



Part V -When Doctrine Shows Up: Paragon Stories that Prove It Works

The moment arrives the way it always does, without warning, without perfect information, and without time for debate.

A commander views an operational picture that is already outdated. Radios crackle with half-sentences. A feed freezes, then returns with a different truth. A friendly call sign requests clearance through airspace that suddenly has too many aircraft and too few guarantees. The timeline keeps moving even as the picture blurs. In that kind of chaos, hesitation isn't caution, it's surrendering tempo to the enemy.

And then something steadier than the noise asserts itself: a shared doctrinal baseline. Not a script; a common warfighting language. A set of principles that tell the force what matters first, what can flex, and what cannot. The commander doesn't need perfect certainty to act, only a reliable framework to decide.

That's what doctrine looks like when it shows up.

The LeMay Center's **Doctrine Paragon** series exists to make that truth visible, turning doctrine from an abstract concept into lived proof across decades of operations.

A **paragon** is a model of excellence, an example so clear in its character and performance that it becomes a standard others can measure themselves against. It is not simply "good." It is the kind of proven best that turns admiration into emulation, because it reveals what right looks like when it matters.

A **Doctrine Paragon** is that same idea, forged for warfighting: a real-world vignette where Airmen, units, and teams faced uncertainty, friction, and high stakes, and doctrine-shaped principles helped them impose order on chaos, align action, and achieve effects. These stories don't decorate doctrine; they **substantiate** it. They take what can feel abstract—terms, frameworks, command relationships, mission command—and anchor it in outcomes: tempo preserved, risk managed, integration achieved, combat power generated, lives protected, missions accomplished.

That is why Doctrine Paragons help provide clarity of purpose for Air Force Doctrine. They prove doctrine is not a library artifact, it is the Air Force's operational memory made usable, the shared language that turns intent into execution, and the disciplined baseline that lets initiative thrive under pressure. Paragons should remind every Airman that doctrine exists for one reason: to **guide the fight**, so when the moment arrives, the force does not hesitate, does not fracture, and does not relearn the hard lessons at the enemy's pace.

Each paragon follows the same underlying rhythm: a problem under pressure, a principle that guides action, a decision made inside uncertainty, a measurable result, and a takeaway that changes how professionals fight next time.



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The stories below are not nostalgic. They are evidence, in four snapshots where doctrine-shaped judgment became the difference between confusion and coherence.

Every paragon begins with a problem that is bigger than a checklist: uncertainty, time pressure, incomplete coordination, and stakes that are never theoretical. Then comes the doctrinal principle, usually simple in wording but unfeeling in implication. After that, a decision is made under pressure, not because someone had perfect data but because doctrine helped them prioritize the right things fast. The result is measurable: preserved tempo, controlled risk, integrated action, prevented disaster. And the takeaway becomes a seed, something future Airmen can carry forward before they ever reach the same cliff's edge.

For any adversary watching from over the horizon, that pattern should feel unsettling: it means the Air Force is not depending on luck or improvisation. It means the force is rehearsing its thinking, then institutionalizing the parts that win.

Here are a few examples taken from many:

Paragon 1, The Battle of Britain: Control of the Air as the First Gate

In late summer 1940, the skies over Britain and the English Channel become a crucible. The Luftwaffe presses offensive attacks to set conditions for invasion, **Operation Sea Lion**, and aims for what every air-minded strategist understands is decisive: air supremacy.

The doctrinal heartbeat here is simple and brutal: **control of the air** is not a luxury. It is the first gate. Air Force doctrine later codifies it plainly: control of the air is a necessary precondition for control of the surface. But in 1940, it is not yet a doctrinal statement on a page. It is a lived requirement, proven by loss and survival in real time.

The Luftwaffe executes offensive counterair-like actions in today's language, fighter escorts, strikes against early warning radar sites, attacks meant to destroy Royal Air Force (RAF) fighters and airfields. The RAF counters with a defensive system built on resilience and warning, radar networks, observation posts, rapid fighter response, and passive measures like hardening and decoys.

Then the hinge: German priorities shift away from RAF aircraft and airfields toward broader strategic attacks on infrastructure and population centers, creating space for the RAF to reconstitute and regenerate airpower. The result is not a single dramatic victory, but a denial of German objectives, Hitler indefinitely postpones the invasion in part because the Luftwaffe fails to achieve requisite air superiority.

The takeaway is the kind of doctrine that needs to be preserved: if an adversary cannot gain control of the air, the entire conflict compresses into a harsher reality, reduced freedom of action and constrained maneuver everywhere else. Doctrine didn't invent that truth; it captured it so the next generation wouldn't have to rediscover it at the same price.



Paragon 2, Operation ALLIES REFUGE: Planning as Combat Power

Fast forward to the summer of 2021. The environment is not a classic battlefield, but it is still an operation where time, risk, and consequence collide. Afghanistan's security deteriorates rapidly. Crisis operations begin with little warning. Special Immigrant Visa holders and vulnerable Afghans must move, fast, and at scale.

Ramstein Air Base becomes the hinge point when bases in Qatar and Kuwait quickly hit capacity. The 86th Airlift Wing clears hangars, postures supplies, and prepares to accept over a thousand passengers a day, on short notice, in a global pandemic, with requirements that triple in under two weeks once Ramstein becomes a primary evacuation hub.

The doctrinal principle here is not glamorous, but it is decisive: **planning creates shared understanding**, and shared understanding creates speed. Ramstein's leaders align mission intent, tasks, logistics, and authorities, then expand support by integrating medical, logistics, maintenance, civil engineering, security, and food services, while coordinating with other Services, U.S. Government agencies, and partner nations.

The result is measurable in human terms: tens of thousands staged for onward movement, a crisis absorbed without breaking the system.

The takeaway is clear for Airmen: doctrine is not just for kinetic moments. It is for any moment where chaos threatens coherence. Planning, done right, is a form of power. It anticipates friction, aligns authorities, and turns a flood of urgent tasks into controlled action. And to adversaries who count on crisis to expose weakness, this is the quiet warning: the Air Force can surge disciplined coordination at scale, even when the environment is unforgiving.

Paragon 3, Operation ANACONDA: Control Is the Antidote to Chaos

March 2002. Shahikot Valley, Afghanistan. Operation ANACONDA begins as a shift from SOF-centric operations toward conventional land force operations. Early assessments label the threat "low," air support is planned narrowly, and then reality arrives with a heavy hand. Enemy numbers and resolve are underestimated, and troops inserted into mountain passes take immediate heavy fire with limited response capability.

The doctrinal problem is as old as war and as modern as joint integration: when airspace is chaotic and command relationships are unclear, speed becomes risk instead of advantage. In ANACONDA, limited command and control (C2), coordination and especially the absence of an air support operations center, directly contribute to the chaos.

The principle that emerges is the one the paragon states bluntly: **control is the antidote to chaos**.

As the fight intensifies, air assets surge, but integration struggles without the right structure. Airborne C2 nodes improvise solutions, Airborne Warning and Control System aircraft provides deconfliction; the Joint Surveillance Target Attack Radar System is pulled in, augmented with



specialists; airborne forward air controllers and tactical air coordinators help integrate airpower assets, prioritize close air support, and prevent fratricide. Unplanned but essential.

The result is not perfect elegance; it is effective adaptation under fire, and it reinforces a doctrine-shaped takeaway: air and land components must plan together for integrated air operations in support of land objectives, and command relationships and component capabilities must be understood before the crisis hits.

For Airmen today, the message is practical: integration isn't a buzzword, it's survival logic. If the structure for deconfliction and prioritization is absent, the fight becomes a scramble for clarity at the worst time. And to any adversary betting on joint seams: doctrine exists to stitch them shut

Paragon 4, Tinian and the Return of North Field: ACE Made Real

Now the scene shifts to the Pacific, where distance is vast, targeting is fast, and large main operating bases are not assumed safe.

In March 2023, an F-22 lands on Tinian, 39 square miles of land, 3,714 miles west of Hawaii. The moment signals a resurgence of operations from a place that once carried immense weight in WWII as the home of a massive B-29 fleet and the world's largest airfield, later abandoned back into tropical nature.

The doctrinal principle here is embedded in the Air Force's **Agile Combat Employment** scheme of maneuver: distribute, move, complicate targeting, sustain generation under pressure. On Tinian, that principle becomes physical reality through engineering. RED HORSE squadrons deploy, working alongside Marine and Naval engineers, carving runways and ramps back out of jungle, restoring North Field and reestablishing it as a semi-permanent contingency location supporting Guam.

The result is more than repaired concrete. It is **combat generation resilience**, options, flexibility, and a problem set for the enemy. The paragon emphasizes why it matters today: ACE capabilities supported by rapid engineering operations complicate adversary targeting, create political and operational dilemmas, and increase flexibility for friendly forces.

The takeaway for Airmen is direct: doctrine is not just written in words, it's built in ramps, fuel lines, communications nodes, contingency basing, and the kind of readiness that can relocate and regenerate under threat. And for any competitor tracking Pacific geometry, the subtext is unmistakable: the Air Force is not preparing to fight where it is convenient. It is preparing to fight where it is contested, and to keep generating combat power anyway.

Doctrine is measurable when it matters most: in **tempo, cohesion, and disciplined initiative** under pressure. Paragons translate "doctrine" from concept into culture by showing what it looks like when professionals act with shared understanding instead of improvising alone. And the force fights better when doctrine is learned **before** crisis, because when the moment arrives, the timeline does not wait for alignment.



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What Comes Next:

Part VI moves from proof to the future, into #AFD35, where doctrine is built ahead of the fight by testing tomorrow's technologies and concepts against 2035 scenarios, then turning what holds into the next doctrinal advantage.

Meanwhile, study the doctrine that governs your mission now. It is how the Air Force plans, commands, integrates, and adapts when comms fail and time collapses. Doctrine prevents improvisation, crushes confusion, and builds decision advantage that survives the future fight. If you want to peak into the engine room and learn more about Air Force doctrine visit <https://www.doctrine.af.mil/>