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In My View

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Ian Oliver

IN MY VIEW . . .

The Falklands Campaign

Sir:

I hope it is not too late for a member of the Royal Air Force to comment on Cdr. Kerr's article on the Falklands campaign in the November/December issue of your journal.

First, he complains about the massive flight refuelling effort that was needed to support the ASW Nimrods of the RAF down to the Falklands area. Yet he discusses in approving terms the speed with which refrigeration ships, heavy lift ships and repair ships were all quickly requisitioned from their commercial uses and sent south in support of the Fleet. Commander Kerr must know quite well that the main feature of the Falklands campaign from start to finish was successful improvisation. Neither the Navy nor the Air Force was prepared for an operation 8000 miles from home. The RAF used tankers to get there and the Royal Navy requisitioned ships from trade to do the same. I fail to see any conceptual distinction.

Second, he claims that in modern warfare as a whole an aircraft is no more than an extension of the artillery shell on land and no more than an extension of naval power at sea. It is difficult to know where to begin in refuting such a narrow view of air power, and there is certainly no room to deploy all the arguments there. I can only suggest that Cdr. Kerr studies the history of air power more closely and takes particular note of the part that the qualities of flexibility and adaptability have played. Above all, he should note the vital importance of concentration of effort in military history as a whole, and the contribution that the very high mobility of air power makes to that concept in warfare.

Third, he makes some comments on strategic bombing that are as ill-founded as they are irrelevant. In the sense in which I think Cdr. Kerr means it, the Royal Air Force gave up the role of strategic bombardment when SLBMs took it over. It was a remarkable piece of adaptation that enabled the obsolete Vulcans to be launched against targets at Stanley, and Cdr. Kerr should not decry it.

His other remarks on strategic bombing suggest that Cdr. Kerr has fallen into the trap of believing that the role refers only to attacks on the major assets, such as cities, of major powers such as the Soviet Union. This is not so. Strategic bombing has always meant attack against the sources of enemy power rather than on their manifestation in the combat zone.

In conditions of super-power nuclear stand-off we have seen at least two wars and many lesser incidents in which, by that definition, strategic bombing has been successfully employed. For example, and constrained only by political considerations, it was employed against North Korea in 1950-51. It was again employed with conspicuous success against Hanoi and Haiphong in the Linebacker II Offensive of December 1974. Cdr. Kerr may not see that as a strategic attack, but the North Vietnamese seem to have done so. A third and particularly interesting example of a lower scale strategic attack was the Israeli air strike against the Iraqi nuclear facility in June 1981. The fact that this raid was made by a small number of aircraft and that the two states were not at war by no means disqualifies this precise and highly effective raid from the domain of strategic attack. The potential balance of power in the whole region may have been shifted by a strike on a key industrial facility rather than by any conventional clash of armies. Perhaps we need a new phrase to describe this kind of air bombardment against targets other than super-power key points, and I suggest that 'theatre strategic attack' fits the bill.

We cannot foresee whether this or any other kind of strategic bombing will be appropriate to wars in the future; but it is quite certain that neither the history of the Second World War nor the limited experience of the Falklands campaign rules it out.

Air Marshal M. J. Armitage, CBE, RAF

Warfare in the Fourth Dimension¹

Sir:

One way to think of electromagnetic warfare is to look at warfare in general as a thermodynamic process. The electromagnetic spectrum is used to transmit information, and the battle for the airwaves is really a contest for control of the flow of information.

Because electromagnetic waves add, it is impossible to actually destroy a signal. But, clearly, the information content can be destroyed by jamming. This reduces the information or increases the entropy. While EW is used to control the flow of information in the electromagnetic spectrum, conventional weapons are used to create disorder (increase entropy) in an opponent's tactical formations, logistic systems, etc.

The view of warfare as a battle to maximize the information under one's control, and to maximize the entropy of an opponent then logically follows. From this point of view, C³I systems are critical in providing an information advantage. The quality of our computer and software systems becomes critical, because of the multiplier effect that they produce in the control of information.

Conversely, an adversary with a sophisticated electronic warfare capability might attack strategic targets with a "soft kill." This could include disruption of banking, electric power distribution, air traffic control, and similar systems. Actually, this could be done in a clandestine manner, so that deniability could be maintained. The

¹ See Lieut. Cdr. G. Guy Thomas, "Warfare in the Fourth Dimension—Is the Navy Ready for it? How can the Navy Prepare for it?" in *Naval War College Review*, January-February 1983, pp 16-23.
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complexity of our electronic systems, and our dependence on them makes our economy more vulnerable than more primitive economies. While there is increasing interest in communications security in the civilian sector, we should be concerned about our ability both to detect and counter active denial or deception attempts, as well as passive exploitation, especially in this age of terrorism and unconventional warfare.

Because national security will become increasingly dependent on information systems, software will be a key defense technology. Our ability to build complex systems is still limited, and the new super-computer and VHSIC technologies that are under development will not materially add to our defense capability without improvements in software technology.

The future may see wars that are fought almost solely electronically, because of a nuclear and conventional stalemate. With our greater reliance on information systems, I hope that we will be ready.

Geoffrey T. Flanders
Cambridge, Mass.

The Bottom Rung of the Ladder¹

Sir,

Mr. Zimmerman and Mr. Greb's article concerning a new nuclear policy in Europe is certainly trendy; however, it fails to convince me that the proposed force disposition could be accomplished and, even if it could, that it would be more effective at deterring war than present in-place forces and strategy.

Western Europe is vital to the security of the United States. Being of primary interest to us it has over the years taken the majority of our efforts in conventional and nuclear defense. Western European nations on the other hand have, since the conception of Nato, been unable to provide the necessary conventional forces to maintain a credible deterrent. For whatever reasons, because of the inability of Nato to maintain enough conventional armed forces to deter Soviet aggression, they have been forced to rely on the nuclear deterrent at the battlefield, theater and strategic nuclear levels.

The Zimmerman/Greb article proposes that Western technical superiority in conventional munitions should be utilized as an alternative method of keeping the Soviets at bay. The weakness of their suggestion seems to me to be threefold;

(1) It is doubtful when one considers history and the present political situation in Europe that the proper level of effort can be maintained indefinitely to provide an adequate conventional deterrent;

(2) Furthermore, the wisdom of placing the defense of something as vital as Europe on unproven and possibly a transitory superiority in technology must be questioned;

¹See Peter D. Zimmerman and G. Allen Greb, "The Bottom Rung of the Ladder: Battlefield Nuclear Weapons in Europe," *Naval War College Review*, November-December 1982, pp. 35-51.

(3) The final effect of using precision-guided munitions (PGMs) as a deterrent is to lower the overall risk of going to war and thereby making war more probable rather than less remote as the authors had hoped.

To center Nato's defense on PGMs would take a significant force structure reorganization with the resultant cost and inevitable uncertainty of effectiveness that any major strategy change would entail. The difficulties of centering Western Europe's defense on high technology should not be underestimated. It would be necessary for numerous political leaders from the significant Nato countries to consciously and publicly commit their countries to an expensive and perhaps chancy arms build up with only long term results. They must be united and willing to sell a complex military issue to an uninformed public and expect to maintain a consensus over a 5-10 year period of development of great cost. If history can be our guide, the most probable result is no country will be able to fund the switch to a PGM defense adequately. Furthermore, once the commitment has been made that battlefield nuclear weapons are to be phased out, it will become politically impossible to phase them back in if the technology fails to live up to expectations or the magnitude of effort cannot be maintained to provide the force level required for an adequate deterrence.

PGM technology is an amazing and promising field of endeavor. However, as the authors stated, the Yom Kippur War did not prove the invincibility of PGM weapons. More recent action between Israeli and Syrian forces show that weapon tactics and technology are in an extreme state of change. Electronic countermeasures and advanced PGMs proved to be highly effective only after significant and time-consuming intelligent collection had been accomplished. It is less clear how effective PGMs will be on a battlefield in a state of constant flux or one occurring at a later date when the technology has time to mature on both sides of the combat field.

The problem of basing long term strategy on advanced technology is the unforeseeable nature of future developments. What would seem like the ideal weapon today may be just another expensive failure tomorrow. It cannot be said that heavier use of PGMs is not without merit. It must be noted however, that methods of defending against PGMs by direct electronic countermeasure and C³ disruption has made significant improvements in recent years. The only sure statement that can be said about PGMs is they will change the battlefield. The final effectiveness of PGMs depends on what future development brings.

Battlefield nuclear weapons, especially of the enhanced radiation or neutron variety, are usable. Since they are usable, they are a credible deterrent. Moreover, first use of nuclear weapons is a significant psychological factor and could well lead to nuclear escalation. The Soviets' sure knowledge of this must be a powerful restraining factor. Decoupling the battlefield from nuclear weapons limits the risk of the aggressor and thereby is less of a deterrent. Pulling nuclear weapons back to the Rhine in effect offers the nuclear free land at a conventional price.

The authors' suggestions are at best premature. It is doubtful they can be accomplished and it is anything but assured they can be maintained. Finally, if instituted, they would at significant cost lessen Nato's ability to deter war rather than increase it.

W.A. Weronko
Lieut. Commander, U.S. Navy
USS *Conyngham* (DDG 17)

More on the Catholic Dilemma

Sir:

Colonel Wilber's letter, "The Catholic Dilemma," in the November-December issue is a thoughtful and worthwhile contribution to the emerging debate of the role of not only Catholics but of all men and women of faith in modern war.

I take exception, however, to Colonel Wilber's several statements denying the competence of Catholic clergymen and, by inference, Protestant and Jewish clergy as well, to make definitive judgments on military affairs. If that is so, then how is it that issue after issue of *Naval War College Review* and all of the other professional journals carry articles on highly technical military subjects written by civilian professors many of whom never have seen military service, or whose service and professional military education are extremely limited? The reason of course is the realization that strategic assessment is a subject far exceeding the limits of the experience and education of most military officers, as Admiral Watkins acknowledges in the opening pages of the same issue.

Father Winters in his *America* article and the Catholic bishops in their draft pastoral letter on nuclear warfare have done a major service in forcing the strategic debate out of the academic closet. The same can be said for the "nuclear freeze" movement. The security interests of the United States and of all free peoples cannot but benefit from more direct participation and interest by greater numbers of our fellow citizens.

Colonel Wilber himself makes a technical error in describing *America* as "a so-called official Catholic magazine." If he will read the masthead at the top of the inside cover of each issue he will find that the magazine makes no other claim than to be "Published by Jesuits of the United States and Canada." Further, successive editors have made it plain in comments published on the same inside cover that they and individual authors speak neither for the Society of Jesus nor the Catholic Church as a whole, presenting only their individual viewpoints.

William V. Kennedy
Mechanicsburg, Pa.