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**CLAUSEWITZ**

VALIDATION OF THE GULF WAR AIR CAMPAIGN PLAN

Core Course II Essay

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COURSE 2

SEMINAR I

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The date is 15 Jan 91. The location is the tank in the Pentagon. General Carl von Clausewitz (brought out of retirement, is one of several prominent military thinkers invited by CJCS and CSAF to discuss coalition air campaign options anticipated to begin soon against Iraq. Gen Clausewitz has received briefings designed to bring him up to speed on airpower history, capabilities, technology and doctrine. We now join Gen Clausewitz during the conclusion of the final briefing presented to him that laid out the air option plan for Desert Storm known as "Instant Thunder".<sup>1</sup> (NOTE: All the US military services and several allied air forces provided coalition air power for Desert Storm. However, I have limited this essay to USAF participation in specifics and references to coalition forces in general).

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**LEFFORGE:** To summarize the briefing, coalition air forces will pursue an air offensive from the very beginning of hostilities. Because we will need to operate in Iraqi airspace to conduct our multi-phased operations, we will pursue and gain air superiority at once. We'll accomplish this with F-15/F-16 fighters coordinated through AWACS. They will meet any offensive/defensive Iraqi aircraft head on to ensure we have total freedom within Iraqi airspace. Day-One air strikes will also de-integrate Iraq's state-of-the-art integrated defense system...a crucial step to achieving air superiority. Concurrently, night air strikes by F-117s, round-the-clock strikes by F-15Es and F-111s will concentrate on Iraqi headquarters, command and control, communications, airfields, aircraft and their hardened shelters, chemical and biological weapons facilities, SCUDs, electrical facilities and ammunition and fuel supply depots. Subsequent air campaign phases will

concentrate heavy bombing, using B-52s in part, on Iraqi ground fortifications and field armies massed in the Kuwaiti Theater of Operations (KTO). Our intent is to isolate ground forces from their supply lines and wear them down through physical and psychological attrition. We hope to convince Iraqi leadership and people early on that meeting coalition demands quickly is in their national interest. General, do you have any questions or comments?

**CLAUSEWITZ:** I am most impressed. Technological advances have been far greater than I ever had imagined possible and I am awe struck. But, war is war regardless if it's fought on the ground, sea or now in the air. I contend that even with the greatest of planning and execution you are doomed to fail, or at least fail to succeed, if you have not considered the basic nature of warfare. Thus far you have shown me what your forces are capable of doing and you have presented your plans for doing it. But remember, the case for airpower involving great decisive actions must include an analysis that extends to the objective, including the *ultimate objective*, which hopefully remains the achievement of peace.<sup>2</sup> Have you considered this?

**LEFFORGE:** Yes sir we have. And you are absolutely correct regarding the subject of objectives. Every stage of the air campaign is driven towards achieving the political objectives set out by President Bush and the military objectives determined by Gen Shwarzkopf. One moment general, I have an overhead slide depicting those objectives and the USAF concept of operations.

### POLITICAL OBJECTIVES

- Immediate, complete and unconditional withdrawal of all Iraqi forces from Kuwait
- Restoration of Kuwait's legitimate government
- Security and stability of Saudi Arabia and the Persian Gulf
- Safety and protection of the lives of American citizens abroad

### MILITARY OBJECTIVES

- Neutralize Iraqi national command authority ability to direct military operations
- Eject Iraqi forces from Kuwait and destroy Iraq's offensive threat to the region, including the Republican Guard in the KTO
- Destroy known nuclear, biological and chemical weapons production and delivery capabilities, to include Iraq's known ballistic missile program
- Assist in the restoration of the legitimate government of Kuwait<sup>3</sup>

### USAF CONCEPTS

- Prevent Iraq's disruption of allied air ops
- Destroy Iraq's offensive air threat
- Isolate and attrit Iraq's field army
- Support allied ground force operations<sup>4</sup>

General, we agree with what you have said before that war is an instrument of political policy and is an act of force.<sup>5</sup> Air power has become a unique force, or put another way, a unique means of war. Even though airpower has brought about a significant change in means, your work continues to provide excellent considerations as to the use of those means. If our National Command Authority commits us to war it will be to accomplish political objectives in order to impose our (coalition) will on the enemy. Our air mission then will render Iraqi forces powerless using the maximum available force of air

power as part of the military instrument used to serve political objectives. War's success is measured by how it has served these objectives. The successful conclusion of that war depends not only on overcoming the enemy's ability to resist but also on overcoming his will to resist.<sup>6</sup>

**CLAUSEWITZ:** I have noted that your president's objectives do not include the total destruction of the enemy's forces or even the total destruction of Iraq. It seems technology has come to a point that could make that objective almost easy. I recall saying once that the invention of gunpowder and the constant improvement of firearms were enough to show that little was done to deflect the impulse to destroy the idea of war.<sup>7</sup> Could it not follow then that war as an act of force offers no logical limit to the application of that force.<sup>8</sup>

**LEFFORGE:** True enough. However, the total defeat of Iraq is not our ultimate objective. Regarding technology, we believe our air campaign plans are such that we can achieve logical limits that don't require total defeat. We have designed the air campaign, as you once said, to "put him (Iraq) in a situation that is even more unpleasant than the sacrifice you call on him to make."<sup>9</sup> Those "situations" have been thoroughly integrated into the air campaign to make him literally defenseless and thus force him to do our bidding at a level short of total defeat. And to paraphrase you again, in war many roads lead to success and they do not all involve the opponent's outright defeat.<sup>10</sup> It's classic Clausewitz!

**CLAUSEWITZ:** You humble me. But if airpower is so capable, would not the total destruction of Hussein's forces be a worthy objective? Suppose in the first few weeks of the war, you successfully gain air superiority and the combined air-land battle is able to push Iraqi forces out of Kuwait. Should you not pursue their total destruction to prevent another attack at a later time and choosing of theirs? Otherwise, are you not simply making the situation transient by giving Iraq a chance for things to improve in their favor?<sup>11</sup>

**LEFFORGE:** I feel you are testing me sir. Total destruction of Iraq's forces may actually be an end result if that's what it takes to meet our objectives. But we believe we will achieve our objectives without his total destruction and without leaving him with the opportunity to go on the defensive in order to later strike an offensive blow. Thus the level of destruction we wage on the enemy's forces is designed to put them in such a condition that they can no longer carry on the fight.<sup>12</sup> Obviously our intent is to make Iraq fear total destruction. We consider this "fear" an important early on state of mind to accomplish what you referred to as "a short cut on the road to peace."<sup>13</sup> In turn, our campaign "methods" are designed to wear down the enemy by substantially increasing his expenditure of effort. You of course have stated that wearing down the enemy means using the duration of the war to bring about a gradual exhaustion of his physical and moral resistance.<sup>14</sup> We've designed the air campaign to wear him down, but expect to achieve an almost immediate

exhaustion as a result of the speed, responsiveness, flexibility and impact that air power offers. The air campaign will hit hard, strike thousands of targets and not give the enemy a chance to recover. We've learned much from you.

**CLAUSEWITZ:** Now you honor me--and yes, it was a test. Obviously I am not technically oriented to completely comprehend the specifics of your air campaign's planning and capabilities. However, it appears you have a very positive plan that is heartily embraced by all. But what makes you believe that air power is a justifiable threat to Iraq?

**LEFFORGE:** H.G. Wells probably put it best. "In the air are no streets, no channels, no point where one can say of an antagonist 'If he wants to reach my capital he must come by here'. In the air, all directions lead everywhere."<sup>15</sup> Air power skips over the battlefield demonstrating to the Iraqi people our awesome capability to strike wherever and whenever we need. The deep air strikes planned into Baghdad on Day-One for instance will demonstrate our ability to penetrate Iraq's massive air defense network while seeking out and selectively attacking key leadership and command center targets.

**CLAUSEWITZ:** Well, I am convinced you have learned many of the lessons as they pertain to the objective. I caution you though that you may put too much faith in your plan and this can lead to problems in your strategy. Do you recall my words that "everything in strategy is very simple, but that does not mean that everything is very easy"?<sup>16</sup>

**LEFFORGE:** We do indeed understand that general, and you may be referring to two time proven Clausewitzian characteristics of war--the effects of fog and friction. Although we can't eliminate these problems or plan for every circumstance, we have spent considerable energy studying these characteristics. They are integral factors in our training, professional education, doctrine and considerations in battle. We also know that fog and friction are hindrances to one's own action, but to the extent that they can be inflicted on the enemy commander, they become allies.<sup>17</sup> Let me provide examples to demonstrate our comprehension.

FOG: This is a serious consideration in war. We'll say that an F-15E mission is sent against a chemical weapons storage facility on Day-One. This mission requires significant coordinated efforts of AWACS for command and control, combat air patrol (CAP) and suppression of enemy air defense (SEAD) to name a few. Our ability to quickly obtain accurate bomb damage assessments (BDA) from the mission impacts subsequent target selections. We don't want to unnecessarily send our crews and aircraft back to a target because we can't quickly and effectively determine BDA. This potentially exposes them to defensive threats again that can increase the chance of failure. It also reduces our options to strike other critical targets since we have to "spread out" the use of limited air assets to strike the target again. For the enemy, fog (allied air superiority) may demand the Iraqis accept the risk of withdrawing

their front line fighters and hiding them in hardened shelters for later use. Our airpower has the capability to penetrate those shelters and destroy his aircraft. We complicate his order of battle by removing any air reserve he may have expected to use. He is doomed.

FRICITION: Similarly, events beyond our control can potentially impact our effectiveness. During the air campaign we plan to execute a predeter~~mined~~ operations tempo. However, unexpected weather over targets can prevent an F-117 from successfully attacking his target. Since we have limited numbers of F-117s, we can't afford to lose opportunities ideally suited for that aircraft. Impact: these sortie losses can alter our operations tempo to our disadvantage. To transition, we obviously want to inflict the greatest amount of friction that we possibly can on Iraqi forces. For example, we anticipate Hussein's extensive use of SCUD missiles and we have planned a significant air effort to hunt down and destroy fixed and mobile SCUD missiles. Destroying fixed SCUD sites and storage facilities will receive a high priority at the outset of the war. Hussein will attempt to disperse his mobile SCUDs but find that we can and will hunt those down also. Impact: serious degradation to his political/military objectives through the use of SCUDs.

As you see, we plan to use fog and friction as our allies. We hope to force Hussein to deploy his forces differently than what he wants because we'll constantly mix up his battle plans.

**CLAUSEWITZ:** Well, I don't want to overstay my welcome. Besides, it is very apparent you have much to do and that you have done your homework. I will leave you with this final thought. You have determined what you are meant to achieve from the political conditions and have charted a course. Now follow through, carry out the plan and do not be thrown off course by thousands of diversions.<sup>18</sup> I return to retirement knowing I have been of service to you. The proposed air campaign and the advent of technological advances will help you in your cause and hopefully lead to a speedy conclusion that meets your aims with minimum bloodshed. Thank you very much.

**LEFFORGE:** Thank you general for your comments and insight. On behalf of us all, please know that your works are timeless. We look forward to briefing you again following the war to demonstrate the successful impact of the lessons you have taught.

NOTES

1. Wennefeld, James and Johns, Dana J. Unity of Control: Joint Air Operations in the Gulf". Joint Force Quarterly Summer 1993: 91.
2. Clausewitz, Carl, On War. Trans. Michael Howard, Peter Paret. (Princeton University Press, 1976) 159.
3. Pearson, Michael A. Clausewitz and the Conduct of US Military Operations in the Persian Gulf War. National War College, Nov 1992. 3.
4. Allied Air Campaign - Desert Storm. DoD Press Briefing videotape. 15 Mar 1991.
5. Clausewitz, 87.
6. United States. US Air Force. Basic Aerospace Doctrine of the United States Air Force. AFM 1-1, Vol II. Washington: GPO, March 1992. 5.
7. Clausewitz, 76.
8. Ibid., 20.
9. Ibid., 18.
10. Ibid., 94.
11. United States, 10-11.
12. Clausewitz, 90.
13. Ibid, 92.
14. Ibid, 93.
15. Emme, Eugene M. Thoughts on Air Power as a Political Weapon. Air War College. Maxwell AFB, Al. Sep 1953. 20.
16. Clausewitz, 178.
17. Warden, John A. The Air Campaign. (Pergamon-Brassey's. Washington, 1989). 100.
18. Clausewitz, 178.