

TASK 5

HOW CAN FORCES EMPLOYED IN PEACE SUPPORT OPERATIONS USE AIR POWER MORE EFFECTIVELY?

Task

- 86 Aircraft have been used to support ground forces in many past PSOs. But the use of air power against hostile forces has caused great misgivings among political authorities, especially in UN operations. What doctrinal developments would clarify the potential for the use of air forces in the future and minimise the risks involved in the employment of such forces?
- 87 Where there is less than clear doctrinal consensus within a force, political authorities may be unwilling to allow combat air forces to be used by commanders without unusual and elaborate control mechanisms. Integration of air power (for combat, surveillance, transportation and logistic support) is to be found in the military doctrine of leading states. Is there a doctrine deficit in this area and if so, how should it be remedied?
- 88 The discussion in syndicate therefore focused on addressing the following questions:
- *How much air power has been employed in recent PSOs and how effectively has it been used?*
 - *How could air assets (of all kinds) be better employed in PSOs?*

Summary of points raised in discussion

- 89 There was agreement that air assets were always in short supply in PSOs in Africa, especially support helicopters and reconnaissance aircraft. It was felt that offensive air support was less useful (and less often used), partly because target selection and identification are difficult in the African context. The dispersal of troops, lack of military infrastructure under faction control and vast distances all militate against the effective use of offensive air support. There are also generic problems related to the concept of minimum necessary force. A force cannot attack factories and remain impartial.
- 90 Air assets can be employed more effectively for reconnaissance, surveillance, deterrence, sustainment and patrolling. The transportation of troops and materiel by air is nearly always essential in PSOs in Africa due to distances, lack of transport infrastructure and the size of areas of

responsibility (AOR). 'Contracted' services have often been used in UN missions in Africa, but the disadvantage of relying on contractors lies in the fact that they often refuse to fly into dangerous areas. National aviation assets therefore remain key to the success of African PSOs.

- 91 Air assets are scarce and expensive resources, so those in possession should share what they have in the PSO spirit of multilateralism. It was agreed that states with well-developed air capabilities should be asked to contribute assets to support PSOs in the African context. Nevertheless, it is important that force commanders have competent advice on the use of such air assets – either from a designated air component commander or from specialist staff. There should also be coherence in the employment of air assets and land forces. These need to be integrated into a joint campaign plan.

Unfinished business/Recommendations for further research

- 92 The syndicate preferred to consider the underlying problems associated with the use of air forces in PSOs rather than to discuss the questions posed in detail. It is also obvious that these issues will enjoy more attention in North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) circles than in African forums. Nevertheless, it was felt that a useful research project would focus on the real record of air forces employed in PSOs in Africa in recent years, and suggestions on how air forces might be made more effective in future.