



CURTIS E. LEMAY CENTER

FOR DOCTRINE DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATION



ANNEX 3-52 AIRSPACE CONTROL

AIRMAN'S PERSPECTIVE

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[Airmen](#) think and operate on theater and global dimensions. Comprehensive awareness at these levels is fundamental to an Airman's way of thinking. A remote piloted aircraft (RPA) flown over Iraq during Operation IRAQI FREEDOM, operationally controlled through a combined [air operations center](#) (CAOC) while providing direct support to the joint force commander (JFC) and multiple ground units is an example of the Airman's perspective applied operationally. Airmen share the JFC's theater-wide focus. While exploiting airpower's speed, range, and flexibility, Airmen provide capabilities from outside an area of responsibility (AOR) (globally in some cases). They then provide control for those capabilities where and when they are required in a given operation. This has direct implications for [airspace control](#) because airspace control plans (ACPs) should be developed, integrated, and possibly implemented across adjacent regions while supporting several operations simultaneously. Airspace has many users and uses which should be carefully integrated, coordinated, and deconflicted to ensure safe and effective operations; this demonstrates the need for some form of centralized control. This is the key reason airspace control authority is normally vested in a single commander. The need for effective integration is greatest in major combat operations, where manned and unmanned fixed-, tilt- and rotary-winged combat aircraft, military airlift, missiles, artillery, and commercial airspace users all vie for the same airspace.

Airpower's Contributions

[Airpower](#) has added a vertical flank to the modern battlefield creating a maneuver space throughout a given theater to be taken and exploited.¹ Few missions ([land](#), [sea](#), or [air](#)) can be accomplished without at least localized air superiority. Fundamental to discussing airspace is the understanding that [air superiority](#) is implicit in establishing even the most limited forms of airspace control. If enemy aircraft target friendly aircraft or ground troops, deconfliction measures between friendly airspace users may be severely challenged until those threats have been neutralized. Airpower operations such as [close air support](#) (CAS), interdiction, and other supporting efforts are likewise compromised without first establishing at least localized air superiority.

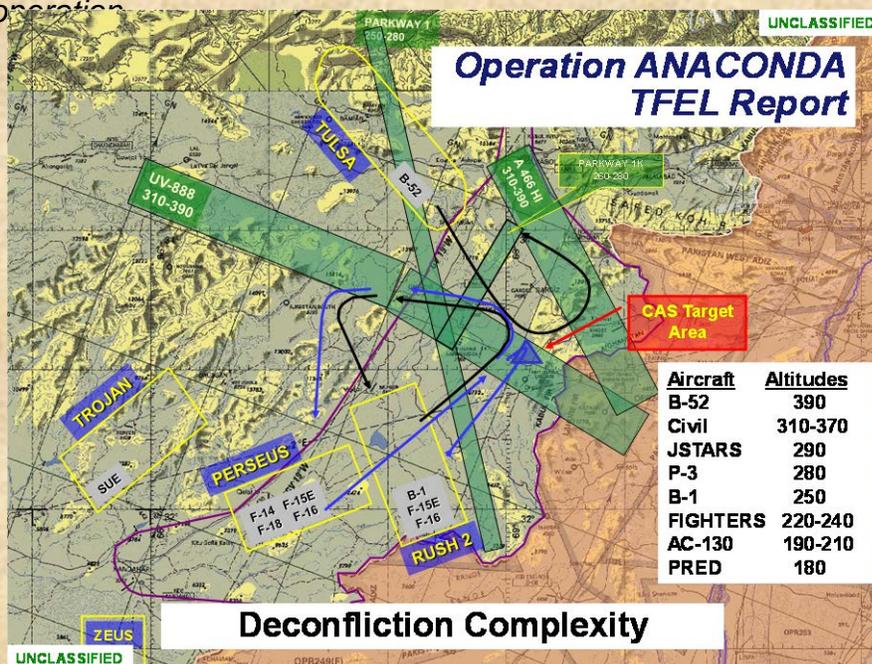
¹ Givens, Robert P., "Turning the Vertical Flank, Airpower as a Maneuver Force in the Theater Campaign", CADRE Paper No. 13, Air University Press, Maxwell AFB, AL, June 2002, p. 85, para 2

Airspace control deconfliction through the use of [intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance](#) (ISR) platforms permits freedom to find, fix, track, and target high value targets while coordinating with fixed-wing and rotary-wing aircraft to complete each operation.

Operation ANACONDA

An example of failing to effectively plan and integrate airspace use occurred during Operation ANACONDA in 2002. Very little planning for use of airpower was conducted prior to commencement of the operation; hence airspace coordination measures were ad hoc and very rudimentary. The lack of airspace planning prior to commencing Operation ANACONDA did not simply complicate air traffic management; it compromised the safety and welfare of warfighters and noncombatants in the air and on the ground. For example, after initiating operations, it took three days to first close and move civilian airline traffic routes running directly over the conflict area; normal airspace planning would have accounted for this earlier. Also, because planners did not adequately prepare for airspace management requirements, they did not foresee the potential threat fighters pulling up after ordnance delivery posed to the airliners above them. Similarly, those same planners did not allow for B-52s dropping 2000 pound bombs through multiple levels of air traffic stacked below them.

(Not depicted are the air refueling routes required to keep the air effort flying or the impact on commercial airspace users) ... In the end, Airmen backfilled airspace planning needs and provided clear, controlled airspace over the ground operation.



Anaconda Airspace