



Improving Agile Combat Support for the U.S. Air Force

Lessons from Operation Iraqi Freedom

The Air and Space Expeditionary Force (AEF) concept was developed to enable the U.S. Air Force to respond quickly to any national security issue with a tailored force that is immediately deployable and sustainable. With the Air Force Logistics Management Agency, RAND Project AIR FORCE (PAF) has developed an Agile Combat Support (ACS) system to enable AEF goals to be achieved. PAF researchers studied the performance of the ACS system during the first month of Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), drawing on insights gained from earlier analyses during Operation Allied Force (OAF) in Serbia and Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) in Afghanistan, to determine whether ACS concepts should be modified further to help the Air Force meet its AEF goals. Analyses, findings, and recommendations fall into six areas:

- **Combat support execution planning and control (CSC2).** PAF developed a CSC2 system to improve combat support planning processes. The Air Force should ensure that CSC2 successes realized during OIF are passed on to future leaders, perhaps through doctrinal changes. Combat support planners should be trained in how to integrate the detailed analysis and coordination that is possible during deliberate planning with the crisis action planning that is required during combat operations.
- **Development of forward operating locations (FOLs).** Diplomatic clearances and site surveys necessary to establish FOLs took a good deal of time during OIF. When possible, the Air Force should plan early and exploit military-to-military relationships and political agreements that would facilitate access to potential FOLs. Processes for establishing FOLs should be standardized within the Air Force, with the other services, and with U.S. allies.
- **Preparation of forward support locations (FSLs) and continental United States (CONUS) support locations (CSLs).** OEF and OIF confirmed that the current AEF structure of light, lean, and lethal response forces is highly dependent on FSLs and CSLs. The needs of the joint services and U.S. allies should be considered in deciding whether to develop new facilities in different locations or to improve the old ones.
- **Movement of personnel and supplies.** AEF operational goals depend on transporting personnel and supplies reliably and quickly. However, current doctrine divides responsibility for the end-to-end deployment and resupply system among multiple organizations. The Air Force may be delegated responsibility for the Theater Distribution System (TDS) because it may be the predominant user in the early phases of future campaigns. The Air Force should provide its personnel with additional training related to theater distribution and consider ways to improve TDS performance.
- **Technology.** Significant improvements in communications technology during OIF allowed some personnel to operate from inside CONUS, reducing the deployed footprint. The Air Force should explore additional opportunities to use technology in areas such as the maintenance of fuels and related assets to further reduce the deployed footprint.
- **Resourcing.** The assumptions that are used during planning to allocate resources such as war reserve materiel, munitions, and personnel are not in sync with the demands of contingency operations, resulting in shortages. Current resource-planning factors and methods should be realigned with current resource-consumption rates.

These lessons and recommendations can help the Air Force further its AEF goals in future operations. ■

RAND RESEARCH AREAS

CHILD POLICY

CIVIL JUSTICE

EDUCATION

ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT

HEALTH AND HEALTH CARE

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

NATIONAL SECURITY

POPULATION AND AGING

PUBLIC SAFETY

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

SUBSTANCE ABUSE

TERRORISM AND
HOMELAND SECURITY

TRANSPORTATION AND
INFRASTRUCTURE

This product is part of the RAND Corporation research brief series. RAND research briefs present policy-oriented summaries of individual published, peer-reviewed documents or of a body of published work.

Corporate Headquarters

1776 Main Street

P.O. Box 2138

Santa Monica, California

90407-2138

Tel 310.393.0411

Fax 310.393.4818

© RAND 2004

This research brief describes work done for RAND Project AIR FORCE and documented in *Supporting Air and Space Expeditionary Forces: Lessons from Operation Iraqi Freedom* by Kristin F. Lynch, John G. Drew, Robert S. Tripp, and Charles Robert Roll, MG-193-AF, 2004 (available at <http://www.rand.org/publications/MG/MG193/>), 148 pages, ISBN: 0-8330-3677-7. Copies of this research brief and the complete report on which it is based are available from RAND Distribution Services (phone: 310-451-7002; toll free: 877-584-8642; or email: order@rand.org). The RAND Corporation is a nonprofit research organization providing objective analysis and effective solutions that address the challenges facing the public and private sectors around the world. RAND's publications do not necessarily reflect the opinions of its research clients and sponsors. **RAND**® is a registered trademark.

RAND Offices Santa Monica • Washington • Pittsburgh • New York • Doha • Berlin • Cambridge • Leiden



PROJECT AIR FORCE

CHILD POLICY
CIVIL JUSTICE
EDUCATION
ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT
HEALTH AND HEALTH CARE
INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS
NATIONAL SECURITY
POPULATION AND AGING
PUBLIC SAFETY
SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
SUBSTANCE ABUSE
TERRORISM AND
HOMELAND SECURITY
TRANSPORTATION AND
INFRASTRUCTURE

This PDF document was made available from www.rand.org as a public service of the RAND Corporation.

This product is part of the RAND Corporation research brief series. RAND research briefs present policy-oriented summaries of individual published, peer-reviewed documents or of a body of published work.

The RAND Corporation is a nonprofit research organization providing objective analysis and effective solutions that address the challenges facing the public and private sectors around the world.

Support RAND

[Browse Books & Publications](#)

[Make a charitable contribution](#)

For More Information

Visit RAND at www.rand.org

Explore [RAND Project AIR FORCE](#)

View [document details](#)

Limited Electronic Distribution Rights

This document and trademark(s) contained herein are protected by law as indicated in a notice appearing later in this work. This electronic representation of RAND intellectual property is provided for non-commercial use only. Permission is required from RAND to reproduce, or reuse in another form, any of our research documents for commercial use.