

Dear Reader,

The operational level of war serves as the crucial link between strategic objectives and tactical actions. Joint Publication (JP) 3-0, *Joint Campaigns and Operations*, defines operational art as “the cognitive approach by commanders and staffs—supported by their skill, knowledge, experience, creativity, and judgment—to develop strategies, campaigns, and operations to organize and employ military forces by integrating ends, ways, means, and risks.”¹ This definition forms the core of this journal and its predecessor titles. Our goal for each issue is to examine and debate the ends, ways, and means to best organize, train, and employ today’s air and space forces.

This issue begins with the Elements of Airpower Forum. Stephen Blackstone leads the four-ship formation with his article, “ACE Gets Light and Lean: Joint Concepts to Make ACE Effective in the Western Pacific.” Blackstone argues for integrating agile combat employment (ACE) with Marine and Army concepts, leveraging joint capabilities for greater effectiveness in contested environments. “Macro-Management in the Air Component: Learning to Love the Mission Type Order” by Robin Kimmelman and Tom Cantrell, presents a fresh perspective on integrating mission type orders (MTO) into sustained operations. The authors propose that MTOs can complement the air tasking order (ATO) rather than serve merely as a contingency for lost communications, arguing that this requires procedural, experiential, and cultural changes to enhance large-scale air warfare.

In the forum’s third article, “An Argument for Agile Autonomy in Airpower,” David Heintz critically examines the Air Force’s traditional technology development process and advocates for agile solutions for hardware, autonomy, and machine learning in aircraft design and training to accelerate fielding, enhance adaptability, and meet evolving defense needs. Chance Smith completes this forum with “The Continued Evolution of Air Force Targeting,” in which he highlights the challenges of Air Force targeting readiness by analyzing six air campaigns since Desert Storm. Smith proposes proactive strategies, sustained expertise, and investments vital to improving targeting proficiency and ensuring success in future conflicts.

Benjamin Johnis, Robert Bettinger, and James W. Dean launch the Space Operations Forum with their article, “The Space Rescue Professional: Operationalizing Guardians for the Future.” They propose a dedicated space rescue professional career field within the Space Force, leveraging Air Force rescue expertise and a partnership with the National Aeronautics and Space Administration to safeguard astronauts and strengthen American leadership in space. John Cserep follows with “Electrifying delta-v for the Space Force,” in which he envisions a future where propellantless space propulsion transforms Space Force capabilities, enhancing resilience and countering threats in space operations.

In the Education Forum, Mark Clodfelter offers a compelling argument for a balanced curriculum at the US Air Force Academy. In “Critiquing the US Air Force Academy’s

1. Joint Publication 3-0, *Joint Campaigns and Operations* (Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 18 June 2022), xiii.

From the Editor

Core: Does It Satisfy the Need?,” he proposes a core curriculum that blends military skills with humanities education, which he believes will best prepare officers to understand the nature of war and become effective warrior-leaders in future conflicts.

Rounding out the issue, we introduce the Heritage Forum, where authors examine the rich history of the US Air Force to draw timeless wisdom applicable to today’s operational challenges. In this vein, Shane Reilly’s “Diplomats in Fortresses: The 1938 ‘Good Will Flight’ to Argentina” recounts how one mission showcased American soft power, validated bomber capabilities, and advanced training. This historical flight of YB-17 bombers reveals lessons for developing Airmen leadership, necessary to ensure the future effectiveness of the Department of the Air Force.

I sincerely hope you enjoy this issue of *Air & Space Operations Review*.

~ The Editor

Disclaimer and Copyright

The views and opinions in *Air & Space Operations Review* (ASOR) are those of the authors and are not officially sanctioned by any agency or department of the US government. This document and trademark(s) contained herein are protected by law and provided for noncommercial use only. Any reproduction is subject to the Copyright Act of 1976 and applicable treaties of the United States. The authors retain all rights granted under 17 U.S.C. §106. Any reproduction requires author permission and a standard source credit line. Contact the ASOR editor for assistance: asor@au.af.edu.