# CURTIS E. LEMAY CENTER
## FOR DOCTRINE DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATION

## AIR FORCE DOCTRINE PUBLICATION (AFDP) 3-03 COUNTERLAND OPERATIONS

## AIR INTERDICTION

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Air interdiction (AI) represents a flexible form of airpower that can be used in various ways to prosecute joint all-domain operations. However employed, certain principles such as centralized control and decentralized execution should be followed to achieve maximum effectiveness with minimum losses. AI can channel enemy movement, constrain logistics, disrupt communications, or force urgent movement to put the enemy in a favorable position for friendly forces to exploit. To be most effective, AI requires persistence, concentration, joint integration, and intelligence that is both timely and accurate. Whether supporting the land offensive by attacking land component nominated targets or decisively halting an enemy advance with theater-wide interdiction, AI provides a powerful tool for defeating the enemy ground force.

The air component often conducts theater-wide air attacks against enemy land forces and their resources to achieve joint force commander (JFC) objectives. This autonomous use of AI usually occurs outside of a land or maritime component's area of operations (AO). Special operations forces' air and land assets may play a significant supporting role during AI with their ability to integrate seamlessly into the find, fix, track, target, engage, and assess process.

Using JFC priorities and understanding the land or maritime component's scheme of maneuver, the air component commander can employ AI to provide effects that facilitate and support that maneuver. The air component commander may support a land scheme of maneuver by conducting AI within a ground commander's AO, or in support of the land component target nominations outside the land component's AO. After coordinating priorities, effects, timing, and targets with land components, the air component commander directs responsive AI across the joint operations area against enemy military capabilities that contribute directly to, or are maneuvering to reinforce, the conflict. Ground commanders often consider AI synonymous with what they express as "shaping" operations within the ground commander's AO. From an Airman's perspective, shaping may be regarded as preparing the operational environment with AI to assist the land component's scheme of maneuver.

**Air Interdiction and Shaping Operations**

The Army defines shaping operations as an operation that establishes conditions for the decisive operation through effects on the enemy, other actors, and the terrain (Army Doctrine Publication 3-0, *Operations*). Therefore, soldiers may consider AI as shaping which solely supports their maneuver elements. From an Airman's perspective, AI may be conducted either in support of land force objectives or in direct support of JFC objectives; in the latter case, the air component commander might be the supported commander. Because of these slightly differing views, there is a potential for friction between the air and land components regarding supporting/supported roles and responsibility for planning. These situations require careful and continuing dialogue between the senior commanders and their common superior commander.