



Integrated Operational and Combat Support Planning Will Support Air and Space Expeditionary Forces

The U.S. Air Force has reorganized into Air and Space Expeditionary Forces (AEFs) to accommodate a changing operating environment that requires the military to respond to regional crises anywhere in the world on short notice. The AEF concept stations people and equipment primarily in the continental United States but allows the Air Force to tailor, deploy, and employ force packages quickly and to sustain them as needed.

The AEF concept requires the Air Force to rethink (1) its method of directing combat support (CS) resources to meet operational needs and (2) the best methods for command and control (C2) of that support. Previous work by RAND Project AIR FORCE (PAF) found that the Air Force simply had no architecture for combat support command and control (CSC2). PAF recommended an architecture that integrates operational and CS planning and provides feedback loops for monitoring performance of CS and indicating where changes need to be made to meet operational requirements. The Air Force has initiated organizational and doctrinal changes to build the CSC2 operational architecture.

In a recent study intended to expand on PAF's previous work and to guide the Air Force as it continues its efforts, PAF found that the CSC2 architecture is evolving but that shortfalls remain. Operational parameters are not consistently communicated to CS planners early in crisis action planning. Capability assessments (e.g., projecting the number of sorties per day that can be generated) are conducted on an ad hoc basis. Oversight for CS personnel and equipment is spread across multiple organizations. Inadequate information systems and decision support tools limit analyses and the ability to rapidly explore multiple deployment options. Finally, spare parts management lacks the data analyses and feedback mechanisms that would support its claim for more funding and allow it to be responsive to the needs of warfighters.

PAF's recommendations to address these issues include the following:

- Enhance analytic capabilities and agility in planning via appropriate, cutting-edge information systems and decision support tools.
- Codify an Operational Parameters Template (OPT) in Air Force CS doctrine and policy that delineates specifically what information operational planners will provide and in what format to CS planners during crisis action planning.
- Improve training for CS and operations personnel. For example, operations personnel should be trained to create, and CS planners should be trained to use, the OPT recommended above.
- Codify in doctrine and policy the content and format of capability assessments, and conduct them regularly.
- Bring oversight of CS personnel and equipment under one organization to simplify accountability and to make deployment planning more efficient.
- Enhance standing CS organizations (e.g., spare parts management) to improve C2. For example, introduce information systems and mechanisms for linking spares requirements to aircraft availability to more reliably and precisely support warfighter needs.

The changing operating environment worldwide and the Air Force's AEF concept that addresses its present significant challenges to the current CS structure. The recommendations in this report are integral to the continued success of Air Force efforts to build a CSC2 architecture. ■

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