

Note from AFA President -- Why Numbers Matter

Friday, August 29, 2008

AFA Members, Congressional Staffers, Civic Leaders, and DOCA Members, below is a short tutorial on how air campaign planners look at the problem of building strike packages and putting the right set of weapons on the right targets. The first thing I want you to notice is - **in the real world**, not every aircraft possessed is mission ready. The second thing to remember is for an operation to run smoothly, the maintenance schedule must be met ... and there must be spare aircraft set-aside in order to keep flight integrity and to avoid missing targets. Thirdly, you should never think in terms of a one-time strike. Air planners understand a single strike is the most ineffective way to use airpower - you have to plan for a continuing campaign. Fourthly, the numbers you are going to see are similar to the ones in the real world ... but are not the actual numbers. Fifthly, I will not include support aircraft in the example ... because it gets complex very quickly.

Next week, I will send you a simple Air Defense problem for fighters.

As always, I look forward to your comments

For your consideration,

Mike

Michael M. Dunn, Lt Gen (Ret)
President/CEO

Scenario -- B-2 Mission from Whiteman AFB, MO against a fictional nuclear power plant in the Middle East

A senior civilian defense official once asked me: How many aircraft can you generate for multiple strikes?

Total B-2s available: 20

Minus 2 in depot = 18

Minus 2 hard broke = 16

Minus 2 - various other maintenance reasons - Estimated time in Commission - parts +24 hours = 14+

Now let's assume the rest are close to being mission capable. The flight time to the target is 18 hours. Time difference between Whiteman AFB and the target is +9+30. The B-2 can only penetrate a sophisticated airspace at night - in this example time-on-target is 0030 (Middle East time)

Refer to this chart:

Event	Time -- Whiteman	Time -- Middle East
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First Strike

President orders attack	D-3 -- 1400	D-2 -- 2330
Bombers begin generation; Crewmembers go into crew rest	D-3 -- 1500	D-2 -- 0030
Crew briefs	D-2 -- 1900	D-1 -- 0430
Takeoff	D-2 -- 2100	D-1 -- 0630
Time on Target	D-1 -- 1500	D-Day -- 0030
Recovery--Whiteman AFB	D-Day -- 0900	D-Day -- 1830

2nd Strike

Crew briefs	D-1 -- 1900	D-Day -- 0430
Takeoff	D-1 -- 2100	D-Day -- 0630
Time on Target	D-Day -- 1500	D+1 -- 0030
Recovery--Whiteman AFB	D+1 -- 0900	D+1 -- 1830

3rd Strike

Crew briefs	D-Day -- 1900	D+1 -- 0430
Takeoff	D-Day -- 2100	D+1 -- 0630
Time on Target	D+1 -- 1500	D+2 -- 0030
Recovery--Whiteman AFB	D+2 -- 0900	D+2 -- 1830

4th Strike

Crew briefs	D+1 -- 1900	D+2 -- 0430
Takeoff	D+1 -- 2100	D+2 -- 0630
Time on Target	D+2 -- 1500	D+3 -- 0030
Recovery--Whiteman AFB	D+3 -- 0900	D+3 -- 1830

Now a few observations.

1. Note that the first flight returns - assuming no divers, bad weather, etc - with 12 hours to go before the 3rd strike takeoff. That means the plane has to be

fully mission capable and turned in that time. Any degradation in combat capability pushes a bird to the 4th strike

2. Same occurs for the aircraft on the 2nd strike - they are available for - the 4th strike ... at the earliest.

3. If you put all your MC aircraft into the first strike, you have nothing for the second day. And you end up with strikes every other day.

4. Most decision makers think only in terms of single strikes and with a high percentage of your fleet participating in that strike. They don't think about a continuing campaign, the possible need to return to the target. They don't consider the need for spare aircraft, for problems with the tankers, with rendezvous, or with a myriad of other things that can go wrong.

5. The decision maker who asked me was shocked when I told him that we could generate and fly about 4 aircraft per mission. I told him that in the first days of a campaign, we could probably go with 6 aircraft - but over the long term - we could get only 4 per mission.

6. I've read articles by some noted people who stated the Air Force did not want more B-2s. The fact is they fought hard to buy more. SECAF Don Rice did everything in his power to convince the administration to keep the production line open. And ... I can tell you that 17 years later ... anyone involved with building campaign plans wished we would have done so.

7. Numbers matter.