# WHY AND HOW OF AIR DOMINANCE

#### A.V. VAIDYA

It is easier and more effective to destroy the enemy's aerial power by destroying his nests and eggs on the ground than to hunt his flying birds in the air. And every time we ignore this principle, we commit an error.

#### — General Guilio Douhet 1921

War is generally defined as a last step towards achievement of the country's political aims. The manner in which a war starts and the way it is conducted depends on many issues. Today, wars are fought not solely by the armed forces but also by all citizens united in a joint effort which touches every phase of national and private life. Wars could be peaceful in nature, popularly referred to as cold wars or they could involve a high level of violence, termed as shooting wars. They could be fought at strategic level or operational level or tactical level. They could be direct or indirect, termed as asymmetric wars. No matter what form a war takes, whether it is cold or hot, direct or indirect, no matter at what level it is fought, it has been noted that air power plays a very vital role in determining its outcome. No military action today, however limited or localised in nature, can be conducted without regard to the effects of

<sup>\*</sup> Air Marshal **A. V. Vaidya**, VM (Retd) is the former Deputy Chief of Integrated Defence Staff of the Chiefs of Staff Committee.

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possible air operations. In fact, air power has played a very crucial and a very decisive role in almost all the wars fought post World War II.

World War II crystallised certain philosophies and doctrines regarding the usage of air power and certain very important conclusions were arrived at. Principles were evolved for planning and

conducting joint operations among the army, navy and air force but the most important single conclusive lesson was that "no country can win a war in the face of hostile air power; no defence can sustain itself against an enemy who controls the air." This lesson of trying to establish a certain amount of air superiority before commencing any important operation on land or on sea has proved itself beyond doubt time and again in the various post-World War II conflicts.

Any air force has two primary functions to perform – one defensive and the other offensive. To perform these functions and to ensure the necessary impact of air power on the enemy, a well balanced air force has to resort to various types of air operations. These various air operations can be divided broadly into strategic and tactical and also offensive or defensive. Strategic operations by definition imply those which have a long-term effect and are directed against present and potential enemies, while tactical operations are those which have an almost immediate effect on the outcome of the war and are directed towards the enemy in a particular theatre of operations.

Ideally, an air force should first ensure that the enemy is unable to launch his aerial weapons against own targets. This could be achieved by destruction of enemy air assets at source through offensive action and if this has not been fully possible, then the air force should be able to deal with those weapons which have been launched by the enemy against own targets through properly executed defensive operations.

Right from the time the aircraft was used as a weapon platform, it has always been the endeavour to deny the enemy the use of his aircraft. All actions and all operations that are conducted to achieve this aim are clubbed together under the heading of counter-air operations. This is a very simple and a very general definition of counter-air operations. It implies action against everything of the enemy that goes into ensuring that his aircraft take to the air effectively. It would include raids on his aircraft industry, the aircraft themselves, fuel dumps, ammo dumps, technical and servicing facilities, a raid even on the briefing Air superiority is a state measurable in terms of degree of freedom that own forces can be said to enjoy against the enemy's air power.

room where pilots have gathered, etc. All such raids which effectively reduce the enemy's capacity to launch his air elements against own targets fall under the category of counter-air operations.

Counter-air operations thus aim to ensure that the enemy is denied the use of his aircraft so that one can use one's aircraft freely as and when and where one desires and this, in other words, is called attaining air superiority. Air superiority is a state measurable in terms of degree of freedom that own forces can be said to enjoy against the enemy's air power. When this degree of freedom is 100 percent, one would call it air supremacy which would mean total absence of enemy air or total absence of enemy's interference from the third dimension. This kind of air supremacy was possible in the good old days when the size of the air forces was not too large and when the assets were kept in the open. The element of surprise, if executed effectively like, for instance, in the Arab-Israeli War, could guarantee a high degree of air superiority bordering almost on air supremacy. Even today, if two sides with great disparity are locked in a conflict, as was the case in the Gulf War, then such a state can be achieved, but it would be more as an exception. In today's context, it is widely accepted that air supremacy would not be possible, particularly in conflicts where parity or near parity exists. This is so because, after the Seventies, most air power assets have been given hardened protection and a very lethal air defence umbrella as a result of which even a discreet preemptive attack will not cause total destruction of enemy air assets.

Because air supremacy is not possible, military strategists all over the world have begun to accept a lower degree of air superiority which they Air superiority, no matter how temporary, or how limited over the area on which attacks are to be carried out, is still of decisive importance. refer to under various names like "limited air superiority", "air dominance", "command of the air", "favourable air situation", etc. All these terms by and large mean the same but vary only in degree. The definition of favourable air situation as applicable today is, "That degree of dominance in the air battle of one air force over another, which permits the conduct of operations by the former and its related land, sea and air forces, at a given

time and place without prohibitive interference by opposing forces." It must be remembered that to win any war, an air force has to fight to satisfy the cardinal principle of achieving air superiority to whatever degree possible, and the higher the degree achieved, the faster will be the victory. Air superiority, no matter how temporary, or how limited over the area on which attacks are to be carried out, is still of decisive importance.

In this context, the statement made by Gen Giulio Douhet in 1921 is of great relevance. He said, "Air superiority means to be in a position to wield offensive power so great it defies human imagination. It means to be able to cut an enemy's army and navy off from their bases of operation and nullify their chances of winning the war. It means complete protection of one's own country, the efficient operation of one's army and navy and peace of mind to work and live in safety. In short, it means to be in a position to win. To be defeated in the air, on the other hand, is finally to be defeated and to be at the mercy of the enemy, compelled to accept whatever terms he sees fit to dictate. This is the meaning of Command of the Air."

Sir Winston Churchill also summed up the effects of air superiority very comprehensively. He said, "Once air superiority has been achieved and real mastery of the air obtained, all sorts of enterprises which normally look impossible, would become easy. All kinds of airplanes, which it is not possible to use on the fighting front would come into play. Considerable parties of soldiers could be conveyed by air to the neighbourhood of bridges or other important points, and having overwhelmed the local guard, could, from the ground, effect a regular and permanent demolition. The destruction of particular important factories would also be achieved by carefully organised expeditions of this kind. All his camps, depots, etc could be made the object of constant organised machine gun attacks from low flying squadrons. But the indispensable preliminary to all this is to defeat the air forces of the enemy."

He further said, "The primary objective of our air forces is plainly apparent namely, the air bases of the enemy and the consequent destruction of his air fighting forces. All other objectives, however tempting, however necessary it may be to make provision for attacking some of them, must be regarded as subordinate to this primary purpose. Any effort, any action or any resources diverted from the aim of obtaining air superiority makes conquering the command of the air that much less probable and it makes defeat in case of war that much more probable."

Whenever the question of air superiority comes up for discussion, particularly so in inter-Service forums, there is always a commotion accusing the air force of fighting its own "private war". Despite the fundamentals of air power employment being so simple and so clear, it is surprising to note that so many army officers at all levels wonder as to, "Why do opposing air forces start banging each other as soon as the war starts? Why don't they use these aircraft to provide support to the army in the TBA (tactical battle area)?" They want to know how many sorties the air force will provide for

their support on D-1, D-2, D-3, and so on so that they can make their fire plan accordingly. The basis of all such doubts is their lack of understanding of air operations.

As a result of limited understanding of employment of air power, many army officers all over the world often have a crib against the air force, that despite having so many aircraft, not enough close air support was provided to them in the wars gone by. Some will even swear that they did not see even a single Any effort, any action or any resources diverted from the aim of obtaining air superiority makes conquering the command of the air that much less probable and it makes defeat in case of war that much more probable. aircraft that came over them to assist or enhance their fire power or raise the morale of the troops in their units/formations. With this observation, they quickly conclude that the air force did not do its job. To such officers, one needs to put the question, "Did you see an enemy aircraft over you pounding your unit?" If not, then rest assured that the air force had done a damn good job of ensuring that the enemy air was kept off your back. Many soldiers tend to measure the performance of their air force by the number of own aircraft seen by them in close air support rather than by the absence of enemy aircraft. For employment of air power, the priorities as laid down by most air forces are as follows:

- (a) First priority to gain the necessary degree of air superiority by carrying out counter-air operations.
- (b) Second priority to prevent the movement of hostile troops and supplies into the battle area or within it.
- (c) Third priority to participate in a combined effort of the air and ground forces in the battle to gain objectives on the immediate front of these ground forces.

The four principles in the use of air power set out during World War II by Marshal of the Royal Air Force Viscount Trenchard, and which are valid even today are:

- (a) To obtain mastery of the air and to keep it, which means continuously fighting for it.
- (b) To destroy the enemy's means of production and communications in his own country by using strategic bombing force.
- (c) To maintain the battle without any interference by the enemy, which means to enable the commanders to build up the colossal supplies and reinforcements necessary for the battle and to be able to maintain them without interruption by the enemy.
- (d) To prevent the enemy from being able to maintain the battle, that is, to prevent him from being able to build up adequate supplies for his army.

Yet another grey area which has been the cause of misleading many officers in thinking that counter-air operations are carried out mainly for the benefit of the air force concerns the way the various air operations have been divided in the past. The traditional way of dividing the offensive air operations has been into two categories, namely, counter-air operations (COA) and offensive air support (OAS) operations. Perhaps these divisions are quite outdated when seen in relation to today's The very fact that the counter-air operations have been separately listed from OAS operations, tends to give an impression that counter-air operations are not being performed in support of the land or naval forces.

battle philosophies. The very fact that the counter-air operations have been separately listed from OAS operations, tends to give an impression that counter-air operations are not being performed in support of the land or naval forces. Such a division suggests that counter-air operations are more a problem of the air force and in no way connected in giving support to the sister Services. This, of course, is far from the truth. The entire planning of counterair operations is directly related to the overall land/sea operations to ensure that these operations can be carried out without undue interference from the enemy air force. In fact, it will not at all be wrong to say that, "counter-air is the best method of providing offensive air support," a fact which is not very easily understood by many officers of all the three Services.

To understand why own air force starts banging the enemy's air force at the start of war, let us examine the effect of "enemy air superiority" or "own air inferiority" on our army in the field. Enemy air superiority will imply that enemy air power will have adequate freedom to interfere with all our operations while, at the same time, own air power will be denied this opportunity. Thus, the effect of air inferiority will be two-fold. Firstly, enemy air will be able to hit our army at will and, secondly, our air force will not be able to help our army by hitting the enemy's army. Under circumstances of air inferiority, our soldiers, equipment, command and control systems, etc will be under attack, resulting in heavy losses of all forms in men and material,

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weakened morale, restricted mobility in the field, and so on. In contrast, our air force will be severely restricted in its ability to provide all means of tactical support to our troops whether by reconnaissance, logistics or offensive air support. Many of our aircraft would get shot down or severely damaged by the destructive

element of the enemy's air power and may not reach their tactical targets. Some aircraft, on being engaged by enemy interceptors, may even have to jettison their war load to survive, thereby, rendering the mission abortive. The effect of loss of air inferiority on our armed forces can, thus, be summed up as follows:

- (a) Greater air effort diverted for air defence of own vulnerable areas (VAs) and vulnerable points (VPs) to prevent enemy air interference. This would indirectly result in less strike potential being available for utilisation in support of own army.
- (b) Greater number of enemy raids on own airfields resulting in hold-up/ cancellation of own sorties in direct support of the army.
- (c) Increased harassment from enemy air in the TBA for own land forces.
- (d) Increased own aircraft attrition over the TBA due to enemy interceptors and other air defence (AD) weapons.
- (e) Decreased/curtailed freedom of manoeuvre for own land forces in and near the TBA and also in depth for deployment/redeployment of ground forces for offensive/counter-offensive.
- (f) Increased number of abortive sorties in direct support of the ground forces due to attrition/jettisoning of war load.

Thus, thinking logically, it will be clear that attainment of air superiority is perhaps more important to the army than the air force. Army commanders, when asked to prioritise the requirements they expect the air force to meet, in the past have, and in the future will, almost unanimously, say that the most valuable contribution that the air force can make to the army in joint operations is "to keep enemy air off their back". It is the air power in opposition that is most dreaded. "No air opposition and no air support" is a happier situation to be in rather than be subjected to hostile air power and, at the same time, have one's own air force in support in the TBA. Immunity from enemy air is the first and most basic requirement of the army and this can only be guaranteed by winning the air war first and creating a favourable air situation. A favourable air situation would ensure the following for the three Services:

- (a) Own aircraft will be able to operate with greater freedom.
- (b) Own army will have the required freedom to manoeuvre and concentrate for offensives or when deploying/redeploying against enemy initiatives.
- (c) The navy, whether land-based or seaborne, will have the required freedom despite being within range of enemy air.

To amplify further why an air force starts attacking the enemy air force with a majority of its strike aircraft instead of devoting most of them for support of the army in the TBA, let us consider a simple example. In a conventional war between two more or less equally equipped countries without much asymmetry, four scenarios can develop as far as the air force is concerned:

Scenario 1: Blue's Air Force hammers Red's Army and Red's Air Force also hammers Blue's Army.

Scenario 2: Blue's Air Force hammers Red's Air Force in an attempt to prevent Red's Air Force from hammering Blue's Army, whereas Red's Air Force concentrates on hammering Blue's Army.

Scenario 3 (Reverse of Scenario 2): Blue's Air Force hammers Red's Army while Red's Air Force in an attempt to prevent Blue's Air Force from hammering its army, hammers Blue's Air Force.

Scenario 4: Both air forces hammer each other's air forces in an attempt to prevent the enemy's air force from interfering with own army operations.

In most war-games, when these four scenarios were presented to the top brass from the three Services and when they were asked which scenario they would prefer, a majority opted for Scenario 4. Almost all the top brass of armies the world over are of the opinion that what they dread the most is the interference of the enemy air force during their own army operations. They would feel far happier not seeing enemy aircraft over them obstructing their progress rather than seeing own aircraft supporting them in the ground battle and enemy aircraft interfering with their plans. Many felt that the armies are generally quite well equipped to fight their own battle and that they can do very well without the support of own air force, provided the enemy's air force is kept out of the scene.

Therefore, it can be surmised that the first expectation of the army from the air force is, "Keep those damn enemy strike aircraft out of our sight." Secondly, what the army wants is support, as and when they find themselves in trouble and need help. In other words, the second expectation is, "Give me air support when I ask for it." Considering that these are the two basic expectations of the army in that order, it becomes quite clear that any air force should first engage the enemy air force and try and destroy it or at least try and ground most of his strike aircraft which are capable of interfering and causing damage to own army. The first aim of the air force should, therefore, be to reduce or if possible, totally destroy, the enemy's "strike potential." It would, however, be wrong to commit all the air power in counter-air operations. What ought to be done at the commencement of war is to utilise a majority of strike aircraft for counter-air operations and keep certain portion for providing close air support interdiction and air defence of the TBA should that become necessary.

The following example will highlight the mathematics involved in the utilisation of strike aircraft in counter-air and close air support. It will show how the availability of aircraft for providing close air support rapidly diminishes for the enemy due to own successful counter-air missions. It will also show how the availability of strike aircraft for providing close air support to own army increases consequent to successful and sustained counter-air strikes.

For ease of understanding and percentage calculations, let us consider that both the air forces – Blue and Red—have 100 strike aircraft each. Only strike aircraft have been considered because mainly they have the damage causing capability. Blue Air Force decides to use 80 aircraft for counter-air operations and keep 20 for close air support, if required. As against this, Red Air Force decides to use all 100 aircraft in the TBA to support the army. Consider that Red Air Force gets the opportunity to take the initiative and carry out preemptive raids. The mathematics of strike aircraft availability for carrying out missions as the war progresses would be as given below. Let us team Blue Air Force as "A" and Red Air Force as "B".

	Aircra	aft over Aircraft for		Total Aircraft		
	T	BA	CAO		Available	
Day – 1	"A's"	"B's"	"A's"	"B's"	"A's"	"B's"
	Aircraft	Aircraft	Aircraft	Aircraft	Aircraft	Aircraft
Raid – 1	20	100	80	-	100	100
Raid – 2	19	60	77	-	96	60
Raid – 3	18	40	74	-	92	40

In Raid 1, Red Air Force carries out the initial strike using all 100 aircraft to hit Blue's Army. Blue Air Force immediately retaliates by using 80 aircraft to hit Red's airfields and other related infrastructure with the aim of grounding Red's aircraft. Attrition rate is presumed to be around 3 percent in CAO missions which is the generally accepted figure. This is expected to drop to 2 percent as the enemy air defence capability is progressively degraded. Blue Air Force, thus, loses 3 aircraft in Raid 1, another 3 in Raid 2 and another 3 in Raid 3—a total of 9 aircraft cAO missions. Three aircraft are also considered shot down in TBA. Thus, availability of Blue's aircraft drops from 100 to 88 at the end of Raid 3. However, Blue Air Force has all its airfields available for launching all 88 aircraft for night missions. Red Air Force on their airfields, a fair number of the airfields become unusable and as such, the number of aircraft which can take off in Raid 2 is only 60 and due to more CAO missions by Blue Air Force, availability of aircraft for Red further reduces to 40 in Raid 3.

Day - 2						
Raid 1	20	60	68	-	88	60
Raid 2	19	30	65	-	84	30
Raid 3	18	10	63	-	81	10

Day 2 starts with 88 aircraft available to Blue Air Force and after overnight repairs to some airfields, 60 aircraft available to Red Air Force. Blue persists with CAO missions with 68 aircraft, keeping 20 for TBA missions and keeps hitting Red's serviceable airfields though it incurs loss of 4 aircraft in Raid 1, 3 aircraft in Raid 2, and 2 aircraft in Raid 3, ending up with availability of 79 aircraft for night missions. Red Air Force persists with missions in TBA in support of their army but due to some airfields becoming unusable and some aircraft getting shot down in the TBA, their availability of aircraft reduces from 60 to 30 for Raid 2 and further down to only 10 at the end of Raid 3 for night missions.

Day - 3							
Raid – 1	20	30	59	-	79	30	
Raid – 2	19	10	57	-	76	10	
Raid – 3	19	10	55	-	74	10	

Day 3 starts with 79 aircraft available to Blue Air Force and after overnight repairs to some airfields, 30 aircraft available to Red Air Force despite night counter air missions by Blue Air Force on their airfields to disrupt their repair work. Blue persists with CAO missions with 59 aircraft keeping 20 for TBA missions and keeps hitting Red's airfields and incurs loss of 3 aircraft in Raid 1, 2 aircraft in Raid 2 and 2 more aircraft in Raid 3, ending up with availability of 72 aircraft for night missions. Red Air Force persists with missions in TBA in support of their army but due to more airfields becoming unusable, their availability of aircraft reduces from 30 to 10 for Raid 2 and Raid 3. By now, most of the Red Air Force's airfields are crippled, some beyond repair. Thus, for Blue Air Force, the requirement to carry out heavy counter-air missions reduces and Blue Air Force can now devote more aircraft for support of the army. Thus, around Day 3 and beyond, the situation is reversed. Blue Air Force can now spare more aircraft for support of their army.

Day - 4						
Raid – 1	30	20	42	-	72	20
Raid – 2	40	10	31	-	70	10
Raid – 3	50	10	19	-	68	10

Day 4 starts with 72 aircraft available to Blue Air Force. Blue Air Force persists with night counter-airfield missions to disrupt the repair work. Red Air Force, however, manages to retrieve some airfields and starts the day with availability of 20 aircraft. Despite having lost 25 percent of its aircraft, Blue persists with CAO missions with 42 aircraft, increasing the aircraft for TBA missions from 20 to 30 in Raid 1 and then to 40 in Raid 2 and further to 50 in Raid 3. During the CAO and TBA missions, Blue loses 2 aircraft in Raid 1, 2 in Raid 2 and 1 aircraft in Raid 3, thus, ending up with 67 aircraft for night counter-air missions. Red Air Force has no choice but to persist with TBA missions in support of their army since they have just 20 aircraft available, further reducing to 10 for Raid 2 and Raid 3. Thus, around Day 4 and beyond, the situation is reversed. Blue Air Force is practically grounded.

The above example, adequately tested in computer war-gaming, demonstrates how the availability of aircraft to the enemy reduces by starting with heavy counter-air operations on his airfields and related infrastructure like technical facilities, fuel and weapon dumps, etc. Today, the serviceability of high-tech modern aircraft is greatly dependent on the availability of technical infrastructure; hence, an attack on his technical labs can cripple these modern fleets. The example also demonstrates how despite losing nearly 30 percent of one's aircraft, the situation gets reversed around the third day of the war and how much greater support can be provided to one's own army by carrying out sustained counter-air operations.

### Planning of counterair missions is a complicated task. It involves a great amount of study and attention to major as well as minor details.

Over the years, certain fundamentals of air power employment have been arrived at. The first fundamental principle which has been amply discussed so far is to attack and reduce the enemy's "strike potential". Only the strike aircraft of the enemy have the capability to cause damage to our VAs and VPs and interfere with own army operations. Therefore, the first aim should always

be to reduce the enemy's strike potential to the extent possible. His air defence aircraft can do no harm to one's army and, hence, one need not worry too much about destroying them. However, these air defence aircraft can cause damage to our strike aircraft when they cross the border to attack his airfields and related infrastructure. Hence, they will have to be countered by sending adequate air defence escorts along with the strike packages to take on the enemy interceptors and ensure that own strike packages remain safe.

There are two ways of destroying the enemy's strike potential. First, destroy his aircraft on the ground but since this is extremely difficult due to hardened shelters, aim to deny them take-offs by attacking his runways, but since runway denial is also getting increasingly difficult, target his airfield complex as a system with cluster bombs, napalm, bombs with delayed fuses, precision guided munitions (PGMs), etc so that the entire airfield is put out of action and his aircraft cannot take off. Secondly, use own air defence aircraft effectively controlled by the airborne warning and control system (AWACS) to shoot down his strike aircraft when they cross the border or preferably even before they cross the border and come for strike in own territory.

Many officers may not be aware how meticulously the counter-air missions are planned. In fact, these are the toughest missions out of all various missions that any air force is required to carry out because the attrition rate in these missions is comparatively very high and the fear of getting shot down in the enemy's territory and ending up as RIP (rest in peace) or POW (prisoner of war) is really terrifying. And yet the brave air force pilots undertake these missions just so that the army does not face the enemy air force's opposition.

Planning of counter-air missions is a complicated task. It involves a great amount of study and attention to major as well as minor details. Execution of this entire plan demands a lot of precision, high level of skill, split second decision-making, tremendous amount of situational awareness, flexibility and, above all, lot of guts. Planning starts taking into consideration the enemy's many factors like aircraft deployment, his radar ORBAT (order of battle), his air defence assets, intelligence acquired during peace-time, his air defence tactics pruned out of monitoring of his peace-time air defence exercises, capability of AWACS aircraft, the kind of air defence air-to-air and surface-toair missiles that he has, his vulnerability to electronic warfare, etc. Based on all the available information, a thorough appreciation is carried out and the list of the enemy's air bases, radars, communication centres and other valuable targets which assist in launching of his strike aircraft is worked out. This list is prioritised and based on availability of own strike aircraft, air defence escorts, electronic warfare aircraft, a strike plan is worked out. The modus operandi generally is to disrupt his communication and data networking centres using PGMs, hard and soft kill of his important radars using anti-radiation missiles with the aim of adequately degrading his fighting capability so that probability of damage to own strike aircraft which closely follow these initial strikes is considerably reduced. Yet another tactic which is commonly used is to saturate his air defence weapons by executing simultaneous attacks on all these targets with a large number of aircraft. Such saturation raids need very meticulous planning and split second execution.

The entire raid is generally preceded by air defence aircraft crossing the border first assisted by AWACS aircraft to kill his interceptor force. These missions are called offensive sweeps. Their aim is to engage the enemy interceptors with the intention of shooting them down or diverting them away from own strike packages. This intrusion is closely followed by strike aircraft to attack his command and control centres and related infrastructure with PGMs to degrade his networking and to break his radar chain with anti-radiation missiles and also precision weapons. The aim of these coordinated strikes is to create a safe corridor for entry of the following strike packages and to degrade The primary aim of any air force should be to try and establish a favourable air situation if not total air superiority so that own army and navy can carry out their operations unhindered by enemy air interference. his overall ability to cause damage to our strike aircraft which cross the border shortly thereafter to attack his airfield complexes. These attacks on his airfields need very careful planning. Based on the targets to be attacked, a study is carried out to determine what weapons to use, what probability of success or, in other words, what assurance levels of destruction are required to be achieved in various attacks, what attrition rate to expect for own strike aircraft, etc. This exercise is called force structure planning. A complete attacking force of this nature in a particular

raid, including strike aircraft with different weapons for various targets, air defence aircraft, air defence escorts, electronic warfare escorts to soft kill his surface-to-air-missiles, AWACS aircraft, airborne refuellers, unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) for real-time intelligence and other paraphernalia may amount to hundreds of actors which need to be meticulously stage managed. Those who have closely followed the way the United States Air Force (USAF) carried out their strikes over Iraq during the initial stages of the Gulf War to attain near total air superiority will be able to appreciate the tremendous amount of complexities involved in planning and executing strikes with such a large force.

In summary, it can be stated that at the commencement of any war, the primary aim of any air force should be to try and establish a favourable air situation if not total air superiority so that own army and navy can carry out their operations unhindered by enemy air interference. This is possible only with concentrated attacks aimed at destroying or grounding his strike aircraft, thus, effectively reducing his strike potential. The top brass of armies all over the world are of the opinion that they can do very well without the support of own air force as long as the enemy air force is kept out of sight and this can be made possible only by carrying out sustained counter-air operations.