



Precision Strike/Dominant Maneuver

After the successes of Operation Desert Storm, many Americans became convinced that future wars will be dominated and won by technology — precision guided weapons that will seek out enemy command and control centers and destroy them, quickly ending the conflict. This concept, that a technological “silver bullet” exists that will cause future wars to be fast, low-cost, precise and relatively bloodless, ignores what history has taught us, that technology cannot counter the human dimension of warfare and that we ignore investments in proven, balanced battlefield capabilities at our own risk. In fact, that was the real lesson of Desert Storm.

The 20th century has been one of enormous technological advances. Many of these have been tailored and employed in our armed forces. The airplane, guided missile, computer, television, laser and atomic energy have all become integral parts of our military capabilities. They are all critical in gaining battlefield dominance and insuring military victory. They have also served to increase the depth of modern battlefields and, while increasing the lethality of war, have also tended to lower overall casualties by making weapons much more precise and less likely to cause collateral damage. Precision engagement has become an extremely important tool for commanders. It has contributed to success on the battlefield by allowing them to destroy critical targets. Still, precision engagement cannot accomplish everything. A true reading of history shows that the human dimension of warfare cannot be countered with purely technological solutions.

No “silver bullet” has yet been discovered during this century, and none is likely to be during the early years of the next one. While the 1930s saw strategic bombing as a way to win wars from a distance, World

War II proved this concept wrong. Then the atomic bomb was thought to eliminate the need for invasions by large massed land armies. Korea proved this wrong. During the 1960s, the advent of high-tech electronics combined with the precision bombing of critical targets was thought to be a convincing way to stop an infiltrating North Vietnamese Army from continuing their conquest of South Vietnam; they proved this wrong. In 1991, a month-long precision bombardment of the Republican Guard was not able to dislodge Saddam Hussein from Kuwait; a large-scale land campaign was the critical element.

A good look at current missions provides a clear rationale for having balance in our structure. Both Bosnia and Haiti are examples of military missions requiring a complete spectrum of operational capabilities. While aerial target identification and sophisticated electronics have been keys to insuring mastery of the military situation, it is the soldier on the ground who has guaranteed the outcome. No amount of laser-guided munitions or strategic presence would do the same. Additionally, without an adequate number of well-trained soldiers — a commodity that cannot be created overnight — we would find ourselves forever limited in what action could be taken.

For the foreseeable future, these types of engagements will be the norm. To focus on one capability over another would likely leave us with an inability to properly dominate in a full range of military scenarios. A proper balance will allow our commanders to take whatever action they felt needed to insure success.

In summary, what is important in the future is to find the proper balance in designing our forces. While increased access to information makes battlefield

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DEFENSE REPORT is published by the Association of the United States Army's Institute of Land Warfare. The series is designed to provide information on topics that will stimulate professional discussion and further public understanding of the Army's role in national defense. Questions regarding the **DEFENSE REPORT** should be directed to: AUSA, Institute of Land Warfare (Attn: **DEFENSE REPORT**), 2425 Wilson Blvd., Arlington VA 22201.

targeting much easier for a commander, he still lacks an ability to look into the mind of his opponent and, without having options on how he will prosecute a campaign, he will likely be defeated by an opponent who *has* a balance of capabilities. While precision strike capabilities will allow us to destroy targets and shape

the battlespace, only by employing *dominant maneuver with precision strike* can decisive victory be guaranteed. With balance, the National Command Authority will have options at the strategic level and commanders will have decisive capability at the operational level. This balance must not be eliminated.

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