Air Force Doctrine
At the very heart of warfare lies doctrine. It represents the central beliefs for waging war in order to achieve victory. **Doctrine is of the mind**, a network of faith and knowledge reinforced by experience which lays the pattern for the utilization of men, equipment, and tactics. It is the building material for strategy. It is fundamental to sound judgment.

~ General Curtis Emerson LeMay, 1968
Doctrine is …

- How you **organize and employ**
- The **agreed upon**, operationally relevant body of **best practices and principles**
- Supported by:
  - History
  - Debate and analysis
  - Exercises, wargames, contingencies
- **Official advice** (i.e., authoritative, but not directive)
Value of Doctrine

• Guides how to organize, present, deploy and employ
  • Organize based on doctrine, not ad hoc arrangements

• The two key pillars of our doctrine are:
  • Principle of War: Unity of Command
  • Tenet of Airpower: Centralized Control/Decentralized Execution

• Airmen work for Airmen and the senior Airman works for the Joint Force Commander

• Normally, doctrine is the best way to proceed
  • If we must deviate, there should be a clear and compelling operational reason
Why Learn Doctrine?

- Provides **common language** and frame of reference for discussion
  - Essential for communication

- How best to **organize and employ** airpower: operational suitability

- Impacts emerging / future capabilities

- Provides **consistent and “teachable” approach** to warfighting: first step to “think outside the box”
Doctrine is about…

- Warfighting…not physics
- Effects…not weapon systems or platforms
- Using domains…not owning domains
- How to organize…not organizations
- Synergy…not segregation
- Integration…not just synchronization
- The right force … not equal shares of the force
Terminology

• Military operations are guided by the interplay of:
  • Policy
  • Strategy
  • Doctrine

• Important to understand their differences
Policy

• **Directive** guidance stating what is to be accomplished
• Sets overall priorities/direction
  • Defines national interest
  • States political direction/guiding principles
• Sets political limits
  • Bounds the response
• Directive guidance
  • Determined by senior national and military leadership
  • Mandatory compliance
• Policy sets the boundaries for doctrine and strategy
• Examples:
  • Circumstances for use of nuclear weapons
  • Address terrorism in a religion-neutral manner
Strategy

- Is about how to apply available capabilities
  - To gain desired ends
  - Using approved means
  - Within the existing environment

- Considers:
  - Objectives
  - Threat, politics, personalities, public opinion
  - Alliances, private volunteer organizations, nongovernmental organizations, government agencies
  - Current capabilities/doctrine

- Example:
  - Campaign strategy devised to target insurgents with minimum necessary forces and reduce collateral effects; attack insurgents’ legitimacy; gain support of population
Doctrine

• Is about how you **organize and employ**
  • Presentation of forces
  • Command and control
  • Command relationships

• The Air Force’s agreed upon, operationally relevant body of best practices and principles supported by:
  • History
  • Debate and analysis
  • Exercises, contingencies

• **Doctrine is not dogma**

• Example:
  • Irregular warfare doctrine developed to provide consistent guidance in any region; emphasis on decentralized planning and decision making
Interplay

- Policy governs the use of force
  - Shapes strategy
  - May affect application of doctrine (e.g., ROE)
    - Commanders should advise policy makers on the potential impacts of deviating from doctrine
- Doctrine provides a knowledge base for making strategy decisions
  - How best to apply and organize forces for a given scenario
- Success or failure of strategy may affect policy and doctrine
Doctrines and Concepts

**Concepts are:**
- Used to develop capabilities to meet national strategic goals
- Unproven ideas that should be rigorously tested; *not authoritative*
- A notion or statement expressing how something might be done
- Developed to respond to a range of future challenges
- Concepts should propose a clear alternative to existing doctrine

**Doctrine is:**
- Based on *extant* capabilities for force employment
- Designed to describe operations conducted with *extant* capabilities
- Subject to policy, treaty, and legal constraints
Develop America’s Airmen Today ... for Tomorrow

Doctrine Development Venues

Joint Doctrine
83 publications

multinational Doctrine
100+ publications

Air Force Doctrine
31 AFDPs
https://www.doctrine.af.mil/

Air Force TTPs
101 publications

Air Land Sea Applications Center
33 publications
Levels of Service Doctrine

The Air Force (CSAF signs)

Operational Doctrine (LeMay Ctr/CC signs)

Tactical Doctrine (TTP) (Various Signators)

3-X
ALSA

3-X
561 WPS

3-X
423 MTS/MAJCOM/A-Staff
Basic Doctrine

- Foundation of airpower doctrine
- Elemental properties of airpower
- Discussion on the nature of war
- Slow to change compared to other levels
Operational Doctrine

- Applies principles of basic doctrine to military action
- Guides proper organization and employment in the context of:
  - Distinct objectives
  - Force capabilities
  - Broad functional areas
  - Operational environments
- Provides focus for mission and task development executed at the tactical level of war
- Changes after deliberate internal debate

Annexes
Tactical Doctrine

- Describes proper employment of specific assets
- Considers:
  - Objectives
  - Conditions
- Closely associated with equipment and therefore changes more rapidly
What Doctrine Provides

- Description of AF operations across all domains to achieve effects throughout the competition continuum
  - Informs the Air Component Commander and staff on the best ways to organize, plan, support, and fight with Airpower
  - Must provide guidance from peace through major ops
- Expression of the Airman’s perspective in terms best suited to Airmen and airpower
  - Airmen have a different view of operations that complements, but does not replace, other military instruments of national power
  - Should integrate with joint team and sister Services without compromising basic tenets of Airpower

Focusing on the Air Component Commander keeps the discussion at the operational level
Who is Doctrine For?

- Air Force doctrine should focus on the Air Component Commander
  - Focused at the operational level
  - Defines functions and tasks (common terminology)
  - Defines Air Component Commander roles and responsibilities
  - Explains roles and responsibilities of the Air Component Commander’s staff
  - Explains command relationships
  - Provides organizational templates

- Because of this operational-level warfighting focus, not everything the Air Force does will be visible in doctrine
  - Not written to highlight the relevancy of career fields or specific organizations
  - Not written to justify programmatics
  - Not written to capture buzzwords or catch-phrases of the moment
Questions?