



CURTIS E. LEMAY CENTER

FOR DOCTRINE DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATION



VOLUME 1 BASIC DOCTRINE

SURPRISE

Last Updated: 27 Feb 2015

“Surprise” is one of the principles of war.

Surprise leverages the [principle of security](#) by attacking the enemy at a time, place, or in a manner for which they are not prepared. The speed and range of air, space, and cyberspace capabilities, coupled with their [flexibility and versatility](#), allow air forces to achieve surprise more readily than other forces. The final choice of timing and tactics rests with the air component commander because terrain and distance are not inhibiting factors.

Surprise is one of [airpower's](#) strongest advantages. Operation EL DORADO CANYON (the US raid on Libya) and the opening day of the air campaign during Operation DESERT STORM highlight examples where airpower achieved surprise.

Airpower can enhance and empower other forces to achieve surprise as well. The rapid global reach of airpower can enable surface forces to reach foreign destinations quickly, thus seizing the initiative through surprise.