USAF Command Doctrine of Centralized Control with Decentralized Execution: Never Divide the Fleet?

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The views expressed in this presentation are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the US government or the Department of Defense.
Introduction

- Technology and Doctrine Often at Odds
- Those Whose Doctrine Adapts to Emerging Technology Often Have Order of Magnitude Advantage Militarily
- USAF C2 Doctrine Appears Stagnant
Core Air Force Tenet

Centralized control and decentralized execution of air and space power are critical to effective employment of air and space power. Indeed, they are the fundamental organizing principles for air and space power, having been proven over decades of experience as the most effective and efficient means of employing air and space power.

Air Force Doctrine Document 1
Military Maxims

- Never Divide the Fleet – Alfred Thayer Mahan
- Interior Lines – Antoine Henri Jomini
- Centralized Control and Decentralized Execution - USAF

Doctrine Can Easily Become Dogma
Factors that Influence Command and Control

- Doctrine
- Technology
- Political Circumstances
Origins of USAF C2 Doctrine

- Kasserine Pass
  - “Penny Packets”
- Army Field Manual 100-20
  - “Lessons” codified centralized command
- Air Force Manual 1-1 thru Air Force Doctrine Document 1

Centralized Command = Independent Air Force
USAF Basic Doctrine

AFDD 1 – USAF Basic Doctrine

Unity of Command = Centralized Command
- Best achieved by a single commander

Centralized Command = Centralized Control

Centralized Control Maximizes the Flexibility and Effectiveness of Air and Space Power

Decentralized Execution Crucial to the Flexibility of Airpower
USAF C2 Doctrine

AFDD 2-8 Command and Control

Command--The authority that a commander in the Armed Forces lawfully exercises over subordinates by virtue of rank or assignment.

Control Definition--process by which commanders plan and guide operations
USAF C2 Doctrine

Impact of Technology
- Enhance Control
- Centralize or Decentralize Execution??
  - 1992 AFM 1-1: Modern Technologies seem to make decentralization of many important decisions increasingly inappropriate or even unnecessary

USAF C2 Doctrine is Not Keeping Pace With Technology Advancements
Basically Unchanged Since 1945
Technology

- Precision Strike
- Persistent ISR
- Autonomous Systems
- Networked Participants
- Long Range Communication

Integration of New Technologies Can Drive C2 to **Centralize** or **Decentralize** Based on Situation and Doctrine
Political Considerations

- Degree of National Interest
- Coalition Stability
- Use of Military Force
- Commander Responsibilities
  - UCMJ, Geneva Convention, The Hague

Diffusion of Authority May Not Be Feasible
Summary

Type of War
- Constraints & Restraints
- Risk Management

Doctrine and Technology

Interrelationship

Doctrine and Training

Many Situations Exist Where Centralized Control with Decentralized Execution is Neither Efficient Nor Effective. Doctrine and Training Must Recognize This Fact.
Questions?

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