counter air operations and the enemy situation on the surface has been weakened by air interdiction." At this point, the surface forces could wage effective offensive operations and the air forces could provide support during the breakthrough and subsequent rapid offensive advances. Air doctrine stressed that in all cases air support must be immediately and aggressively exploited by "vigorous surface action." This concept was not unlike the air ground cooperation involved in the charge of the Third Army across France during World War II. The service doctrine stressed
that the planned surface action "must be of sufficient scope and magnitude to be of a decisive nature in order to warrant diverting the theater air force to the close support task."55

The linkage of all of the basic combat tasks of tactical aviation to decisive operations in theater combat was at the core of the Air Force doctrine which emerged under the New Look. This doctrine was strongly founded on the traditional concepts of air power theory, providing a solid justification within the Air Force for the maintenance of strong tactical air forces in being. The doctrine combined with the increasing national reliance on nuclear weapons and the emerging operational concepts to establish a critical relationship between the theater and strategic air forces. Most importantly for the survival of viable tactical air forces, the service doctrine meshed easily with the American national security commitments and with the President's perspective on required military forces.

The relationship of the Air Force doctrine and American national security policy was strongest in the European theater where the nuclear armed tactical air forces could support a nuclear based theater conflict and provide critical contributions to the associated strategic air offensive. However, the Korean War also stimulated interest in the additional role of using American military power to
deter or fight the limited wars which were emerging as an increasingly likely challenge to national security.
NOTES FOR CHAPTER V


7. General Cannon to General Twining, 5 Jun 1953, Box 59, Twining Papers; General Cannon to Chief of Staff, USAF, 5 Jan 1953, Box 59, Twining Papers; General Twining to Commander, Tactical Air Command, 24 Jun 1953, Box 59, Twining Papers; General Twining to General Cannon, 24 Jun 1953, Box 59, Twining Papers.

8. "Legislative Leadership Meeting," 17 Nov 1953, DDEPP, Legislative Meetings Series, Box 1, DDEL; "Legislative Leadership Meeting," 22 Dec 1953, DDEPP, Legislative Meetings Series, Box 1, DDEL; U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Appropriations, Department of Defense Appropriations, 1954, 83rd Cong, 1st Sess, 1953, pp 25-29; U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Appropriations,


1956, pp 11 & 36. See also note #12 above.


23. USAF, Air Force Regulation(AF R) 23-10, Tactical Air Command, 1 Apr 1954, pp 1-2; AFM 1-3, pp 1-3 & 9-10; AFM 1-7, p 1.


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27. House, Soviet Total War, pp 360, 392, 1543, 1617, & 1621; Senate, Air Power Hearings, pp 496-97; ANAF Journal, 30 May 1953, pp 1181, 1183, & 1189; ANAF Journal, 4 Dec 1954, p 418; Senate, Report on Air Power, p 27. See also discussion of tactical roles in chapters 1 and 3 above.

28. AFM 1-8, p 10; Senate, Hearings on Airpower, pp 1543 & 1840; Finletter, Power and Policy, pp 149-50; Herkens, Counsels of War, pp 88-89; Kaplan, Wizards of Armageddon, pp 90-110; Futrell, Ideas, Concepts, Doctrine, p 221.

29. AFM 1-8, p 11. See also Senate, Hearings on Airpower, pp 1543 & 1840; Finletter, Power and Policy, pp 149-50; Herkens, Counsels of War, pp 88-89; Kaplan, Wizards of Armageddon, pp 90-110; Futrell, Ideas, Concepts, Doctrine, p 221.


32. AFM 1-3 and AFM 1-7. See also Chapter 4 above on the Joint Training Directive which was a training guide without official doctrinal status.


40. General John K. Cannon to General Nathan F. Twining, 5 Jun 1953, Box 59, Twining Papers; General John K. Cannon to Chief of Staff, USAF, Box 59, Twining Papers; AFM 1-3, pp 3 & 15; AFM 1-7, pp 9-10; "Legislative Leadership Conference," 17 Dec 1953, DDEPP, Legislative Leadership Series, Box 1, DDEL; "Memorandum of Bipartisan Briefing of Congressional Leaders on Foreign Policy," 17 Nov 1954, DDEPP, Legislative Meetings Series, Box 1, DDEL; Twining, Niether Liberty Nor Safety, pp 81-86.

41. AFM 1-7, p 9.


43. AFM 1-3, p 11. See also note #42 above.

44. AFM 1-3, pp 10, 18 & 31; AFM 1-7, p 7.

45. AFM 1-3, pp 5-6, 15-16; AFM 1-7, p 1.

46. AFM 1-3, 6, 10, & 15; AFM 1-7, pp 1-2 & 6-8; AFM 1-2, 1953, pp 4 & 12.
47. AFM 1-4, pp 5-6, 10, & 15; AFM 1-7, pp 1-2, 6-8, & 10; Senate, Air Power Hearings, pp 472-73.


50. AFM 1-3, p 6; AFM 1-7, p 7.


53. AFM 1-3, pp 11 & 22; AFM 1-7, p 2.


55. AFM 1-3, pp 16, 22, & 31; AFM 1-7, 2 & 16-18.
CHAPTER VI
THE EMERGING MISSION:
TACTICAL AIR POWER AND LIMITED WARFARE
1953-1956

President Dwight D. Eisenhower's defense program stressed air-atomic power and with the declaratory policy of Massive Retaliation tended to focus attention on the strategic air offensive. During the implementation of New Look, however, the problem of local warfare became a major issue, and the Air Force steadily increased its emphasis on the role of the tactical air forces in deterring and waging limited wars. During the first year of the Eisenhower administration, these forces were largely shaped and justified by the demands of Korea and especially by the intertwined general war requirements of contributing to both the strategic air offensive and the defense of Western Europe. Although the general war responsibilities remained a critical mission of the tactical forces throughout both terms of the Eisenhower administration, the limited war role became increasingly important as a mission and as a justification for tactical air power after 1954.

Many military officers considered the Korean War an example of the need for a highly mobile response force. One of the more vocal proponents of this capability was General
Otto P. Weyland, Commander of the Far East Air Forces from June 1951 to March 1954 and Commander of the Tactical Air Command from April 1954 to July 1959. General Weyland, without downgrading the general war missions, was a strong advocate of the tactical air forces being the key U.S. response to the problem of "local aggression." Under General Weyland's leadership, the Air Force tactical community pursued, proselytized, and publicized its role as a critical instrument of national power across the entire spectrum of warfare, with emphasis on tactical air power's position as the dominant force at the lower end of the spectrum. This position was paralleled by the efforts of senior leaders from all of the other services to at least partially justify force developments by the limited war requirements described in the national security policy.¹

Limited War Commitments And Force Requirements

The Korean War demonstrated that nuclear superiority and strategic nuclear air power might not deter limited or peripheral wars regardless of the implications of the Massive Retaliation concept. The Korean experience - combined with the foreseeable arrival of nuclear parity and the likelihood of some form of mutual deterrence - created considerable concern over the Soviet exploitation of "local aggression." Critics of the formal security policies both
within and outside the government cited problems in a variety of locations — including Korea, Malaya, and Indochina — to challenge the concept of Massive Retaliation and the specific force structure of New Look. Although the Eisenhower defense program was dominated by the strategic demands of a general war which arguably posed the "greatest danger" to the United States, the President's security policies also recognized and attempted to respond to the challenges of limited warfare.²

From 1953 onward U.S. national security policies expressed a strong concern for the problem of limited wars. Policy statements and high level discussions of security issues frequently highlighted the dangers which would be inherent to a period of "nuclear parity," during which a general war would become much less likely and the nation would face "a long period of tension with local aggressions." The security policy statements further noted that "piecemeal conquest" by "subversion, indirect aggression, and civil wars" was "an immediate and most serious threat" to the free world. Although some writers in the 1950s used the term local war to include attacks on Western Europe, the President clearly considered U.S. and Soviet involvement in a European conflict a general war. Therefore, policy references to the term of limited or local wars tended to designate potential conflicts no larger than the Korean War
and involving limitations on geographic scope, military power, and/or political or military objectives. The U.S. military, while periodically discussing unconventional or guerrilla warfare concepts, tended to view limited warfare as scaled down conventional military action.\(^3\)

The national security policies and the associated internal debates attempted to identify general solutions for these "lesser military actions." Most formal policy statements stressed the fact that the nature of peripheral problems made "it very difficult to respond primarily by military means." Therefore, the expansionist challenges to other "free world countries" were best met "not primarily by military means, but by a flexible combination of political, psychological, economic and military actions." The security policies also described the collective security and military assistance programs as the first line of resistance against enemy aggression. Although the President and the formal policies stressed the complexity and the nonmilitary nature of many of the peripheral problems, the Air Force tactical air advocates and the leadership of the other military services sought to use these policy statements to justify major components of their force structure and to strengthen service positions in the competition for scarce resources.\(^4\)

Early in the Eisenhower administration, the armed services could cite NSC 153/1, 10 June 1953, which stated
that American deterrence of Soviet expansionism required the United States to
Develop and maintain our capability to commit appropriate forces and material in collective, and, if necessary, unilateral action against local communist aggression in key areas.5

The requirement for a military capability was strengthened the following year in NSC 5422/2, which noted the "loss" of North Vietnam and stated that the U.S. could not "passively accept further extension of Communist control." From 1954 onward, policy statements of the Eisenhower administration routinely called for military forces beyond those "overseas deployed forces" committed to NATO and Korea which could deter and fight limited wars. These capabilities were described as "mobile U.S. forces" which possessed "sufficient strength, flexibility and mobility" to "punish swiftly and severely any local aggression, in a manner and on a scale best calculated to avoid the hostilities broadening into total nuclear war." The policy papers emphasized that the best way to reduce the possibility of an escalation to general war was to defeat any aggression rapidly and decisively.6

The mobile "ready forces" were tentatively planned as part of a strategic reserve which would be based in the continental United States. President Eisenhower refused to support any concept which would "commit packets of troops all around the periphery." The ability to fight in limited
wars was directly incorporated into the description of the New Look force structure provided to Congress and the public by Admiral Arthur H. Radford. However, these forces could not be just specialized units, but also were expected to have the dual capability of being able to contribute to the "initial tasks in event of general war." Although the need for mobile response forces was well established, the specific solution to the problem was not as easily agreed upon.\(^7\)

President Eisenhower's view of the need for limited war forces was dominated by the issue of economic stability. He stressed the need to deal with the strategic nuclear problem first, as this represented the greatest threat to the United States. The President argued that the option offering the greatest security and cost effectiveness was building forces for a "big war" which could then be used as needed in "small war" situations. He believed that specialized limited war forces did not offer the needed capability to also contribute to the general war requirements. The Air Force leadership presented air power as the best solution available for the rapid response mission, but the other three services also offered themselves as the primary response force for limited wars. While the service leaders generally conceded that any intervention would be a joint action, each service tended to focus on independently
justified forces as part of the competition for a bigger share of the budget.8

Army leaders such as Generals Matthew B. Ridgway, James M. Gavin, J. Lawton Collins, and Maxwell D. Taylor argued that the "mobile ready forces" described in the national strategy demanded substantial, properly equipped, and trained ground forces and sufficient dedicated airlift. These commanders claimed that "ultimately" in limited conflicts "the burden must be shouldered largely by the Army." Army officers waged a vigorous, concerted campaign for the limited war mission in articles, speeches, and Congressional testimony. The new "Pentomic" organization, which was developed for the nuclear battlefield, was also described as capable of operating in any combat environment, including guerrilla warfare. In lobbying for a larger force structure, the Army leadership challenged the emphasis on strategic air power and continental defense in the national strategy, and cited "nuclear parity" and "demonstrated Communist tactics" to justify expanded Army forces capable of fighting and winning limited conflicts.9

The Army perspective accepted the importance of air power in modern combat, but emphasized that "localized aggression tends to occur in under-developed regions" and that in this environment "our ability to make effective use of many of our most modern weapons is severely limited." In
peripheral wars, as well as any other type of conflict, the Army believed "the ultimate and decisive role is played by military forces on land." The Army leadership also stressed that its forces were "versatile and flexible" with the "ability to vary the application of military force to the needs of the moment, to make 'measured' rather than 'mass' retaliation." Senior Army leaders claimed that the national defense posture should exploit this flexibility. They further stated that the budget priorities should focus on deterring general and local war and fielding an "ability to win local war" before attempting to build a capability to fight a general war.10

The President specifically rejected the need for forces justified solely by the limited warfare mission, especially ground forces. This view was mirrored in the security policies, which from NSC 162/2 onward stated that "the ground forces required to counter local aggressions must be supplied largely by our allies." The President believed that in addition to being more cost effective than using American manpower, reliance on indigenous troops would demonstrate the local commitment to their own defense, thereby justifying U.S. contributions to collective security efforts. The President and the formal policies envisioned the key to our collective security activities as providing the strategic deterrence power and concentrating "on
building up internal security forces and local security forces of the regions themselves."\textsuperscript{11}

President Eisenhower and the security policies stressed that if needed the United States "would give mobile support, with the Air, Navy and Army supporting weapons, and perhaps put in several battalions at truly critical points." American ground combat strength was to be drawn from the Marine Corps in most situations. The President believed that this type of response could be effectively performed by the general war oriented force structure which he advocated. He informed the military leadership that in his view

> Participation in small wars is primarily a matter for Navy and Air. Our job will be to support [our allies], but not to engage our main forces which must be kept clear for larger-scale hostilities.\textsuperscript{12}

The strong presidential position undermined the Army's search for a stronger raison d'être, while providing support to the arguments for larger Navy and Air Force shares of the budget. The Navy routinely cited the president's statements on the requirement for "a carrier force to provide air power to meet unexpected developments in any corner of the globe." The Navy leadership waged an aggressive public relations campaign which described aircraft carriers as cost effective platforms which could contribute to any level of conventional or nuclear combat from the strategic air offensive, through any type of theater conflict, to limited warfare. Senior Navy officers noted in Congressional testimony that
the carriers removed the cost, as well as the physical and political difficulties of maintaining and protecting overseas air bases. Additionally, the Navy stressed the potential use of naval power for diplomatic influence and reassurance. On the specific limited war problem, senior leaders stated that the Navy was the best means of immediate response to peripheral aggression as

our fleets are ready for such emergency action and can easily and rapidly move to new trouble areas. The Navy is our truly flexible means of applying tactical airpower, nuclear or nonnuclear.

The Air Force leadership was very concerned about both the Army and the Navy lobbying efforts. The service maintained an extensive clipping file of statements and articles by Navy officers. Members of the Air Staff developed internal memoranda which countered many of the Navy claims. These studies frequently cited statistics from the Korean War or analyzed exercises such as MAINBRACE, a relatively unsuccessful attempt to demonstrate the value of carrier air power to NATO in Central Europe. The Air Force used the studies to support lobbying efforts, but, because of presidential discontent with open interservice conflict, the Air Force and the Navy avoided a public debate and a possible repeat of the 1948 carrier-versus-bomber controversy.¹⁴

The Air Force attempted to counter the arguments of the Army and especially the Navy by presenting a strong case for its own local war capabilities in addition to its
longstanding emphasis on the strategic mission. The Air Force leadership began to present the limited war mission as a central justification for the tactical air forces, and as a critical responsibility for the service in its support of the national security policy. Air Force spokesmen strongly presented this position to the public and to governmental decision makers in articles, speeches, books and Congressional testimony. Air doctrine did not move as rapidly as the public and private opinion of the senior officers; however, key doctrinal tenets provided a foundation for the Air Force claim to the limited war mission. In addition, the service modified the basic doctrine to emphasize the role of air power in cold and limited war situations.15

Air Force Doctrine And The Limited War Mission

AFM 1-2, USAF Basic Doctrine Manual, in its earliest form provided little guidance on the limited war role. By the third iteration in 1955, however, the manual strongly presented the case for the value of air power in local war scenarios. The 1953 and 1954 versions of AFM 1-2, while mentioning the possibility of "a limited action," downplayed the issue by lumping all combat into two broad categories: heartland operations (strategic air offensive), and peripheral operations. Although this could be inferred to refer to limited warfare, the doctrinal context generally
described peripheral actions as part of a general war, rather than as some form of isolated and restricted conflict. The primary doctrinal position which supported an Air Force role as the nation's mobile response force was the emphasis on the inherent flexibility of air power and the ability to concentrate striking power through the "capability of being rapidly deployed on a global basis as the situation demands."16

The 1955 version of AFM 1-2 specifically dealt with the problems of cold and limited warfare and identified air power as a critical tool for the support of the national political objectives in an environment dominated by these types of conflict. The manual maintained, but somewhat softened the service's emphasis on the overriding importance of strategic air power and the ability to deter and win general wars. The Air Force expanded its doctrinal perspective with the claim that air power also could deter limited war and, if necessary, neutralize enemy power which might "radiate outward from an object nation's central sources to peripheral localities, satellite states, or to segregated or proxy areas of conflict." The doctrine further argued that

air forces, if necessary, can conduct specialized operations in warfare that is limited by geographic or political boundaries, in which they need not penetrate a major opponent's sovereign territory to achieve acceptable results. The effects of air operations in any of these conditions can be of decisive proportions.17
AFM 1-2 strengthened the Air Force claims for the limited war mission through the position that regardless of the nature of the conflict, "of the the various types of military forces, those which conduct air operations are most capable of decisive results." The Air Force doctrine expanded this into the conclusion that air forces provide the dominant military means of exercising the initiative and gaining decisions in all forms of international relations, including full peace, cold war, limited wars of all types, and total war.  

The Air Force based this view on the its assessment of the predominant characteristics of air forces which made them "inherently capable of operating anywhere and at anytime." These characteristics were identified as global range, the speed to be anywhere on earth in a matter of hours, mobility based on the ability to rapidly establish new bases, flexibility, and penetration ability. Noting that air power could be used in war or peace, AFM 1-2 stated that even the deployment and "mere presence" of air forces could achieve a dominant position.  

The Air Force relied heavily on the claims of flexibility and decisiveness to bolster its position in the interservice competition for resources. AFM 1-2 contained the service's warning to the national political leaders that "proper employment of air forces requires recognition of their versatility as a component of the military
instrument of national policy." The manual further cautioned that to obtain adequate security for the United States,

"Immediate, effective reaction to threats to national security in all forms of international conflict is a matter of primary importance. Forces-in-being must be provided and maintained for this purpose. The speed with which the forces can execute the required tasks may well determine the course of the conflict."

Through this direct link to growing national security concerns, the Air Force leadership believed it strengthened the rationale for a substantial air force in being, including adequate tactical air forces. Senior Air Force officers forcefully presented this position from 1954 onward. Air Force and TAC planners rapidly translated this force justification into operational concepts and capabilities for employing the tactical forces in limited war situations. As with the early basic doctrine manuals, the Air Force operational doctrine manuals on theater air power provided a foundation, but did not directly examine the local war missions.

The Air Force operational doctrine retained the more traditional perspective on force application and failed to deal specifically with the local war problem. Both AFM 1-3 and AFM 1-7 based their logic on the heartland and peripheral concepts in which theater air forces engaged the "deployed military forces" of the enemy, normally in concert
with strategic air operations. The primary link to the limited war role in these doctrine statements was through discussions of the inherent "flexibility and striking power" of theater air forces. The theater doctrine also emphasized the capability of tactical air forces to operate "in all geographic areas and climates" and "from temporary bases whenever required by the situation."22

Within Air Force doctrine, peripheral actions which might be labeled local wars, were not separated from those which were part of a general war. The doctrinal discussions of theater warfare noted the differences between developed and undeveloped regions. However, other than to identify possible shifts in targets due to variations in the socio-economic structure, the general approach to theater warfare was not modified due to these differences. The implied assumption of this position was that U.S. military intervention in peripheral conflicts would be directed against major enemy field forces which were involved in overt aggression against a friendly state.23

This doctrinal emphasis on military responses to military problems did not mean that the Air Force leadership ignored the other factors which spawned and influenced limited wars. The basic doctrine followed Clausewitzian logic in stating that all military action should be guided by specific political objectives and that victory was
defined by the accomplishment of those objectives. In addition to military power, AFM 1-2 also identified political, economic, social and psychological aspects of international power and conflict. Senior Air Force officers demonstrated an ability to transfer this theoretical recognition of the complexities of warfare into the real world during discussions of possible U.S. interventions in peripheral regions, including proposed involvement in Indochina before and after the French defeat at Dien Bien Phu in May 1954. 24

Key Air Force leaders resisted plans for American involvement in Southeast Asia in support of the French on the grounds that the problems in that region were largely political. They argued that without clear prospects for a political solution, military intervention alone had little chance for success. In response to a proposal for a post-Dien Bien Phu B-29 operation, General Partridge informed General Twining that "B-29 aircraft using conventional weapons cannot produce decisive results in Indo China operations and should not be so employed." General Partridge summarized his position on the Indochina situation as follows:

This is basically a civil war, with pacification and unification (as opposed to destruction) being the prime objective. Air operations, without the required political and psychological programs, can only be regarded as destructive. Aside from the needed military leadership, the Indo Chinese have
great need for economic, political and leadership. It is believed that no great credit will accrue to the U.S. if, in the face of the very obvious needs for leadership, our contribution consists primarily of destructive power. As conditions exist today, participation by U.S. air units as currently envisaged cannot possibly produce decisive results.

General Partridge further noted that although an air strike could produce positive short term military and "psychological effect(s). . . from the long-term point of view there is the possibility of adverse effects." The possible negative image which would accompany an unsuccessful intervention caused service leaders to balk at the use of Air Force assets in Southeast Asia. General Partridge warned that failure to obtain decisive results would "certainly reflect unfavorably on the U.S. and the Air Force in particular." To avoid the negative fallout of a military failure, General Partridge counseled General Twining that if the United States made the "political decision" to intervene in Indochina, it would be "desirable to allow the U.S. Navy fullest opportunity to employ their fast carrier task forces," and the "B-29s should not be used."

Although the Air Force leadership recognized the complexities of the limited war problem and resisted certain intervention proposals, they also seized on this mission as a critical justification for the tactical air component. Air Force officers frequently described these assets as the
logical central element for American reactions to local war situations. The service identified the intervention role as the critical mission of the tactical air assets in force structure justifications, especially for the stateside based Tactical Air Command. Air Force descriptions of the tactical forces also stressed the retention of the general war capabilities and responsibilities. The doctrinal emphasis on flexibility and responsiveness supported this multi-mission concept and the development of complementary operational concepts for both limited and general war.\textsuperscript{27}

**Tactical Air Power And Limited Warfare**

The Air Force leadership, including the senior representatives of tactical air power, did not actively pursue the limited war mission in the first year of the Eisenhower presidency. During 1954 this situation rapidly changed, although the general war roles continued to dominate the justification of the overall force structure and the specific missions of the standing air forces. The Air Force had primarily presented its tactical air assets as part of planned general war operations, especially in Europe, with the flexibility to respond to other challenges such as had been demonstrated by Korea. Air Force leaders also frequently used the mission of supporting the ground forces as a further justification of the tactical component,
although this role was not central to the service's concept of decisive theater air operations. By the middle of the President's first term, the formal Air Force position swung strongly over to the local war role as the premier responsibility of the tactical air forces, with substantial capabilities to contribute in a general war and provide air support to the Army when needed. 

The shift in the Air Force position paralleled the growing criticism of the New Look defense policy and the increasing emphasis on limited war within the national security policy, while also reflecting practical lessons which Air Force officers drew from the Korean War. Although the Air Force viewed Korea through the filter of its theater doctrine, and although strategic requirements and concepts dominated the service during the conflict, this experience combined with the ongoing combat in Indochina generated considerable discussion within the officer corps on the future roles and missions of air power. Some air power supporters described the Korean war as "artificial" or as an anomaly, with conditions and restrictions which were unlikely to appear again. Other officers believed Korea had demonstrated the probable nature of future challenges to Free World security. The issue generated internal debates and formal studies which illuminated the complexities of the problem, stimulated the the transformation of basic doctrine
and produced operational concepts for the air power response to peripheral aggression.  

The importance of the limited war role in the inter-service competition for resources further stimulated the increased emphasis on this mission in the Air Force. Tactical advocates and the senior leadership of the Air Force were concerned with the popular image of the service being only interested in "big airplanes." In early 1954, General Twining complained of external criticism that the Air Force was incapable of doing "anything other than [taking] massive retaliatory action in the event of war." General Twining wanted the Air Force to counter the impression that the service was relying on the major war threat as the sole justification for its force structure. He specifically noted the implications in the attacks on the Air Force force structure that "surface forces are more capable of dealing with localized aggressions than are air forces." The senior Air Force leadership wished to block this possible entree to a larger ground structure, especially if it was at the expense of the Air Force. In Congressional testimony, senior Air Force officers presented the position that

tactical air forces properly manned and equipped are the United States Air Force and the Department of Defense logical answer to any allegation that we do not have the means to meet the threat of peripheral wars.
The concept of air power as a universal instrument of deterrence and victory was in keeping with the traditional air power claims of decisiveness in any type of war and the associated concept of global air superiority. An Air University team of officers attempted to clarify the role of air power during an era of limited war in a major study termed "Project Control." The objective of this evaluation was the identification of ways to use air power to deter aggression at levels below general war and to define appropriate military responses if deterrence failed.31

"Project Control" was in some ways an effort to produce a nuclear era capability similar to the British efforts to control tribesmen in the Middle East with air power during the interwar years. Several senior Air Force officers drew parallels between limited war deterrence and the British experience. The results of the "Project Control" analysis were briefed to the Air Force World Wide Commanders Conference in May 1954, with subsequent presentations also made to the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Secretary of Defense. The conclusions of the study roughly mirrored the national security policy by emphasizing indigenous ground forces supported by Air Force airlift and interdiction operations.32

The Air Force tactical leadership was in the vanguard of the development of appropriate air power response
capabilities for the local war threat. General Weyland was particularly vocal in his advocacy of the tactical air forces as the predominant instrument of the U.S. against any peripheral aggression. General Weyland based his position on the logic that the strength of the Strategic Air Command produced a successful deterring effect on general war, but would not likely deter all local aggression. Therefore, in official correspondence, public statements and Congressional testimony, he argued that

> with the maintenance of a strong strategic air command in being, any armed conflict in the near foreseeable future will in all probability be of the brush-fire or limited type as opposed to an all-out or global war.

General Weyland and other tactical air power advocates reasoned that in the face of this threat the United States "must have adequate tactical air forces in being that are capable of serving as a deterrent to the brush-fire type of war just as SAC is the main deterrent to a global war." However, the tactical proponents were concerned that the national leadership, including the Congressional purse-holders and certain military leaders, would not recognize the value of these flexible air assets. In Congressional testimony General Weyland explained that the missions of the Strategic Air Command and the Air Defense Command were "simple in concept and fairly well understood." However, he feared the tactical air forces could be misunderstood or
ignored because rather than having a single specific mission, these forces were the "versatile, jack of all trades element of our offensive airpower."^34

The tactical air force advocates pointed to the lessons of Korea to establish a stronger mission identification for the tactical component and to support the need for increased Air Force tactical air forces. Although the service had been ill prepared for that conflict, Air Force spokesmen claimed that South Korea would have fallen without the rapid response of air assets which were not specifically trained nor equipped for that type of action. Nonetheless, they noted the inherent flexibility of air power allowed these forces to stem the Communist advance and then provide the decisive contributions to subsequent combat operations. General Weyland asserted that had adequate Air Force tactical air power been in place in the Far East in 1950, the Communist invasion of South Korea would not have occurred. He extended this argument to the position that

"It is highly unlikely that the aggressor will again select a periphery area for expansion, such as Korea, in which an organized United States air force is presently deployed and prepared for action."^35

General Weyland and TAC planners extended this logic to solidify the role of tactical air power as a the limited war solution which complied with Presidential and policy constraints. The tactical advocates argued that for those
areas not covered by an organized Air Force element, the rapid response force described in the formal security policies should be composed largely of tactical air "task forces, specifically organized, trained and equipped for 'putting out fires' in any part of the world on a moment's notice." This tactical air power response meshed well with the overall New Look emphasis on air-atomic strength and the judgment that the U.S. could not afford to have organized forces permanently stationed at or near all the many potential trouble spots worldwide. Some Air Force supporters attempted to broaden the appeal of this concept by comparing these mobile strike forces with the peacekeeping potential of the nineteenth century Royal Navy, or to the "big stick" role of the U.S. Navy under President Theodore Roosevelt. 36

The air power proponents emphasized the ability of dedicated tactical units to provide a visible statement of the capability of the United States to intervene rapidly worldwide in response to any aggression. General Weyland added that the effectiveness of these forces in the deterrent role would depend on the country "advertising" both the capability and the commitment to use this capability when local situations demanded action. Brigadier General Henry P. Viccellio, the commander of the Nineteenth Air Force, noted that these forces could be periodically deployed to or near trouble spots as a "show of force" to demonstrate U.S.
resolve. These arguments applied the theoretical foundation of deterrence - capability and the will to use it - to the tactical air forces and the problem of limited war. The tactical community strongly believed that with the support of the political leadership, the ability to mass "tactical air power to cope with armed aggression anywhere in the world" was a capability which the Communists would "respect." Given this situation, the tactical leadership argued that the probability was very low that Communist states "would continue to pursue their objectives by military periphery actions in the face of such an effective challenge." The emerging Air Force position held that strategic and tactical air power in a properly balanced, dynamic military-political policy "could well make another Korea or another Dienbienphu impossible."37

The tactical position, reinforcing the link with the national security policies and the presidential position, emphasized the inherent capability of these mobile strike forces to also support general war operations. The tactical concept and the relationship with the strategic component also meshed with core aspects of airpower doctrine, including the concept of the indivisibility of air power. The tactical advocates stressed that an air power solution to local aggression dovetailed with the emphasis on air power in deterring general war. Air power logic was simply
being applied all along the "spectrum of available targets." The tactical air leadership believed the flexibility demonstrated by the multitude of missions assigned to their forces substantially enhanced the value of the tactical air component to both the Air Force and to the nation.38

Tactical commanders placed considerable emphasis on their complementary relationship with the Strategic Air Command, although the reverse was not necessarily true. The tactical community had to resist periodic SAC efforts to enhance the strategic force structure at the expense of the tactical forces, including claims of sufficient flexibility to use strategic assets in limited war situations as well as the general war role. The implication of this SAC position was that the tactical air forces could be considered an excess capability and, therefore, did not merit a substantial portion of the Air Force budget. A similar logic was present in the proposal to merge TAC and SAC into a single USAF Combat Command. The tactical response to the intra-service challenge was to concede SAC's ability to hit targets at the lower end of the spectrum, but also to emphasize the need to maintain both offensive components within national air power, with the tactical forces serving as the critical swing force.39

The tactical leadership questioned the wisdom of assigning limited war missions to the strategic forces due
to both theoretical and practical considerations. The tactical community argued that the deterring power of SAC which forced the Communists into the local aggression mode was also needed to deter escalation from limited warfare into a general war. If SAC forces were removed from the strategic alert force to fight against peripheral aggression, the strategic deterrent strength of this force would be reduced. Any reduction of strategic air power was of great concern in the face of growing doubts over the ability of this force to cover the expanding list of Soviet strategic targets.40

General Weyland added to the debate his opinion that the post-World War II limited war experiences had "proven that strategic air forces, the principle deterrent to all-out war, are relatively ineffective in deterring or fighting wars of less than major proportions." Although the General agreed that strategic assets could "be considered as a back-up force," he also argued that "SAC forces are not suited for and cannot cope with the essential tactical air aspect of limited wars." He specifically cited deficiencies in equipment and training which were due to the heavy demands of preparing to carry out the difficult deep penetration missions in the strategic air offensive. In contrast, the tactical air forces which were specifically trained for the limited war role also could easily and effectively be
employed in the theater missions during a general war.41

The flexibility and versatility of tactical aviation was the central component of the lobbying effort aimed at maintaining and expanding the size and responsibilities of this force. On the most basic level, the contribution of tactical aircraft and crews to deterrence of and victory in both general and limited wars made them a very cost effective component of the national military structure. Additionally, the tactical air advocates related the need for "versatile forces . . . prepared and trained to execute a multitude of divergent missions at any time" to the "threat of an extremely flexible enemy." Although flexibility was important at any level across the spectrum of conflict, the tactical community claimed that since limited wars were ill defined and not subject to approved solutions, the correct response to this threat was the most flexible of combat forces -- tactical air power.42

General Weyland led a concerted campaign to assign the limited war mission primarily to the Tactical Air Command. He reasoned that in addition to maintaining the strategic forces, the U.S. reaction to localized aggression should not degrade the deterring capability of the tactical air forces already deployed to potential trouble spots, such as Europe and Korea. Generals Twining and White, while generally considered strong advocates of the strategic forces, lent their
support to the development of TAC "mobile tactical striking forces." In 1954, General Twining informed Congress that "since aggression might be initiated at any time and place," the United States "must be capable of immediately deploying our tactical units stationed in the U.S."\(^{43}\)

The senior USAF leaders translated their support for the TAC position into official directions through AFR 23-10, The Tactical Air Command. The 1953 version of this regulation gave TAC the primary mission of the "command, organization, administration, provision, training, and the preparation for tactical air operation of all units and personnel" as directed by the Chief of Staff, United States Air Force. The regulation also gave the command the very general charter to develop "Air Force policies, doctrine, organization, systems, tactics, techniques, and procedures applicable to the employment of tactical air power." AFR 23-10 described tactical air operations in the traditional theater perspective, while also providing sufficiently broad guidance which could be interpreted as assigning the limited war mission to TAC. The peripheral war mission was easily justified by the specific responsibility for:

Preparation of specific plans as directed by the Chief of Staff, USAF for the deployment and employment of designated units in tactical air operations, independent of or in concert with land, naval, and/or amphibious forces within those areas of the world for which no other United States Air Force commander is responsible.\(^{44}\)
In 1955 the Air Force revised AFR 23-10 and provided more specific tasking to the Tactical Air Command on the peripheral role. The regulation maintained the general tone of the earlier version on theater warfare and the responsibility for areas which lacked an organized Air Force presence. The primary modification was the specific charter for the maintenance of a capability and development of plans for the deployment of mobile atomic strike forces for use in tactical operations in any area of the world independent of or in concert with other air, land, naval, and/or amphibious forces.  

Based on this tasking and the emerging limited war challenges, the Tactical Air Command developed the Composite Air Strike Force (CASF) concept. Each Composite Air Strike Force was comprised of a mixture of aircraft types, normally including fighter, fighter-bombers, tactical bombers, and reconnaissance aircraft, supported by dedicated transport and aerial refueling aircraft. AFR 23-10 and TAC employment plans directed these forces be capable of serving in any area in support of the SAC or theater commanders. However, TAC primarily envisioned the Composite Air Strike Force as the specific Air Force and national response to the limited war threat. Although the Composite Air Strike Force employment concept included possible joint action with other U.S. military forces, the preferred employment option was providing support for indigenous ground forces in peripheral
conflicts.46

The emphasis on Composite Air Strike Force firepower supporting local ground forces was a continuation of the Air Force effort to link its limited war proposal to the national security policy and the President's defense program. This posture also supported the Air Force desire to reduce any opening for expanded Army forces based on the limited war mission. General Twining emphasized the need to rely on allied ground forces when he argued before Congress that the U.S. should follow the logic of having each free world state "develop those capabilities for which they are best suited." In the Air Force perspective, within the context of mutual security and collective defense the allies could "provide ample manpower for ground forces, but do not have the capability of providing tactical air forces for joint operations." Therefore, the service reasoned, the U.S. should not attempt to duplicate this capability with expensive American troops, but should concentrate on the technological contribution, especially air power.47

General Weyland buttressed the Composite Air Strike Force concept by warning that in the face of peripheral aggression the "indigenous forces will fold if we don't get some tactical air in immediately." Therefore, the dedicated strike organizations were designed to serve as standing alert forces which could provide a rapid reaction for
limited war threats, much like SAC could react to a strategic alert or attack. If a local war erupted, TAC planners envisioned the prompt deployment and swift employment of Composite Air Strike Forces as the critical factor in stabilizing the situation and gaining a quick decisive victory. The speed of this victory combined with the threat posed by a fully alert Strategic Air Command would deter any escalation from a limited conflict into general war.48

The foundation of the Tactical Air Command operational concept was the doctrinally based belief that air power, if properly employed, could "affect a decision in small wars independently or in combination with surface forces." In keeping with the general theater doctrine, Air Force leaders warned that peripheral military commitments and plans had to optimize air power and not just emphasize surface operations and their support. Although Air Force commanders recognized the political aspect of limited wars, they also chafed under the prospect of the political constraints on military action which they knew could accompany such conflicts, as had been shown in Korea. Air Force officers warned that the decisiveness which was necessary for deterrence and victory might not be possible if air power was handcuffed by political or narrowly focused military decisions, especially if the initiative were surrendered to the enemy. The senior Air Force leadership cautioned against enemy manipulations
and domestic philosophizing which could inhibit "American strength by having [the country] believe in and adopt methods of warfare which give Communists an advantage."

More specifically, Air Force officers argued:

> air forces provide the ideal weapons for limited war, but to be most effective, the political restrictions applied to limited war must favor the air weapon rather than favor enemy manpower. ⁴⁹

Air Force planners recognized, even if given free reign, any quick and decisive air power intervention had to be conducted by a relatively small combat force. This requirement was imposed by force structure and practical planning considerations. Although the service continually lobbied for an expanded force, growth was unlikely due to the budgetary situation. Therefore, the mobile strike forces had to be drawn from those air assets not required for the strategic air offensive, the strategic defenses, and the overseas theater forces. Additionally, a portion of the tactical forces which might be used in the response role was committed to wartime theater missions or for training forces for the theater requirements. This left a limited number of units for the peripheral reaction capability.⁵⁰

Practical concerns also pushed the Composite Air Strike Force concept towards compact deployment packages. A small, well trained force could be maintained on alert, deployed, and employed much more economically, effectively, and efficiently than larger organizations such as the tactical
air commands and tactical air forces of the Second World War. Additionally, speedy global mobility required considerable logistical support, especially in the form of aerial refueling, and the Air Force was unable to provide adequate resources to support the movement of substantial intervention forces. Air Force planners also noted the likely limited availability of usable airfields in most peripheral regions. This factor was compounded by the runway requirements (length and load bearing capability) of the high performance aircraft which were being procured for the tactical air forces. The limited airfield space and the need to deploy all of the logistical support for the strike forces into underdeveloped regions were additional constraints on the size of forces which could be deployed and effectively employed in reaction to local aggressions.\(^{51}\)

Air Force planners contended decisive operations were possible even with the small mobile strike forces. They stressed this would only be possible if the air power was used in accordance with established air doctrine. In particular, the assigned forces had to be employed offensively under the direction of a centralized air commander who could exploit the flexibility of his forces. Additionally, the planners reiterated the need to avoid excessive political or land warfare military constraints on the air operations. An additional major concern for the air
planners was the availability of nuclear weapons for limited wars. Many senior Air Force officers believed the firepower of these weapons was the critical capability which could guarantee air power's success in deterring or winning limited wars. The Air Force based much of its intervention planning on the availability of nuclear weapons, while also facing some uncertainties in the actual availability of these weapons for this mission.\textsuperscript{52}

**Nuclear Weapons, Air Power And Limited Wars**

The New Look program committed the United States to the use of nuclear weapons in all types of wars, including local conflicts. Formal national security policies contained the same position. For the military, this posture solved many problems associated with fighting a relatively traditional theater-type conflict in a physically remote area with minimal forces. The Air Force embraced the formal policies as support and justification for its preferred force structure, including a predominately nuclear capability. Although the political signals on the actual role of nuclear weapons were mixed and the military was forced to consider alternative concepts; the equipment, training, and tactical force structure were primarily designed to exploit the firepower gained from the new technology.\textsuperscript{53}
The Air Force justified its heavy emphasis on nuclear capabilities through the general and specific directives in the national security policies and the President's attitude towards these weapons. From 1953 onward, the military sections of the basic national security policies, including discussions of limited war issues, were dominated by nuclear weapons. Although the policy statements maintained a requirement for conventional capabilities due to political and psychological constraints in limited wars, they also stated the mobile ready forces "must also have a flexible and selective nuclear capability, since the United States will not preclude itself from using nuclear weapons, even in local situations." The U.S. was expected to exploit this capability if such use will bring the aggression to a swift and positive cessation, and if, on balance of political and military consideration, such use will best advance U.S. security interests. In the last analysis, if confronted by the choice of (a) acquiescing in Communist aggression or (b) taking measures risking either general war or loss of allied support, the United States must be prepared to take the risks if necessary for its security.  

The security policies formally tasked the president with making the decision on the actual use of nuclear weapons both "in general war and in military operations short of general war." The specific guidance President Eisenhower provided military leaders on nuclear employment emphasized the likely use of these weapons. Although many critics
considered the Korean War an example of self deterrence, with the threat of nuclear weapons largely useful as a negotiating ploy, the President's comments in National Security Council meetings indicated a willingness to use tactical nuclear weapons if they provided substantial military advantages which outweighed their disadvantages. President Eisenhower was very aware of the many constraints on such action, but he considered this an aspect of the decision process and not a block to the consideration of nuclear operations. He also expressed the opinion, shared by many military officers, that use of the atomic bomb in Korea might break down the psychological resistance to the extensive integration of nuclear weapons into American strategy and force structure.55

President Eisenhower accepted the need to retain some residual conventional capabilities due to the possibility that some locations and circumstances might preclude nuclear employment. When limited conventional action could secure the free world position, or when the aggressor was not clearly identifiable, he conceded a totally conventional response could occur. Because of this possibility he directed the U.S. military not to expect immediate nuclear authorization in "minor affairs" or "police actions." However, the President emphasized the U.S. would not procure a larger conventional force structure to deal with the
peripheral challenges. He argued that the nuclear orientation did not mean the loss of all other military capabilities. He also forcefully stated the United States would not be restricted by self deterrence, as demonstrated by his pledge to the National Security Council in late 1953 that he "would certainly decide to use" nuclear weapons if their use "was dictated by the interests of U.S. security."\textsuperscript{56}

The President responded to concerns over the danger of escalation to a general war through the use of nuclear weapons with his expectation these weapons would become a conventional military capability which would be "accepted as integral parts of modern armed forces." He reasoned in "local wars . . . the tactical use of atomic weapons would be no more likely to trigger off a big war than the use of twenty-ton 'blockbusters'." The President expected American support of indigenous forces to exploit the "most effective weapons," which meant tactical nuclear warheads. President Eisenhower also informed his military advisors that if American forces were involved and the conflict "grew to anything like Korea proportions, the action would become one for use of atomic weapons." He reinforced the nuclear orientation of the military in his defense budget for 1957 which emphasized technological modernization, research and development, and increased reliance on "air-atomic power." In addition, in support of continuing fiscal constraints,
the administration announced the budget "outlays for conventional weapons and for stockpiling will be decreased."57

The nuclear orientation was welcomed and encouraged by the senior Air Force leadership, as the service's emphasis on decisiveness with small forces was, in many scenarios, only achievable with the use of nuclear weapons. The Air Force tasking in AFR 23-10 for TAC to develop "mobile atomic strike forces" reflected this perspective. Air Force spokesmen continuously stressed the necessity of using nuclear weapons to "maximize the potential and effectiveness" of rapidly deployable tactical forces. The service also noted that tactical forces with nuclear firepower would not require the supplemental heavy support of strategic bombers as had been the case during the Korean War. General Twining advocated a national commitment to exploiting nuclear firepower whenever possible, including limited war situations. The Air Force nuclear orientation was very clearly presented in early 1953 when Secretary of the Air Force Harold E. Talbot lobbied for a defense policy in which U.S. atomic strength "must be made applicable to preventing local aggression," to include "use of atomic weapons in local conditions whenever it is militarily desirable."58
The broad national and service commitment to nuclear firepower supported operational concepts designed around nuclear weapons, while pushing the tactical air forces towards a nuclear dominated force structure. The broad mission flexibility of tactical air power also reinforced the nuclear orientation. The ability of the tactical assets assigned to the peripheral mission to perform a swing force role and contribute to general war operations demanded that these forces have the capability of fulfilling the nuclear requirements of the strategic air offensive and theater operations in Europe. Therefore, the planning demands of efficiency and effectiveness drove the aircrew training and aircraft procurement of the tactical air forces towards optimization of the critical nuclear delivery role, with the conventional capabilities clearly becoming a distant secondary priority.  

An outgrowth of the nuclear emphasis and the pressures of cost effectiveness was an Air Staff proposal to limit all Air Force aircraft to a totally nuclear capability. Although this proposal apparently contradicted the requirements on conventional capabilities contained in the national security policies and presidential directives, it was seriously considered by the senior Air Force leadership. The tactical community successfully resisted this initiative by citing the potential loss of a portion of the inherent
flexibility of air power. Tactical commanders also noted the reality that "whether nuclear weapons will be used in a periphery action is not purely a military decision." They therefore reasoned the Air Force must "maintain a current capability and proficiency in the delivery of both conventional and nuclear weapons with all the combat aircraft in our inventory." General Weyland supported the logic of this position when he warned other Air Force leaders that aggressors would "endeavor to create conditions whereby our atomic superiority is not brought into play. Hence, we must be prepared to use either atomic or conventional weapons."^60

The Air Force accepted the tactical position and made the dual role capability of the tactical air assets a formal requirement, a decision which remained in effect throughout the Eisenhower years, although the conventional capabilities were eroded by the nuclear emphasis. General Weyland was a strong proponent of maintaining the conventional option for tactical air power due to his concerns over the exact nature of any limited war, his emphasis on the versatility of tactical air forces, and especially his recognition that the use of nuclear bombs was fraught with "myriads of political, psychological and other implications." Nonetheless, General Weyland was also a strong advocate of tactical nuclear weapons as the critical aspect of the American response to limited wars. He argued that the U.S. had to be
"psychologically prepared" to use nuclear weapons when they were required.61

General Weyland and the Tactical Air Command built the Composite Air Strike Force concept around the use of nuclear weapons with the possibility of performing conventional operations if necessary. General Weyland presented the prevailing Air Force opinion when he described "small low yield" tactical nuclear weapons as "ideal weapons for limited wars." He extended this to the position that "small nuclear weapons are not, repeat not, weapons of mass destruction" nor weapons of "massive retaliation." He also claimed "tactical nuclear weapons are designed for employment against purely military targets" and "can be used accurately and selectively." The Air Force used these concepts to downplay the potential of escalation due to the use of nuclear weapons. The service leadership hoped to gain acceptance for nuclear-based intervention concepts by emphasizing the totally military targeting of tactical weapons and the prospect of quick victory which would preclude escalation. The Air Force used these arguments to strengthen the logical foundation for the plan to use the nuclear armed Composite Air Strike Force capability as the primary American means for conducting rapidly decisive operations against peripheral aggression.62
The Composite Air Strike Force concept provided the Air Force's solution to the serious security threat of peripheral aggression. The Composite Air Strike Force meshed smoothly with the direction provided by the service doctrine and philosophy, while also meeting the requirements levied by the President, the formal national security policies and the military plans developed within the Department of Defense. The Air Force intervention plan also provided the important cost effectiveness benefit of using forces which could also contribute to general war operations. The rapid response mission became a critical element in the justification of the tactical air forces during the intense competition for resources which dominated the defense issues of the 1950s.63

The value of tactical air power was logically well established, both within the service and within the national defense structure by the end of President Eisenhower's first term. However, budgetary pressures, interservice and intraservice competition, and the stress induced by rapidly developing, expensive technologies forced tactical air power advocates to continuously fight to protect their position in the U.S. military strategy and force structure. Near the end of 1956, General Weyland warned his key subordinates and the overseas tactical air force commanders of the need to continue the fight to explain and justify the
tactical air forces and their roles and missions. He expressed concern that tactical air power was not getting credit for its important contributions to national security from the public, the Air Staff and the Department of Defense. From his perspective as commander of the Tactical Air Command, General Weyland provided his opinion that

As a result of the impact of extreme performance aircraft and nuclear weapons on warfare, TAC's contribution to the security of this nation is becoming increasingly involved in the composite air strike force. Publicly we must emphasize the decisiveness with which the air strike force could act in major all out wars as well as against peripheral-area aggression. These ideas will be emphasized against a background covering the potency of tactical air in a major war, and the constant readiness, global mobility and flexibility, and firepower capability of tactical air. 64

From 1954 throughout the remainder of the decade, the advocates of tactical air power stressed the ability of the tactical air forces to provide critical contributions across the spectrum of war, from the strategic air offensive, through nuclear dominated theater conflict, to nuclear, or, if necessary, conventional peripheral action. The Air Force, while stressing its overall role of deterring general war through its strategic forces, also emphasized the high value to the national security of its tactical component as the decisive factor in deterring or winning local wars. The nuclear emphasis in the limited war planning allowed the Air Force to rather easily blend these requirements with those
of the theater and strategic missions in planning and developing its tactical component. During the mid and late 1950s, the Air Force emphasized flexibility and nuclear striking power in the development of its tactical air force organizations, force structure, equipment, and training.
NOTES FOR CHAPTER VI


3. NSC 153/1, 10 Jun 1953, White House Office, Office of the Special Assistant for National Security Affairs, (Hereafter WHO/OSANSA), Special Assistant Series, Policy Paper Subseries, Box 5, Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, (Hereafter DDEL), Abilene, KS; NSC 172/1, 20 Nov 1953, WHO/OSANSA, Special Assistant Series, Presidential Subseries, Box 1, DDEL; NSC 162/2(2), 30 Oct 1953, WHO/OSANSA, NSC Series, Policy Papers Subseries, Box 6,

5. NSC 153/1.

6. NSC 5422/2; NSC 5440/1; NSC 5501; NSC 5602/1; "Summary Statement of Existing Basic National Security Policy," nd(1954), WHO/OSANSA, NSC Series, Policy Papers Subseries, Box 6, DDEL; House, "DOD Appropriations for 1955," p 121.


8. "209th Meeting of the NSC," pp 707-09; "Conference with the JCS," 10 Feb 1956, Ann Whitman File, DDE Diary, Box 15, DDEL; "Memorandum of Conference with the President," 14 Mar 1956, Ann Whitman File, Dwight D. Eisenhower Diary Series, (Hereafter DDE Diary), Box 15, DDEL; Memorandum of Conference with the President, 24 May 1956, Ann Whitman File, DDE Diary, Box 15, DDEL. For an example of the


16. AFM 1-2, Mar 1953, pp 7-9 & 11-12; AFM 1-2, 1 Apr 1954, pp 9 & 11-14. For additional information on the heartland and peripheral concept see Chapter #5 above.

17. AFM 1-2, 1 Apr 1955, pp 1-2 & 7-10.

18. AFM 1-2, 1 Apr 1955, p 10.

19. AFM 1-2, 1 Apr 1955, pp 4 & 7.

20. AFM 1-2, 1 Apr 1955, pp 4 & 10.

21. AFM 1-3, pp 1-3, 6, 9 & 15; AFM 1-7, pp 1-3, 9 & 11. For additional information on the USAF theater concept
see Chapter #4 above.

22. AFM 1-3, pp 1-3, 6, 9 & 15; AFM 1-7, pp 1-3, 9 & 11.

23. AFM 1-7, pp 11.

24. AFM 1-2, Mar 1953, p 1; AFM 1-2, 1 Apr 1954, p 1; AFM 1-2, 1 Apr 1955, p 1. On intervention in Indochina, see note #25 below.


26. COMFEAF, msg to COFS, USAF, REDLINE Message # 918, 7 Jun 1954, Box 102, Twining Papers. See also note #25 above.


Program," nd(1954), Box 70, Twining Papers. For the emphasis on the general war mission, see Chapter 4 above. For statements on limited war missions, see note #25 above.


Science 299 (May 1955): 127. For the concept of "Global Superiority" see chapter #5 above.


41. Weyland, Lecture, 18 Feb 1959; Weyland, Presentation to Air Staff; Weyland to Kuter, 16 Dec 1955.

42. Weyland, Public Statement, 1956; Senate, Appropriations for DOD, 1955, pp 76-77; House, Appropriations for Air Force, 1956, p 9; House, Soviet Total War, pp 259-61; House, Appropriations for DOD, 1957, Reid,


44. AFR 23-10, Tactical Air Command, 29 Jun 1953, K4343, USAFHRC.

45. AFR 23-10, Tactical Air Command, 13 May 1955, K4350, USAFHRC.


49. Harold Talbot, Memorandum to the Secretary of Defense, 12 Feb 1953, Box 58, Twining Papers; Weyland, Lecture, 25 Feb 1955; Reid, "Tactical Air in Limited War,"


54. NSC 162/2(2); NSC 5440/1; NSC 5422/2; NSC 5501; NSC 5602/1; Dulles, "Policy for Security and Peace," p 358. See also discussion of nuclear weapons in general war and theater operations in chapters 2 and 4 above.

55. NSC 5501; NSC 5440/1; NSC 5602/1; NSC 147, 2 Apr 1953, (FRUS, 1952-1954, vol VII, pp 844-46) identified the existing restrictions on nuclear weapons use in Korea, noting that Presidential release was expected in the face of pending "military disaster." For Eisenhower's comments on the desirability of nuclear use, see Memorandum of Discussion at the 131st meeting of the NSC, 11 Feb 1953, FRUS, 1952-1954, vol VII, p 770; Memorandum of Discussion at the 143rd Meeting of the NSC, 6 May 1953, FRUS, 1952-1954, Vol VII, p 977; Memorandum of Discussion at the 144th Meeting of the NSC, 13 May 1953, FRUS, 1952-1954, vol VII, p 1014; Memorandum of Discussion at Special Meeting of the NSC, 31 Mar 1956, FRUS, 1952-1954, vol VII, p 272.

56. Memorandum of Discussion at the 204th Meeting of the NSC, 24 Jun 1954, FRUS, 1952-1954, vol II, pp 696-98; Memorandum of Discussion at the 209th Meeting of the NSC, 5 Aug 1954, FRUS, 1952-1954, vol II, p 707; Memorandum of Conference with the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 10 Feb 1956, WHO/OSS, Subject Series, DOD Subseries, Box 4, DDEL; Memorandum of Conference with the President, 14 May 1956, Ann Whitman File, DDE Diary Series, Box 15, DDEL; Memorandum for Record, 10 Feb 1956, WHO/OSS, Subject Series, DOD subseries, Box 4, DDEL; Memorandum of Discussion with the President, 24 May 1956, Ann Whitman File, DDE Diary Series, Box 15, DDEL. The term "Blockbuster" was originally applied to 4,000 pound general purpose bombs, but was also generically used to describe the 10,000 pound "Tall Boy" and the 22,000 pound "Grand Slam" bombs which were developed during World War II. See H.H. Arnold, Global Mission, (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1949), p 222; "Blockbuster" and "Grand Slam," Simon and Schuster Encyclopedia of World War II, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1978), pp 69 & 246; U.S. Army Air Corps, Impact, vol III, no 6, June 1945, pp 46-7 (Reprint by the Air Force Historical Foundation, New York: James Parton and Co., 1980).

57. Memorandum of Conference with the President, 24 May 1956, Ann Whitman File, DDE Diary, Box 15, DDEL; Memorandum of Conference of the Joint Chiefs of Staff with the President, 10 Feb 1956, WHO/OSS, Subject Series, DOD Subseries, Box 4, DDEL; U.S. House, Committee on


64. Weyland, Oral History; Weyland, Lecture, 25 Feb 1955; Weyland, Lecture, 18 Feb 1959; COMDR TAC, msg to COS, USAF, 27 Jun 1956, K4353, USAFHR; COMDR TAC, msg to COMDR 9th AF, COMDR 18th AF, COMDR, 19th AF, 14 SEP 1956, K4355, USAFHR.
CHAPTER VII
HONING THE SWORD:
SHAPING THE TACTICAL AIR FORCES UNDER THE "NEW LOOK"

Within the "New Look" defense program, the Air Force developed a standing tactical air force structure, operational concepts, and equipment procurement programs designed to produce the critical swing force supporting the national military strategy. The tactical air forces were designed to help deter the greatest threat to American survival -- a general war with the Soviet Union -- while also providing the decisive element of the American response to limited wars -- the most likely form of conflict facing the United States in the 1950s. These forces clearly reflected the guidance of the formal national security policies and Air Force doctrine, while remaining sensitive to the constraints imposed by the tight budgets of the Eisenhower administration. The resulting air forces and their employment concepts were built upon steadily improving aircraft designs and the capabilities gained from nuclear weapons and aerial refueling. As summarized by General O.P. Weyland, commander of the Tactical Air Command (TAC), these forces were a critical national security resource because:
tactical air power must be the primary deterrent to local or limited war. Additionally, it must be the full-fledged but more economical element of our offensive air power as a general war deterrent.

The Air Force developed its plans for tactical air power roles across the spectrum of conflict by emphasizing the capabilities of mobility, flexibility, and striking power, and by developing training programs and specialized organizations for planning and command and control of contingency operations. This situation generated some tension within the Air Force and between the armed services over the suitability of these forces for all of the planned missions. Air Force planners conceded some problems due to funding limitations which prevented the fielding of the optimum forces for all potential combat circumstances. But, the service argued that, given the planning constraints, substantial tactical air power in being was the best option for countering the numerous security challenges facing the United States. Although considerable overlap existed between the various security missions, the competing demands of general and limited warfare and the problems associated with preparing for conventional and nuclear operations created some serious difficulties for Air Force planners. The resulting programs, while stressing flexibility, followed the lead of the formal national policies in emphasizing nuclear general war capabilities while tending to view limited war operations as
scaled down theater conflict, with a preference for using nuclear firepower whenever possible.²

The deployment patterns of the tactical air forces during the first term of President Eisenhower reflected the strong general war orientation of the Air Force. From December 1952 to December 1956, the Air Force combat wings assigned to the Far East Air Forces (FEAF) remained relatively stable, with a slight drop projected as several tactical units were scheduled to return to the U.S. in 1957. The overall expansion of the tactical air forces within the 137 wing program was absorbed by the U. S. Air Forces in Europe (USAFE) and the Tactical Air Command (TAC) in the continental United States. USAFE grew from eight tactical wings and one attached strategic wing to fourteen tactical wings, two attached strategic wings, and three tactical missile squadrons. TAC expanded from twelve to seventeen tactical combat wings.³

Although both Europe and the Far East were critical regions in U.S. security planning, the European theater received more emphasis because of its projected role in any general war with the Soviet Union. The USAFE units had critical responsibilities in the strategic air offensive and the defense of Western Europe. Because of this importance, although TAC could augment either theater, much of the command's planning and training was directed towards
reinforcing USAF in a general war. American planners quickly realized that they would not be able to support all of the goals which had been established in Lisbon for the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Therefore, American war plans designated TAC units based in the United States as NATO committed units, and TAC began a rotation of squadrons from designated wings to European bases to enhance readiness and improve training. The expansion of the NATO reinforcement role was a major justification for the expansion of TAC under New Look.

The growing strength of the Tactical Air Command led its leaders to seek more recognition for the tactical air forces and a stronger voice in the Air Force planning process which could help ensure the continued growth of tactical air capabilities in the shadow of the Strategic Air Command (SAC). The justification for a larger TAC was strengthened by the need to both support the training requirements of the overseas tactical commands and allow aircrews and support personnel to rotate between the United States and overseas assignments. Additionally, TAC's growth after the Korean War was partially based on its role as the source the Air Force component of any rapid response to local aggression, particularly in the form of the Composite Air Strike Force. The Composite Air Strike Force was a model of the importance of mobility and flexibility in tactical air
planning. It was primarily described as a limited war capability, but it was also exercised and provided important capabilities as a theater augmentation force for Europe.\textsuperscript{5}

The multiple responsibilities of TAC in supporting general, theater, and limited war operations and the associated need to prepare for both nuclear and conventional operations reflected the major problems facing the Air Force tactical air forces in developing employment concepts, organizations, equipment programs and contingency plans during "New Look" and throughout the rest of the 1950s. Air Force tactical planners emphasized the capability of the tactical air forces to perform diverse missions, while placing the highest priority on the general war requirements of the European theater and nuclear operations.

Evolving Operational Concepts

The requirements of general war operations in the European theater which dominated the development of the Air Force tactical components and employment concepts under the "New Look" were an evolutionary development of the tactical air power concepts which had emerged in the late 1940s and matured during the Korean War. Although the Air Force leadership routinely described the role of tactical air power in the traditional perspective of "supporting the ground forces," the emerging doctrinal emphasis on decisive offensive air operations and the availability of nuclear
weapons in the "era of nuclear plenty" provided the actual foundation for tactical air planning. Spokesmen for TAC, while not rejecting the mission of supporting the Army, warned that emphasis on this area was misleading, as

... support to Army forces, the original concept of tactical airpower, had become but one of many phases of modern tactical operations. However, many people, including some members of the Air Force still believe this is to be its primary function. Such, of course, is not the case.6

The resulting operational concepts directly followed service doctrine guidance on theater warfare, producing specific tactics, basing plans, individual and unit training, and equipment requirements.

The predominant factor guiding the planning for tactical operations was the doctrinal perspective of a two phase war. Regardless of the level of the conflict, the Air Force considered first phase of the war the decisive period, with combat operations revolving around the battle for air superiority, either in the form of the strategic air offensive, or as an intensive counterair campaign. The Air Force believed the success of subsequent military operations was totally dependent on victory in this initial air effort. Because of the decisiveness of this phase, the tactical air forces were built to win the initial battle and then use air power's flexibility to perform the other missions which would lead to final victory.7
The importance of the initial phase of any war demanded that the tactical air forces either be in place at the start of the conflict, or be capable of rapidly deploying to the appropriate theater of operations. This requirement placed a premium on maintaining substantial tactical air forces in being and caused the tactical forces to emphasize readiness in training at levels which were comparable to those practiced by the Strategic Air Command. Tactical units stationed overseas had to be able to act immediately at the start of a war. Units assigned to TAC were tasked with high readiness which would allow their forces to supplement the Air Defense forces at the start of a strategic nuclear exchange, or rapidly deploy to engage in early, decisive operations in Europe or peripheral conflicts. Air Force tactical planners emphasized a highly mobile force structure in equipment procurement, training and contingency plans.\\n
The importance of the initial counterair campaign was amplified by the belief that, especially in a war in Europe, air operations would be predominately nuclear. This increased the importance of the initial strikes as the best, perhaps only, means to counter the enemy nuclear strike capability. This basic planning orientation drove the tactical force structure towards long-ranged nuclear delivery aircraft with the capability to take out the enemy airfields. These aircraft were also capable of striking the
interdiction targets which were the next priority for the tactical forces, and they could also deliver conventional or nuclear weapons in the close air support role if the situation demanded. 9

Following the service doctrine on mission priorities, the Tactical Air Command expected that during the first phase of the war, ninety percent of the available sorties would be flown in the counterair campaign. The remainder of the available sorties during this phase would be split between the other two offensive missions. After the counterair battle was won, the emphasis would shift to deep interdiction targets, using the capabilities and training required in the initial campaign. When the circumstances were such that the ground forces could turn to offensive operations and exploit the impact of air power, TAC planners expected the bulk of the sorties to be flown in more direct support of the army. The force structure and training patterns were predicated on this doctrinally based, and national security policy supported, set of assumptions on the way the next war would be fought. 10

The emphasis on tactical nuclear strikes expanded rapidly as more nuclear weapons became available and tactical aircraft assumed targets from the strategic air offensive during the early and mid 1950s. SAC aircraft provided the initial theater nuclear delivery capability, as
portions of the strategic air offensive target list directly supported the theater commander. The emerging tactical delivery capability led to coordination efforts between SAC and the theater nuclear forces in 1952, with actual integration of operations plans beginning in 1953. During this integration, SAC aircraft were assigned fixed theater targets while Air Force and Navy tactical aircraft were assigned more fleeting mobile targets. As the tactical nuclear weapons and delivery aircraft became more plentiful and the number of strategic targets in the Soviet Union increased, the theater air forces assumed responsibility for most of the fixed targets within their range. By the mid-1950s, the theater target list identified airfields as the highest priority targets, reflecting theater and doctrinal concerns, but also the claim by tactical planners that fifty per cent of the counterair targets behind the Iron Curtain were within range of forward deployed tactical air forces, making the initial tactical air strikes crucial to the success of the strategic air offensive as well as theater operations. The tactical nuclear target lists also identified other important fixed targets, including command and control facilities; petroleum, oil and lubricants (POL) production and storage facilities; logistics centers; and choke points on the enemy lines of communication (LOCs).11
As more nuclear weapons became available and planning for nuclear operations evolved, the tactical air forces gained responsibility for increasing numbers of mobile targets. Some of these targets were part of the counterair campaign, such as Soviet aircraft operations from auxiliary airfields or mobile missile systems which were expected to shortly enter the Soviet inventory. Other targets fell into the traditional interdiction and close air support categories as defined by Air Force doctrine. These targets represented the deployed Soviet theater forces and included combat unit concentrations, assembly points, field command posts, mobile maintenance and logistical organizations, and forward supply depots. As directed by service doctrine, Air Force tactical planners preferred to strike these targets as deep as possible.

During the implementation of the "New Look," the tactical air community also developed plans to use nuclear weapons in the close air support role. However, the Air Force viewed nuclear close air support sorties less as a traditional application of aerial delivered firepower and more as an extension of the decisive role of air power, with friendly ground forces setting up the enemy ground forces for decisive air strikes. The Air Force tactical forces continued to plan for conventional close air support for the Army, but the increasing emphasis on the nuclear battlefield
naturally produced a strong impulse towards nuclear close air operations. The Air Force leadership envisioned tactical nuclear air strikes in close proximity to ground forces as the best means to prevent the massing of Soviet ground forces, making defensive or offensive operations easier for friendly ground units. Although the Army accepted the growing reality of a nuclear battlefield and wanted nuclear fire support, Army leaders rejected the Air Force concepts which would have subordinated Army operational planning to the needs and constraints of air power.13

Senior Army officers voiced numerous concerns over the Air Force concepts of theater warfare and the Air Force perspective on nuclear close air support. Much of the Army criticism of the Air Force doctrine and the resulting operational concepts were an extension of the long standing feud between the two services on mission priorities and the command and control of close air support sorties. As with conventional missions, Army leaders were concerned with the availability of air assets for close air support operations given the Air Force commitment to the deep battle. Additionally, the Army worried about the responsiveness and the ability of Air Force aircraft to strike targets close to friendly troops with nuclear weapons, especially at night and in bad weather. The power of the new nuclear weapons
made these issues very important to Army commanders.14

The Army attacks on the Air Force in the area of close air support sorties shifted in focus as the nuclear battlefield became a stronger factor in the planning process. Under "New Look" planning, the Army used its claims of tactical air power inadequacies less as a demand for more support from the Air Force but more to enhance the justification for Army nuclear delivery programs. The Army lobbying effort argued for the 280mm Atomic Cannon and a rapidly developing family of short and long ranged missiles, which would provide responsive, accurate nuclear fire support, day or night and in all weather conditions. These systems would reduce the need for extensive air delivered support. Although seeming to undercut part of the rationale for large tactical air forces, the Air Force primarily resisted the growing Army interest in deep targets and long range delivery systems while accepting the short ranged capability as a logical extension of Army firepower capabilities. Nonetheless, the Air Force also retained the ability to use its tactical air power flexibly to effectively conduct nuclear close air support missions and General Nathan F. Twining promised "immediate nuclear support to ground commanders" when needed.15

The use of air delivered nuclear weapons in close air support sorties and the move towards striking mobile targets
placed considerable demands on the entire tactical air force structure. Implicit to the expanding nuclear missions was the availability of adequate numbers of weapons and aircraft, and also well trained aircrews. An additional major requirement was an improved command and control structure to ensure that the targets could be struck before they moved or dispersed. Also, effective strikes on mobile targets required an extensive reconnaissance and intelligence system which could provide timely, accurate information on enemy forces. This intelligence system was crucial for all nuclear targeting, for assessing the damage caused by strikes, and for determining the need for retargeting.\textsuperscript{16}

The ability to detect and rapidly strike critical targets on the battlefield was a major concern for tactical planners. The proposed solutions often pushed the state of the art, such as the 1955 proposal by the Tactical Air Command to use satellites to help solve the target detection problem. A more simple operational solution was the use of armed reconnaissance sorties, launching a pilot with nuclear payload and allowing him to go hunting for targets. This solution was an extrapolation of normal conventional tactics used in a fluid combat environment. Although a possible course of action, this option created considerable difficulties in the sensitive area of nuclear release procedures.\textsuperscript{17}
Effective strikes on mobile targets, whether armed reconnaissance or quick reaction, placed heavy demands on the nuclear weapons control procedures and the release process during combat operations. Weapons availability and delegated release authority were needed to ensure the strikes could arrive on the target before it moved or dispersed. The nuclear weapons assembly and release procedures in place during the Korean war could not support the type of flexible operations expected in any future conflict. Engaging mobile targets or even conducting rapid strikes on enemy airfields at the start of the war, required forward deployed nuclear weapons, improved weapons assembly capabilities and early release to the delivery system.

During the Korean War, the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), while recognizing the value in terms of political control of longer assembly times, initiated changes which would reduce the existing nuclear reaction time from the twenty-two hours needed to prepare weapons which had previously been deployed forward.18

The target for the military enhancement was a four hour reaction time which planners believed would allow quick strikes against most high value targets. Although President Eisenhower was adamant that nuclear weapons release authority had to remain in Washington under his control and not shift to the local commanders, he also recognized the
military necessity of an early release and rapid delivery capability. In the perspective of the President and senior military planners, the improved nuclear reaction time was crucial to the success of the initial counterair campaign. The shorter reaction times ensured that at the start of a war in Europe the tactical air forces would be able to deliver simultaneous strikes on all "communist forward air bases in Europe."19

The perspective that an offensive air campaign conducted with nuclear weapons was the key to victory carried with it the assumption that the adversary would attempt a similar attack on U.S. and allied air assets at the start of a war. Concern over this possibility was amplified by the pattern of air offensives conducted by the Soviet Air Force prior to large ground operations during the latter portion of World War II. The response time available to Western Air Forces subjected to such an attack was also a concern due to the Soviet doctrinal emphasis on surprise attacks. The time factor and the basic problems of aircraft and air base survival was compounded by the assessment beginning in 1951 that the Soviet military was developing a ballistic missile capability which could put the NATO air bases at considerable risk of a rapid preemptive attack. The tactical planners under the "New Look," therefore, were very concerned over the need to maintain a viable, survivable
force structure in the face of these challenges.  

**Survival Concerns And Air Operations**

The Air Force sought a variety of solutions to the perceived Soviet offensive counterair threat to tactical air power's ability to support the national security policy and implement the service doctrine. The concerns over survivability and sustainability were especially strong in planning for operations in Europe. The first logical step involved force structure decisions related to defense and reaction times. These efforts were complemented by developments in base planning, operational concepts and tactics.

The first concern for Air Force planners was providing adequate warning which could allow successful intercepts by air defense aircraft, reducing the impact of a preemptive attack on the valuable offensive component of the tactical force structure. Although the foundation of Air Force planning was long-range offensive operations, the concern over preemption and the need for some defenses to degrade enemy operations until air superiority was seized, led to the integration of interceptor units into both USAFE and FEAF. Additionally, the tactical air forces continued to field considerable numbers of day fighters which could assist the interceptors in the defensive role, provide air cover for the ground forces, escort the deep strike missions, and, if needed, fly offensive nuclear strike missions as well. The
interceptor and day fighter capabilities were only considered a means to reduce the impact of enemy air attacks, as Air Force doctrine stressed that the only way to truly gain air superiority and prevent such attacks was by destroying the enemy bases of operations.\textsuperscript{21}

Until air superiority was achieved, the Air Force planners realized that efforts were needed to complement the air defense measures and reduce the effect of enemy air strikes on the ability of the tactical air forces to wage the offensive battle. The planning studies which examined the survivability issues under the "New Look" guidance developed proposals for shifts in basing plans, air base modifications, and changes in tactical concepts. The first step which had been initiated during the Korean War was to shift U.S. air bases as deep as possible into the rear area. In NATO, USAFE bases in the late 1940s had been in the American zone of occupation, in Bavaria, very close to the border and therefore vulnerable to surprise air attacks and potential rapid capture by ground offensive. As the NATO force structure evolved, the USAFE bases were shifted as deep as possible to bases in the western part of the Federal Republic of Germany, France, and Great Britain. This redeployment kept the bulk of U.S. aircraft and support facilities outside the range of most Soviet tactical aircraft. But, given the longer ranges of U.S. aircraft and
the rapidly evolving aerial refueling capability, USAFE fighters, fighter-bombers, and tactical bombers could still hit crucial Soviet targets as part of the strategic air offensive and the theater war plan.\textsuperscript{22}

Air Force leaders could not assume that this early range advantage would remain for long. Nonetheless, the use of deeper bases offered numerous continuing advantages even if the Soviets developed the capability to strike deep. The deeper base locations ensured a substantial warning time of any Soviet air attacks, increasing the possibility of successful air defense operations. In addition, if the air units were on a high level of alert, they could vacate the base before the attack arrived and perhaps contribute to the defensive action. In spite of these benefits, Air Force planners had to contend with the prospects that U.S. air bases in a theater of conflict would be hit at the start of the war and would continue to be attacked until air superiority was achieved. The emerging ballistics missile threat amplified the concerns over air base survivability. In 1956, this concern was so intense that TAC planners worried about

\begin{quote}
The big question -- can we survive the first anticipated Soviet attack . . . and save an effective percentage of our strike aircraft?\textsuperscript{23}
\end{quote}

These concerns over force survivability were compounded by the expectation in the national strategy and service
planning of nuclear combat. Surprise nuclear strikes could inflict much more devastating damage on a normal tactical air base than conventional air attacks. Additionally, modern jet aircraft and their increasingly high technology systems required longer hard runways and much more support than had been the case with older tactical aircraft. Those tactical air force resources that survived the initial strikes would have to operate in a contaminated environment while generating the response strike and all subsequent air operations. The Air Force leadership recognized that this would require solid training, good planning, and extremely high combat readiness. The plans which emerged to counter this challenge emphasized hardening of base facilities and various dispersal concepts. In many cases the high cost of the proposals made good ideas impractical, although the planning effort under "New Look" laid the foundation for many subsequent tactical developments, especially for NATO operations.24

The tactical air planners considered the hardening of airfields the best option for survivability and for sustaining combat operations in a contaminated environment. This solution was particularly favored for the European theater where the national security policy supported an extended American presence and the Soviet Air Force offered a serious threat to allied tactical air and ground
capabilities. The survival of forward deployed tactical air forces in Europe was critical to accomplishing the national security objectives through the strategic air offensive and combat operations in Europe. In the most advanced form, the survival concerns produced hardening plans which called for all "critical resources" on a base to be located in well protected underground facilities. This included aircraft hangers, maintenance and logistical facilities, living and working areas for the support personnel, and appropriate command and control capabilities. The total hardening of a base was an extremely expensive project, which, given the budgetary environment of the 1950s, had little chance for implementation. Although the Air Force did build some hardened facilities, the dispersal and combat readiness options which were linked to good early warning were the core of Air Force plans in the 1950s.25

At the most basic level, dispersal concepts directed that tactical units avoid concentrating valuable air resources in one location. A limited dispersal plan for permanent bases in the theater of conflict involved the construction of sprawling air bases which would be well camouflaged and on which aircraft could be hidden in widely scattered, possibly hardened locations. This situation would require multiple, accurate nuclear strikes on each airfield to destroy all of the combat capability of each
base. On a broader scale, operational plans and doctrine required that tactical wings deploy to several airfields whenever possible during combat operations. This would further reduce the number of aircraft which could be destroyed by a single nuclear strike. A force structure corollary to this concept was the requirement that tactical aircraft had to be able to use the more common shorter runways as well as temporary or hastily prepared airfields. The ability to operate from a wide range of airfields also was crucial to the tactical air power capability of deploying worldwide without being restricted to large, well maintained airfields.26

The ultimate dispersal plans envisioned removing the tactical aircraft from the long runways and extensive support facilities which made air bases easily identifiable targets. The most desirable option was the development of tactical aircraft capable of vertical take off and landing (VTOL). Planners also called for the development of short take off and landing (STOL) aircraft which could operate from smaller or damaged airfields. A true VTOL capability when combined with a high readiness rate, good command and control, and a dispersed support system away from main operating bases would make a preemptive strike or aggressive offensive counterair operations after the start of the war very difficult.27
The technical capabilities of the 1950s, however, held limited prospects for the early development of a VTOL aircraft that could match the performance of existing frontline aircraft. Therefore, the Air Force developed the capability to launch fighters and fighter-bombers from a short ramp with rocket boosters. This zero length take off procedure could be used in conjunction with hardened shelters for survivability and high readiness near the main bases. In this concept, the aircraft on the protected launch rail would be loaded with fuel and weapons, and the aircrew, ground crew, and support equipment would stay in the shelter during their alert tour of duty. Some TAC plans suggested that up to one-third of a tactical wing could be placed on this type of instant response alert. Alternatively, the Air Force demonstrated the ability to launch aircraft from the back of trucks. This allowed valuable aircraft to deploy to dispersed locations during high threat periods. Although these solutions partially solved the initial survivability problem, the tactical aircraft still had to return and land at an airfield with a long runway. The zero length take off concept, while demonstrated as a possible option did not grow into a practical solution, except when used as part of early tactical missile launch systems.\textsuperscript{28}

The problems and cost associated with many of the dispersal concepts pushed Air Force planners towards heavy
reliance on high combat readiness to enhance survival prospects at the start of a war. High combat readiness could reduce the probability of a successful preemption and allow a substantial offensive strike on the enemy air bases very early in the war. The emphasis on high readiness for forward deployed tactical units eventually produced plans which placed small numbers of aircraft and crews on an alert status which would allow them to launch against crucial enemy targets in a matter of minutes, provided that nuclear release had been given. Additionally, the rest of the theater air forces had to be able to rapidly reach the same level of readiness during times of increased tension. The tactical forces located in the United States were not exempt from these readiness levels. They had to be prepared to rapidly reinforce the deployed theater air forces to replace the losses of the initial exchanges, and sustain the momentum of the initial offensive air operations. The rapid response capability was also a key element in TAC's role in limited war scenarios.29

The efforts to enhance survivability and the sustainability of the air forces in theater operations directly supported service doctrine and the guidance in the national security policy. The emphasis on the initial battle for air superiority and the importance of the offensive counterair campaign to the strategic air offensive and the theater
operations placed considerable pressures on aircrews and tactical organizations. The tactical forces under the "New Look" pursued a readiness level on par with that maintained by SAC and the strategic alert forces. This reflected the belief that proper training and preparations would be crucial to gaining victory in the initial phase of any war. Although flexibility remained a key concept for the tactical forces, tactical training increasingly had to focus on the demanding operations needed to lay the foundation for eventual victory in the initial battle for air superiority.

Training In Support Of Doctrine And Strategy

The emphasis on nuclear weapons and the counterair offensive dominated tactical air force training activities under the "New Look." This emphasis was complemented by the emphasis on high combat readiness, which amplified the importance of the training and preparedness of the tactical air forces. Although the tactical air forces were expected to perform a wide variety of missions, the key to success in a general war, conducting nuclear strikes on air bases and other critical targets deep in the enemy's rear, dominated peacetime training. Additionally, by assuming that nuclear weapons would be used in interdiction and close air support missions and in limited war scenarios, the Air Force justified a strong nuclear orientation in its individual and unit training programs.30
The emphasis on nuclear strikes on deep targets, and the growing plans for strikes on mobile field targets, created considerable demands on Air Force tactical aircrews. The pilots of the single seat aircraft which dominated the tactical fleet had to conduct accurate navigation and deliveries to ensure target destruction. Although nuclear weapons were popularly viewed as area weapons of mass destruction, tactical planning stressed the need for accurate delivery of smaller yield weapons against specific military targets. In addition, if friendly forces were nearby, accuracy was even more important to ensure that no fratricide resulted from the attack. Accurate deliveries of small yield weapons could also help reduce the collateral damage to civilians which exercises such as CARTE BLANCHE and SAGE BRUSH indicated would occur during tactical nuclear operations. The aircrew task was further complicated by the need to penetrate enemy air defenses during ingress and weapons delivery. The deep penetration mission was also made more challenging by the shift towards low altitude penetration tactics which enhanced survivability and reduced the prospects for successful intercepts, but made the navigation problem and target identification even more difficult.31

The delivery of nuclear weapons also required more training because of the need for special delivery tactics
which would allow the aircraft to escape the effects of the blast. The tactical crews trained in dive toss, high altitude dive toss, high altitude level, and low altitude bomb system (LABS) delivery techniques. Although early on-board computers assisted in the bomb release, the tactics still required considerable practice to attain and retain proficiency. The navigation, target identification, and weapons delivery tactics all imposed considerable training demands on the tactical aircrews. 32

These training requirements in the nuclear mission caused some within the tactical air force structure to recommend that the nuclear assigned units concentrate solely on the nuclear mission. The senior Air Force leadership resisted this suggestion, based on the need to retain a dual role capability with conventional weapons. Nonetheless, the nuclear role dominated unit and individual training at the expense of conventional capabilities. The conventional option was also constrained by funding cuts which limited training sorties, prevented the formation of adequate weapons stockpiles, and restricted the development of new conventional weapons. The competing conventional and nuclear training requirements caused some tactical leaders to advocate a cut in training with the Army, as this training tended to emphasize conventional close air support sorties, reducing the sorties available for nuclear oriented
training. Air Force planners feared that the joint training was "hampering efforts of [nuclear tasked units] to maintain an operational ready status for their primary mission."\textsuperscript{33}

The same tensions which affected individual training patterns was also present in the large joint exercises conducted after the end of the Korean War. Although these exercises were improvements over the exercises conducted before and during the Korean conflict, they remained constrained by the desire of the individual services to establish doctrinal precedence in areas of command and control, mutual support, tactics, and by extrapolation national strategy and force structure priorities. For Army and Air Force joint training, the exercises were frequently more separate training operations which were overlaid in time within an artificial scenario than true free play sessions which could produce lessons applicable to future combat operations.\textsuperscript{34}

The central issues which had dominated the interservice relationships after World War II and through the Korean War continued to affect the exercise planning and execution under the "New Look." The senior Army leadership continued to challenge the validity of the Air Force commitment to centralized control of air power. In particular, the Army continued to lobby for dedicated close air support aircraft for lower level ground commanders. The exercises also
highlighted the strong Army concerns over the inadequacy of intertheater airlift to rapidly deploy ground forces and intratheater airlift which provided tactical mobility and logistical responsiveness to deployed forces. The tactical airlift issue became a particularly heated debate as the Army developed a helicopter force which could provide aeromedical evacuation and battlefield logistics support as well as developing reconnaissance, security and raiding roles.  

The air play in most of the exercises generally was not influenced by the Army concerns, other than to provide a chance to practice the Air Force version of procedures. In some cases the Army criticism was undercut by the failure of the Army to maintain its portion of the air control system, a situation similar to the one that existed at the start of the Korean War. The Army routinely complained about this situation during preparation and execution of the exercises, but the Air Force insisted on following its doctrine.

The doctrinal imperative for the air side of the joint exercises resulted in air play being performed in a series of phases. The first phase was dominated by the decisive battle for air superiority. As the counterair battle was being decided, the emphasis shifted to the interdiction campaign with a slight increase in close air support sorties. As the ground forces began to perform their offensive operations under the cover of air superiority, the
concentration of sorties shifted to close air support. In some scenarios an initial defensive counterair effort was required because of the effect of an enemy surprise attack. 37

The air play in the more free play type of exercise also tended to follow the doctrinally derived phases of operations. If anything, the importance of the initial battle for air superiority was even stronger. In the largest joint exercise after World War II, SAGE BRUSH, the focus of the air activity and the subsequent lessons learned was directly on the preeminence of the offensive counterair campaign in successfully fighting a modern war. The counterair battle was so dominating that to achieve an adequate amount of training in close air support procedures, each side stood down from all air operations for a period of time so the other side could devote its air resources to practicing with the ground forces. 38

Although this situation was not acceptable to the Army, the point of most conflict during SAGE BRUSH was the issue of the control of nuclear weapons. The debate between the two services was so intense that the exercise was almost cancelled, and the service chiefs and secretaries had to intervene to establish the ground rules. A key compromise was the specific agreement that the exercise play would not establish precedence for future joint doctrine. In spite of
this agreement, many military officers felt the exercise, as well as other exercises, such as CARTE BLANCHE in Europe, were crucial to the ability of the services to implement the nuclear oriented strategy under the "New Look." In the case of SAGE BRUSH, the procedures tended to allow each service to control and use its own doctrine within a broad framework. The primary area of cooperation was in warning the other service of pending nuclear detonate to avoid killing friendly forces. Nuclear close air support sorties were requested by the ground commander through the joint control system, but the bulk of nuclear fire support for the Army was provided by Army weapons. This reflected an Army trend towards minimizing the need for close air support sorties by providing its own nuclear firepower, especially with guided missiles.39

The Air Force leadership viewed SAGE BRUSH and the extensive nuclear play as a clear demonstration of the validity of the service doctrine. Air Force assessments of the exercise play emphasized the increasing importance of offensive counterair operations when nuclear weapons were used. These assessments reinforced the doctrinal concept that only offensive strikes could produce air superiority and that as long as the enemy had a single field which he could use to conduct nuclear operations, air superiority was not secure. This situation required good reconnaissance
forces which could locate all of the enemy's nuclear resources. The Air Force also concluded that all-weather and night-capable aircraft were an absolute necessity so that the enemy could not use natural sanctuaries to reconstitute an effective nuclear strike capability. The experience of SAGE BRUSH reinforced and amplified the established Air Force doctrine on theater operations, and provided more stimulus for the nuclear oriented force structure which the service was developing.40

In addition to the field exercises which validated service theater concepts, the Air Force also conducted deployment exercises which were important to the perceived mobility roles of tactical air forces in support of national security policy and their roles in deterring and fighting major and minor wars. The deployment exercises showed the capability and the intent of the Air Force to deploy tactical air power to reinforce Europe or the Far East, or to respond to trouble spots on the periphery. The Air Force six month rotation program for Europe not only provided a way to increase the NATO air commitment without permanently stationing more units in the theater, but each unit rotation was an exercise in theater reinforcement.41

The Air Force also built on and expanded the mobility tests which had begun during the Korean War and conducted public relations-oriented events to demonstrate the ability
to fly combat units to distant areas. An example of such an activity was a nonstop flight of a fighter formation from Japan to a flying display over Bangkok and on to a landing in the Philippines. The Tactical Air Command also routinely deployed units between bases in the United States to develop the mobility concepts and to train units for rapid movement to trouble spots. The focus of much of this training was the Composite Air Strike Force.42

The most significant deployment exercise related to the Composite Air Strike Force under the "New Look" was MOBILE BAKER, conducted in conjunction with NATO exercise WHIPSAW in 1956. MOBILE BAKER was a deployment of a Composite Air Strike Force composed of sixteen fighters, sixteen fighter-bombers, four reconnaissance aircraft and four tactical bombers, all supported by dedicated aerial tankers. The deployment also included all of the support assets needed to conduct combat operations and a command and control element drawn from the Nineteenth Air Force which had been formed expressly to support Composite Air Strike Force deployments. The planned destination of MOBILE BAKER was Adana, Turkey, where the Composite Air Strike Force could demonstrate the American ability to rapidly support the southern flank of NATO. This operation would also symbolize the ability to react to other peripheral aggression.43
The exercise was shifted, however, into a reinforcement of the central European region. Political events, including unrest in Hungary and Middle East tensions surrounding the Suez Canal, caused the Air Force to divert the Composite Air Strike Force from Turkey to bases in Germany and Northern Italy. Although the shift created some problems in exercise employment because the aircrews were not certified nor prepared for operations in the region, the deployment phase of the exercise was viewed as a success and a validation of the Composite Air Strike Force concept. The shift also emphasized the flexibility of the tactical air component and the inherent ability to contribute in the central European big war scenario as well as on the flanks or the periphery.44

The ease of the shift from region to region and scenario to scenario was in part due to the emphasis on nuclear operations in all of the roles. The NATO region by definition would involve nuclear operations. On the periphery, although President Eisenhower stressed the need to be prepared for conventional operations, the directions from Washington, the general attitudes of the senior leadership and, especially, the lack of funding for conventional capabilities all pointed towards the use of nuclear weapons in limited war situations. This situation also made the training syllabus for tactical units easier to manage, while
enhancing the strike force concept which become a central element of Air Force planning for the tactical air forces during the "New Look."45

The Strike Force Concept

The Composite Air Strike Force concept was an integral part of the Tactical Air Command mission as stated by the Air Force. As demonstrated by exercise MOBILE BAKER, the Composite Air Strike Force allowed flexible tactical air power to be used in a wide variety of situations. The concept of mobility oriented tactical air power eventually evolved into a TAC proposed program which would make tactical air power the parallel to the Strategic Air Command and, in some minds, the most important striking force in the American arsenal. Although flexibility was at the core of the evolving tactical concept, the force structure and its planning was dominated by nuclear operations, as was reflected in the training patterns.46

The nuclear imperative which was found in national security policy and the President's force structure was not totally accepted within the tactical air force community. General Weyland, while following policy and building a nuclear oriented TAC, also fought hard to retain a conventional capability. He clearly understood and expressed the concern that the country's adversaries would likely seek to create situations in which the United States would not be
able to use its primary military strength -- nuclear weapons delivered by the Air Force. Weyland strongly resisted efforts by other senior Air Force leaders to do away with a substantial conventional stockpile. Although an advocate of maintaining a conventional capabilities for contingencies, Weyland and the Tactical Air Command planners also recognized that the budgetary process and the available resources would drive the United States towards a nuclear response to aggression. Weyland observed that the small size of the Composite Air Strike Force almost demanded that it use nuclear weapons if it was to be effective as a deterrent and as a decisive force in combat.47

The Composite Air Strike Force (several were eventually to be available) would be drawn from designated units across the continental United States. Although exercises such as MOBILE BAKER took months to plan and prepare, the objective of the Tactical Air Command was to develop the capability to pull these forces together and have them enroute to the trouble spot within hours of orders from the national leadership. One planning document indicated a target of a four hour reaction time for Composite Air Strike Force designated assets. The remainder of the designated tactical units could be sent as a follow on force in a matter of days. General Weyland and other tactical air leaders felt that such a capability would demonstrate American resolve
and by their early presence in a region could deter aggression.48

The Composite Air Strike Force concept gave the Tactical Air Command an important combat function beyond training and providing forces to other commands. The capabilities which supported the Composite Air Strike Force gave birth to another plan which placed TAC into a role which paralleled SAC's control over strategic air assets. In 1956 General Weyland presented a program titled "TAC Concept" to the Air Staff. This proposal called for all Air Force tactical air resources to be subordinated to the Tactical Air Command. This centralized control would allow a more efficient development of tactical air power to respond to the global demands imposed by the national security policy.49

The "TAC Concept" emphasized the mobility capability which already existed in both the theater reinforcement and the rapid response roles. The concept also meshed well with President Eisenhower's desire to base the bulk of American power in the United States. Tactical Air Command planners proposed that all tactical air forces be based in the United States. The theater forces would be provided by the rotation of wings into theater bases for six month long tours once every two years. This plan would keep the bulk of the forces, the support structure, and the families of
the servicemen in the U.S. In General Weyland's view, keeping the families at home would reduce the cost of overseas bases and would allow the aircrews to concentrate on training and high readiness rates while on the deployment without being distracted by their families. Between rotations, the tactical forces would train and retain the reinforcement and Composite Air Strike Force commitments which were already established.50

Although the proposal offered some efficiencies in a time of tight budgets and seemed to be in line with the national security requirements, other than in the existing NATO rotation program, the concept was not accepted. The political implications, especially in terms of the perceived commitment to the theater commands prevented the "TAC Concept" from gaining support outside TAC. The problems of shifting command arrangements made senior leaders uncomfortable with the concept. A concern which was somewhat justified by conflicts which developed between the command element of the Composite Air Strike Force and the gaining command, which should have had clear authority over TAC units deployed into its theater. Nonetheless, the emphasis on mobility remained the focus of Tactical Air Command planning for the rest of the 1950s.51

The mobility which was needed for Composite Air Strike Force operations and for theater reinforcement and the other
requirements of the Composite Air Strike Force tended to support the technological imperatives which were driving the tactical air procurement programs. The equipment programs supported the service doctrine and the national security policy, although tactical leaders often felt that the budget constraints were precluding the optimum capabilities and force structure. The nuclear orientation, the long ranges needed to deploy and to strike deep targets, and the ability to operate from minimal bases for deployment or dispersal were the dominant characteristics of the tactical programs.

Tactical Equipment Programs

The aircraft procurement programs which were developed under the "New Look" were largely a continuation of the programs initiated during the Korean War expansion. These programs dominated the Air Force tactical structure well into the 1960s, as no new tactical aircraft programs were initiated during President Eisenhower's second term. The programs reflected the Air Forces interpretation of the national strategy and the doctrinal view of how the next war would be fought. The key combat aircraft types were the fighter or day fighter, the fighter-bomber, and the tactical bomber, with the tactical forces also procuring transportation aircraft, aerial tankers, and reconnaissance aircraft to support their operations.
The supporting aircraft were crucial to the success of the tactical forces in accomplishing their missions. The transportation and tanker aircraft were the keys to the global mobility which was the basis of tactical air power's value to the national strategy. The tankers were also an important readiness factor. Refueling allowed tactical aircraft to stage from deeper bases for security, takeoff with heavier payloads or with shorter runways, and strike deeper targets. These were all important elements in tactical planning, especially for offensive operations in the first phase of the war and for conducting missions as part of the strategic air offensive.\(^{52}\)

Although tankers were very important to the ability of tactical air power to support national policy, the budget constraints prevented the tactical forces from buying a substantial modern fleet. Under the "New Look" program, the primary tactical tanker was the KB-29, a modified bomber which had inadequate speed to safely and efficiently refuel the modern jet fighters in the tactical inventory. The Tactical Air Command and the overseas tactical commands lobbied for better aerial refueling capabilities, but the response was in the form of another modified bomber, the KB-50. Although somewhat improved under the "New Look," the aerial refueling capability, critical to mobility and combat concepts, was generally inadequate to support substantial
tactical operations. Regardless of the availability of tanker support, under the "New Look," all of the tactical combat aircraft were modified or designed with an aerial refueling capability.53

The tactical procurement programs for combat aircraft fared somewhat better than the support programs, although not developing as rapidly as tactical leaders wished. The fighter programs which grew rapidly during the Korean War matured under the "New Look," although rapid technological advances made many of the systems obsolescent very rapidly. The fighters were the swing forces in the tactical inventory. They were designed to provide defensive support prior to the success of the offensive counterair campaign, to protect the frontline forces and the offensive aircraft and to deliver nuclear weapons as a secondary role when needed. The nuclear capability was driven by the Air Force commitment to have all tactical aircraft available for nuclear delivery if necessary. This position also reflected a desire to avoid having aircraft which were restricted to a single narrow role, as this could seriously reduce the flexibility of the tactical force structure.54

During the mid-1950s, the tactical fighter force was composed of Korean War vintage F-84s and F-86s, with a growing percentage of new F-100s. These systems would be joined by a limited number of F-104s which were designed as
a small, cheap, high speed aircraft which could be based at forward bases in large numbers and quickly intercept penetrating enemy aircraft. The emphasis in the design of the newer aircraft was speed which would allow them to reach the attacking forces before they could deliver their nuclear weapons.55

The mainstay of the tactical force structure under the "New Look" remained the fighter-bomber. These aircraft would carry the offensive to the deep enemy targets, especially his airfields. The nuclear counterair battle and the strategic air offensive provided the rationale for the emphasis on this aircraft type. Some Tactical Air Command planners believed that in terms of economy and survivability, the tactical fighter-bombers should be the instrument of choice for all but the deepest strategic targets. The development of fighter-bombers was slowed by the budget situation and the competition for resources between tactical and strategic programs within the Air Force, but the development of a strong fighter-bomber capability was the number one priority of the tactical planners.56

During "New Look" the bulk of the fighter-bombers were Korean War or earlier vintage platforms which were often stretched to the very limits of their capabilities to perform the expected roles, especially the nuclear strike missions. Various models of the F-84 and the F-86 made up
the strike force. These aircraft were joined by a modified version of the F-100, which was not the optimum solution, but given budget constraints and the need for a new aircraft provided at least an interim solution.\textsuperscript{57}

The tactical community was pinning its hopes for the future on the F-105. Although Air Force leaders routinely told Congress that the F-105 was designed as a support aircraft for the Army, this aircraft more than any other reflected the services view of the nature of air warfare. The F-105 was designed as a high speed, low altitude, nuclear weapons delivery aircraft from the very beginning. It was intended to go after deep targets and gain the initial advantage in the offensive counterair campaign. In the interest of flexibility, the F-105 maintained a conventional delivery capability and a limited ability to perform air-to-air combat as well.\textsuperscript{58}

The F-105 program became particularly critical to the future of the tactical air forces when the tactical bomber program foundered on budgetary problems. Exercises such as SAGE BRUSH demonstrated the importance of all weather and night delivery capabilities in the nuclear counterair offensive. For the Air Force tactical air forces in the mid-1950s, the only source of such a capability was the tactical bomber. The tactical bomber force after Korea was comprised of obsolescent B-45s, the original tactical
nuclear bomber, and the inadequate B-57 and B-66. The B-57 was an older British design and the B-66 was a modification of a U.S. Navy bomber, the A-3D. Although the B-66 replaced the B-45 as the deep theater nuclear strike aircraft, tactical leaders considered neither aircraft an adequate platform for future air wars. Although tactical leaders lobbied aggressively for a new high performance bomber, the budgetary situation resulted in negative reactions from the Air Staff.

Many alternatives were suggested for the next generation of tactical bombers, including the modification of existing medium bombers from the strategic bomber fleet. However, the practicality and cost of the proposals prevented any easy solution to the problem. In the case of the B-47 and B-58 strategic bombers, these aircraft could deliver nuclear weapons in the all weather and night conditions which were required. However, these strategic aircraft required more extensive support and couldn't operate from the limited types of fields which were dictated by the dispersal and mobility aspects of tactical doctrine.

Faced with little possibility of a new tactical bomber, and a fight over the money available for the F-105 fighter-bomber program, the tactical leadership placed its emphasis on the F-105. This one aircraft was expected to assume the traditional role of the fighter-bomber, and with its long
range and improved delivery system also replace the tactical bombers. Although not the preferred solution, it was the best that could be achieved given the situation.61

The F-105 would not, however, have to field the entire responsibility for the counterair and interdiction campaigns. The tactical air forces were developing and beginning to deploy a new type of weapon, initially referred to as pilotless bombers. The tactical guided missiles of the early and mid-1950s were cruise missiles, which were treated much as aircraft in planning and operations. The Air Force viewed the Matador and Mace series of missiles as a complement for the fighter-bombers, and especially as a night and all weather option against counterair and interdiction targets.62

The tactical missiles were initially attached to tactical fighter-bomber wings when they were integrated into the deployed forces. Eventually, as more missiles were deployed in Europe, they were concentrated in a separate missile wing which was counted as a "flying" wing when budget constraints imposed a tactical force reduction in the late 1950s. Although the Air Force tactical missiles were originally designed to carry either nuclear or conventional warheads, the inaccuracies of the early guidance systems and the nuclear orientation of the national strategy resulted in the Air Force dropping conventional option. These missiles
provided a useful additional capability for the theater air commander.  

The tactical guided missiles represented the general war emphasis and the nuclear orientation which dominated national and Air Force planning and which drove the tactical air forces towards their nuclear oriented force structure. The tactical missiles also represented the competition from the strategic missile programs which was beginning to intensify the budget battles in 1956 and which would take more and more of the scarce budget dollars under the "New Look" of the second Eisenhower administration. In the face of this set of circumstances, the tactical leadership struggled to maintain a conventional capability which could be used in any limited war in which nuclear weapons might be impractical or politically unacceptable. Although the conventional option was recognized, and the tactical forces were marketed as the best response to limited wars, the deployment patterns, tactical concepts, training and equipment programs all had a distinctively nuclear orientation. The result was a force structure which was most capable of fighting with nuclear weapons while its leaders conceded that the most likely type of war might well be a small conventional conflict. The explanation used to defend this apparent disconnect was that air power's inherent flexibility would allow tactical air forces to
effectively respond to a multitude of situations. This view allowed General Thomas D. White, Vice Chief of Staff and subsequently Chief of Staff of the Air Force to claim that

Our tactical air forces, with enormous fire-power, global mobility, operational invulnerability and versatility, have become a deterrent to aggression and a decisive force in war. As such, our Tactical Air Command assumes a place alongside our Strategic Air Command as a potent force for peace.
NOTES FOR CHAPTER VII


7. U.S. House, Committee on Appropriations, Hearings on


10. For service doctrine on theater conflict, see discussion in chapter V above. See also, Senate, Airpower Hearings, pp 168-9 & 472-3; TAC History, July-December 1955, vol VII, p 53; Weyland, Oral History, 19 Nov 1974, K239.0512-813, USAFHR; Weyland, Lecture, 1959; Bishop, Oral History; Disosway, Oral History.


Stone Age?" pp 30-33; Thomas K. Finletter, Memorandum to General Vandenberg, 7 March 1951, Box 84, Papers of Hoyt S. Vandenberg, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.


23. Concerns over the dangers of a Soviet Surprise attack, including the dangers of guided missiles were presenteve during the Truman administration. See for example: North Atlantic Military Committee, Standing Group, Memorandum to the Chief of Staff, USAF, 6 November 1951, Reel 6, JCS/NATO. See also: HQ TAC, "Soviet Ballistic Missiles Threat to Tactical Air Forces in Europe," nd(1956), K4354, USAFHRC; Underhill, NATO - Air Age or Stone Age," pp 30-33


25. Chief Warrent Officer A. R. Swingle to Director of Operations, HQ USAF, 24 Aug 1956, K4354, USAFHRC; HQ TAC, "Soviet Ballistic Missiles Threat to Tactical Air Forces in


56. Weyland, Lecture, 1955; Weyland, Lecture, 1959; TAC History, January-June 1955, vol I, p 84; Tactical Air Command Operational Plan for the F-86H Aircraft as a Day Fighter, nd(1953), K4345, USAFHR; TAC History, January-June
1953, vol IV, p 81, K4344, USAFHRG; World Wide Fighter
Conference, 1954, Report of Seminar Group VI, Role of
Fighter Aircraft in Future Tactical Air Operations," 1954,
vol IV, p 81, K4344, USAFHRG; General O. P. Weyland to
General Nathan F. Twining, 15 September 1954, K4353, USAFHRG;
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57. TAC History, July-December 1955, vol XI, pp 20-1;
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January-June 1956, vol 1, chapter 6; Senate, Airpower
Hearings, p 486.

TAC History, July-December 1956, vol I, pp 120-23; Davis,
Oral History; General Weyland, Message to General White, 13
July 1956, K4353, USAFHRG.

59. TAC History, July-December 1955, vol XI, pp 33-40;
TAC History, January-June 1956, vol I, pp 53-4; TAC History,
July-December 1956, vol I, p 98; CMDR, TAC, message to COFS,
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60. TAC History, July-December 1955, vol XI, pp 38-40;
TAC History, July-December 1956, vol I, pp 123-25; General
White, message to General Norstad, Redline message, 1
February 1953, Box 102, Twining Papers; General Weyland,
Message to General White, 13 July 1956, K4353, USAFHRG;
CMDR, TAC, message to COFS, USAF, 13 Jul 1956, K5353,
USAFHRG; TAC History, January-June 1956, pp 31-33.

61. Weyland, Oral History; Weyland, Lecture, 1959;
CMDR, TAC, message to COFS, USAF, 13 Jul 1956, K5353,
USAFHRG; Senate, Airpower Hearings, pp 491-2.

62. Weyland, Lecture, 1955; CMDR, TAC, message to COFS,
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21-56, K4355, USAFHRG; HQ TAC, "Operational Plan for the
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63. TAC History, July-December 1956, vol I, pp 115-16;

64. ANAF Journal, 7 May 1955, p 1063.
CONCLUSION

The United States Air Force tactical air forces which had been virtually nonexistent in early 1950 were a strong and credible combat force by 1956, and during the second term of President Dwight D. Eisenhower the trends which had shaped the rebirth of Air Force tactical air power continued and intensified to produce a unique force structure and combat capability. The budgetary restrictions which had plagued the development of the United States Air Force tactical air power from 1945 onward continued to be a dominant factor, sustaining the ongoing competition for funding between the services and within the Air Force. The competition for resources was intensified by the emergence of new weapons systems, such as ballistic missiles, which placed steadily increasing demands on the limited national resources. Although the tactical air forces which emerged from the budget constrained decision process were criticized for numerous shortcomings in capability and doctrine during their development and during the decades after 1960, they accurately reflected the requirements established by the national security policies and the guidance provided by the basic Air Force doctrine.
The direction and constraints provided by the national government and Air Staff leadership sustained the nuclear oriented tactical air force structure which had emerged under the "New Look" program. These tactical forces were also doctrinally driven towards employment concepts based on the belief that air power was the decisive element in deterring or winning both general and limited war. The emphasis on the nuclear role for both types of war was also reinforced by the need to gain the most cost effective combat power possible in the face of ever tightening budget pressures. While firmly embracing the nuclear delivery missions as a justification for continued support in the nuclear oriented Eisenhower defense program, the tactical air community also argued that the flexibility of tactical air power, which included both nuclear strike and limited conventional capabilities, justified even higher funding levels rather than the yearly reductions. In spite of the lobbying efforts of the tactical leadership within the Air Force, the budgetary constraints and force structure tradeoffs made by the senior United States Air Force leadership resulted in a major decline in tactical air forces during the latter portion of Eisenhower Presidency.¹

The budgetary constraints forced an overall drop in the Air Force structure from a high of 137 wings in 1957 to 96 wings in 1960. The tactical air forces in 1957 had reached
a post-World War II peak of forty-one combat wings, including six tactical bomber wings, eighteen fighter-bomber wings, ten day fighter wings, one tactical missile wing, and six fighter-interceptor wings assigned to overseas commands. Three years later, the tactical structure dropped almost in half to twenty-three wings, including two tactical bomber wings, sixteen fighter wings, one tactical missile wing, and four fighter-interceptor wings in overseas commands. These force reductions generated serious concerns for tactical planners and provided additional ammunition for the critics of the limited and narrowly focused capability of tactical air power. The Air Force tactical leadership, while attempting to sustain existing combat power and ensure flexible capabilities within larger tactical air forces in being, also found itself driven even more strongly into the use of the nuclear strike capability to offset the limited numbers of aircraft available to perform the "decisive" combat missions.  

The reduction in capability due to the declining force size was compounded by severe restrictions on the research and development and acquisition budgets for tactical air power. As a result, between 1956 and 1964 the United States Air Force did not conduct a single first flight of a new production series aircraft. This compares to the twenty-three separate fighter type aircraft developed between the
end of World War II and 1956. Additionally, during the entire two term Eisenhower Presidency, the only positive production decision on a tactical aircraft was the authorization to build the F-105. The only other tactical aircraft to grow from the requirements of the late 1950s was the TFX or F-111, which, while filtered by Department of Defense managerial efforts under Secretary of Defense Robert W. McNamara, was originally a response to a stated tactical requirement for a short takeoff and landing, low level, high speed, nuclear strike aircraft. Both the F-105 and the F-111 represented the dominance of the offensive nuclear strike role in tactical air planning and force development.3

Although internal and external criticism of the Air Force tactical program and its nuclear orientation gained strength during the late 1950s, the nuclear emphasis was a direct implementation of the formal national security policies. The nuclear focus of the original "New Look" program, which was subjected to increasingly strong criticism, was sustained during the second Eisenhower administration. The official national security policy statements declared

It is the policy of the United States to place main, but not sole reliance on nuclear weapons; to integrate nuclear weapons with other weapons in the arsenal of the United States; to consider them as conventional weapons from a military point of view; and to use them when required to achieve national objectives.4
As in President Eisenhower's first term, the United States Air Force leadership viewed this commitment to nuclear weapons as complete support for the dominant role of air power in a general war with the Soviet Union and recognition of the preeminent role of strategic air power in the national military strategy. This service perspective gave the Strategic Air Command a commanding position in the internal battle for Air Force budget priority. The tactical aviation leadership was so concerned over the problem of resource allocation that in 1959 General O.P. Weyland, the commander of the Tactical Air Command warned the Air Force Chief of Staff that

There is no cheap or easy solution to the tactical air force modernization problem. I am convinced, however, the time has long passed when the tactical forces can be considered a revenue source for the support of our strategic and air defense programs.

A major aspect of the Air Force tactical community's effort to strengthen its position in the budget process was to emphasize and reinforce the critical missions which had been developed for tactical air power during the early 1950s. A crucial mission which helped justify a major portion of the tactical air forces was the increased responsibilities in the general war plans. The tactical air forces which were forward deployed during the late 1950s were accepted by the senior Air Force leadership as the first wave of any nuclear exchange with the Soviet Union.
This represented the maturation of the concepts developed by tactical planners in the late 1940s and early 1950s for a tactical contribution to the strategic air offensive. In the late 1950s, the budget restraints forced even the strategic planners to accept the contribution of the tactical air forces to ensure an adequate delivery capability against an expanding Soviet target list. In addition to the strategic contribution, Air Force planners also believed the theater air forces would provide the decisive element of the theater campaign, especially in Europe, through deep nuclear strikes. These deep nuclear delivery missions provided the most widely accepted justification for the tactical air forces and clearly dominated the organization, training and equipping of these forces. Nonetheless, the strategic and theater commitments alone were not sufficient to sustain the size of the standing tactical air forces in the face of the budget pressure.6

The tactical air power leaders therefore intensified their emphasis on the limited war mission as a justification for maintaining larger tactical air forces in being. This effort was also part of the Air Force reaction to the steadily intensifying criticism of the Eisenhower administration's ability to deal with local aggression. The formal Air Force position in the late 1950s normally presented the tactical component as the flexible swing force
which could contribute to general war and, when needed, fight against local aggression. This concept of dual war capability directly mirrored the official policies of President Eisenhower on specialized limited war forces. The cost effectiveness of this argument was also of considerable value in the interservice force structure planning battles of the period. The senior Air Force leadership used the dual responsibilities concept to justify a limited tactical force structure which was based primarily on specific general war tasking. This view was reinforced at the Air Staff level by the high research and development and acquisition costs of new strategic systems, such as the intercontinental ballistic missile. The tactical leaders countered with the logic that rather than allowing fewer tactical forces, the limited war mission actually required additional forces so that local aggression could be deterred and countered without drawing down the tactical and strategic assets which were dedicated to the general war missions. The reasoning behind the tactical community's position went unheeded and the size of the forces available for both general and limited war was reduced throughout the last three years of the Eisenhower administration.7

The small size, limited fiscal support and the commitment of the available tactical resources to both general and limited war contingencies, drove the tactical air forces to
develop equipment, plans and training patterns which would be applicable to both types of war. Given the dominance of general war concerns in the national planning process, the existing nuclear orientation of the Air Force grew even stronger. Additionally, the restricted forces available for limited war reactions combined with the doctrinal emphasis on quickly achieving decisive results to make nuclear operations the only viable option for many intervention scenarios. Critics attacked the concept of nuclear responses to the threat of local aggression as an effort by the Air Force to simply scale down strategic bombing to a smaller area of operations. However, the service's plans were directly in line with the guidance of the national security policy.\(^8\)

The Eisenhower administration and the formal national security policy statements recognized the problems associated with local aggression, and called for highly mobile "ready forces" which could be rapidly deployed when needed. However, in the interest of cost effectiveness, the policy statements continued to stress the need to draw these forces from the general war assets. The Air Force concept cleanly meshed with this national perspective. Additionally, the Air Force nuclear orientation was supported by national security policy directives that

military planning for U.S. forces to oppose local aggression will be based on a flexible and selec-
tive capability including nuclear capability for use in cases authorized by the President. Additionally, the national security policy stated that

The U.S. nuclear stockpile should include in varying sizes and yields, standard weapons, and clean weapons as feasible, and selective capabilities for general or limited war as may be required to achieve national objectives.

The emphasis on nuclear weapons in the national security policy was widely, but not totally, accepted within the United States Air Force, as it supported the role of decisive air operations in deterring and fighting general and limited wars. The nuclear orientation was so strong that the use of small yield nuclear weapons against local aggression was openly discussed in public and in the professional press. In 1960, an extensive, straightforward presentation of operational concepts for using nuclear weapons in limited wars was presented in an article in the Air University Quarterly Review. The article included a description of the effects of nuclear explosions on various types of terrain in Southeast Asia, a possible target of the rapid reaction capability. In keeping with national security policy, the nuclear operations in limited war situations were planned to allow the indigenous forces to win with little or no involvement by U.S. surface forces. This concept represented the fulfillment of the original operational charter of the Composite Air Strike Force which was developed under "New Look."
Although critics within and outside the government challenged the nuclear orientation of the Air Force rapid reaction capability, the service believed the Composite Air Strike Force concept was validated by deployments conducted during the late 1950s. Some of the deployments were training exercises which were also designed for public relations or "show the flag" purposes. However, the rapid response role of the Composite Air Strike Force was also tested by two almost simultaneous reactions to regional crises in 1958. The first Strike Force was dispatched to Turkey as part of the American intervention in Lebanon in July. Approximately a month later, the second Strike Force was sent to Taiwan as part of the response to the Taiwan Straits crisis. In neither case did the Air Force units engage in combat, but the Air Force interpreted the two rapid reactions as an example of the deterrent impact of rapidly deployed tactical air power.12

Many within the Air Force did not draw the same conclusion. In particular, some planners believed the deployed forces were too small to have been effective if the President had not authorized the use of nuclear weapons. Additionally, some observers believed that the deployed units were ill trained and generally unprepared for conventional operations had they been required. These problems were not directly addressed in the final two years of the
Eisenhower administration, but they rapidly became a major concern as United States Air Force responded to the changing demands of the national security policies of the 1960s.13

The election of President John F. Kennedy brought with it the new strategy of "flexible response," which imposed greater demands on tactical air power and established a stronger rationale for larger, more flexible tactical air forces. Additionally, as the military commitment to the conflict in Southeast Asia increased, the Air Force struggled to meet the heavy demands of conventional combat operations by exploiting the flexibility of air assets which had been primarily fielded to fight in an expected air-atomic conflict. The deep nuclear strike role and many of the operational concepts which were developed in the 1950s have remained an important element of the deterrence posture of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization to the present. However, the alliance strategy and United States national security policies of the 1970s and 1980s have slowly pushed the nuclear strike mission into the background, and the possibilities of conventional deterrence and a conventional first phase have begun to dominate the planning for United States Air Force tactical air power.14

In the decades since 1960, the tactical air forces and the leadership of the tactical components of the United States Air Force under President Eisenhower have often been
criticized for the capabilities and limitations of the force structure, equipment, and operational concepts of the era. The strongest of these criticisms have focused on the nuclear emphasis of the tactical air forces and the very limited ability to conduct conventional operations in limited war scenarios. These charges are generally summed up in the comment that the tactical components were striving to become a "mini-SAC."\textsuperscript{15}

Although criticism of the United States Air Force tactical aviation capabilities are valid in the context of perfect hindsight and the requirements of the 1960s, they are not completely valid in light of the circumstances of the decade of the 1950s. The tactical air forces which emerged from the lows of the post-World War II demobilization and the budgetary constraints of President Truman's administration were shaped by a complicated set of factors. As with any military force, the tactical air forces of the 1950s cannot be understood in isolation from the environment in which it was created.

In both the Truman and Eisenhower administrations, the budgetary restrictions which had almost eliminated tactical air power were a major concern for all military planners. Within this situation, the Air Force tactical community was continually fighting to justify sizable tactical air forces in being within the available national resources. This
inevitably brought tactical air advocates into competition with the other services and the other components of the Air Force. The tactical air leaders, therefore, sought leverage through direct linkage to the national security policy and the basic doctrine of the United States Air Force.

From the late 1940s onward, the pursuit of a tie to both doctrine and the national security requirements led the tactical community to seek a role in the strategic air offensive. This operation was critical to national survival and, therefore, a central component of the national strategy, as well as the first priority of Air Force doctrine. Although this led tactical planners into the realm of the Strategic Air Command, as the 1950s progressed the senior Air Force leadership increasingly accepted the tactical air power contribution to this crucial mission. The blend between theater and strategic missions was eased considerably because of the overlap between the two missions by the tactical air assets assigned to the defense of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

The United States Air Force theater air forces deployed in Europe were guided by air doctrine which stressed strikes on deep targets in the pursuit of decisive effects on any campaign. The plans for tactical air operations in the European central region incorporated deep nuclear strikes and a complementary and synergistic relationship
between these deep tactical operations and the strategic air offensive. The result of the combination of strategic and theater missions was an intense commitment to the use of nuclear weapons by tactical air power. This commitment was strongly supported by the national security policies.

The other major security problem, deterring and fighting local aggression, generated the greatest difficulty for military planners during the Eisenhower years. The limited war mission also provided the potentially strongest justification for large standing tactical air forces during the 1950s. Although the Air Force tactical leadership sought additional forces for this mission, recognized the strong possibility of conventional limited wars, and struggled to maintain even a limited conventional capability, the tactical force structure was pushed towards a predominantly nuclear posture by the national security policies, the decisions of the senior Air Force leadership, and the budgetary pressure. In this situation, the nuclear orientation, while not the optimum response, was the end result of the implementation of the national political guidance and the efforts to match limited resources to perceived threats.

The United States Air Force tactical air forces of 1960 were, therefore, a product of the competition for limited budgetary resources, the direction of national security
policy, and the guidance of Air Force basic doctrine. When challenged by the new national security commitments after 1960, the Air Force tactical leadership was able to draw on the restricted conventional capability it had fought to retain and the flexibility which was stressed in Air Force doctrine to provide the foundation for the broader air power responsibilities. In spite of the subsequent shortcomings, and while seeming to overemphasize nuclear operations, the United States Air Force tactical air forces which were developed during the rebuilding program in the 1950s accurately reflected the environment which spawned them, and were capable of performing the missions assigned to them by the national strategy.
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