

distributed defense

Distributed Defense

New Operational Concepts for Integrated Air and Missile Defense

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Expériences alliées

After Integration, What?

A new problem has arisen: the prospect of conflict with near-peer adversaries who have spent two decades going to school on the American way of war. Although a conversation is now under way about how to adapt the U.S. military to this new strategic environment, air and missile defense (AMD) forces have been all too absent from that conversation. Against near-peer threats, today's AMD force is unfortunately far too susceptible to suppression. One avenue for transformation is with new and more imaginative operational concepts. More distributed AMD operations would improve their flexibility and resilience and in turn strengthen the broader joint force.

NEW OPERATING ENVIRONMENT

Joint Staff and Service publications have long pointed to the emergence of high-end technology threats, and some of those predictions have now materialized.

1. Potential adversaries like Russia and China have acquired a spectrum of air and missile capabilities and emulated U.S. concepts for using deep precision strike to fracture ground and naval forces. Unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), for instance, might be used to provide reconnaissance and targeting data to enable cruise missile, artillery, and ballistic missile strikes.

2. Salvos or swarms may be used simultaneously, creating a complex, cluttered, and confusing battlespace. Advanced surface-to-air missiles could also hinder U.S. air operations, as well as the transport and supply of ground forces.

A missile-heavy threat set already forms the backbone of the anti-access and area denial

(A2/AD) capabilities that complicate American power projection, but those complications are growing. Although tenets of the Cold War-era AirLand Battle doctrine still have important applications and have worked well in smaller operations against lesser threats, the new operating environment has many contested domains. U.S. forces now have more limited forward presence, their numbers are far fewer, and air supremacy is no longer a given.

3. Potential adversaries' integrated air defenses and precision strike weapons hold forward-based U.S. forces at risk, complicate maneuver, and impair freedom of action. Unfortunately, the United States is not well postured against this form of combined arms, and without swift adaptation it will not be for the foreseeable future. In the face of complex integrated attack, integrated air and missile defence (IAMD) has become critical for joint operations.

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