

Battle Phases

Introduction.

Modern warfare is carried out in distinct phases. This ensures that Commanders do not overstep the boundaries of prudence and overextend their forces and place them in peril. There are many examples of this in recent history – WW1 and WW2 each providing classic reference material.

The end of one phase of battle and the beginning of the next may well involve minor blurring of roles for air and ground forces, but not usually in any great measure. I will attempt to layout the phases below with a snap-shot of their purposes.

Counter Air.

Degradation of the enemy's ability to control the airspace and attack Blue Force assets and troops. This involves direct Air-to-Air engagement between aircraft, attacking air defence units, SAM systems, radar sites, Command and Control centres. All this is done from high altitude with minimum risk to assets.

Air Interdiction.

Once Air superiority is achieved and Red Air has been pushed away from the AO, the low-level and medium-level attacks begin. SWEEP/SEAD/Grnd Attack packages begin to attack support infrastructure but there is still the risk of mobile SAM units that have survived. Low-level sorties to attack bridges, railway yards, fuel storage, ammunition dumps, power stations and transformer yards, supply routes, comms towers etc begin. Anything that degrades the enemy's ability to prolong the conflict.

Battlefield Air Interdiction.

The hunt for enemy ground units begins. These units will still have some mobile SAM systems and as always the risk of MANPADS is ever present. Enemy artillery positions, tank formations, ground attack missile systems (SCUD for example), troop concentrations and dug-in defences, convoys. Anything capable of fighting in force is targetted.

Maritime.

If this has been mainly a dry land war then there is unlikely to have been major naval engagement. If there was major naval engagement (rare these days) then some mopping up may be done on open water. However, in this phase it generally concerns coastal defences, minor warships and anti-shiping missile systems (Silkworm etc), fast attack boats, naval workshops and ports, dockyards and fuelling depots.

Pre-Invasion.

Creating a beach -head , clearing an area around the landing site and CAS missions for the landing troops where necessary. Providing CAP and air cover thereafter for the duration of the landing until a suitable airfield is secured. After which the rest of the campaign proceeds pushing into the enemy country using a repeat of the phases until the determined objective is achieved.

Conclusion.

I hope that this is of some use. I feel that the RAFAIR Tuesday night would really be hinged around the Air Interdiction phase or Battlefield Air Interdiction phase as there would still be mobile SAMs, red air from further afield for the air defenders and plenty of ground assets and SEAD for the likes of 97/41/3/892 to get their teeth into. What we wouldn't see is major SAM systems or fighter formations in the AO. Red air would definitely be incoming from outside though.