

# WHAT IS CLOSE AIR SUPPORT (CAS) AND WHY IS IT AIRPOWER'S MOST IMPORTANT MISSION?

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## 1. INTRO

- a. The battle against A-10 “divestment” is not about making the A-10 immortal; it’s about the future of CAS.
- b. This is not a hardware issue, it is a **people** issue.
- c. The long-festering inadequacy of CAS is not a uniquely Air Force problem: the Army, Navy, Marines and Air Force leadership are all failing our troops—and, without outside intervention, will continue to do so.
- d. There is a cadre of USAF/ANG/JTAC/SOF people who really know and want to do CAS. Today they face a USAF HQ reign of terror to silence them.

## 2. AIRPOWER AND WINNING WARS: BOMBING VS CLOSE SUPPORT

- a. Douhet vs Quesada = overwhelming, indiscriminate destruction vs eliminating enemy fighting power = annihilating a target list vs combined arms (air + ground) disintegration of enemy’s cohesion.
- b. Leveling cities and bombing enemy heartland consistently lengthens wars: WWII Germany, WWII Japan, North Korea, North Vietnam/Cambodia/Laos, Serbia, Gulf War I.
- c. Air-ground cooperation provides the crucial edge in blitzkrieg victories and in preventing retreats from becoming catastrophes. CAS enabled the German breakthroughs into Poland, Holland and France, saved the Allies on the Normandy beaches, unleashed Patton’s blitz across France, saved multiple German Army groups from encirclement on the Eastern Front, prevented a Marine massacre at the Chosin Reservoir, in Vietnam saved Special Forces Camps from being overrun on hundreds of occasions.

### 3. THE ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF CAS, IN ORDER OF PRIORITY

- a. A ground commander and an air commander who **want to do CAS**. Impossible to achieve through better joint regs, more joint HQs or wider bandwidth networks and comms.
- b. Skilled forward controllers—preferably ground *and* air—to man every air-ground combined operation, each spending 50% of their time living with troops on the ground.
- c. Skilled CAS-only pilots intimately familiar with ground tactics, each spending at least 10% of their time living with controllers and troops on the ground.
- d. CAS-capable aircraft. Must be able to: deliver a dozen or more passes of devastating firepower within 50' of friendlies; find camouflaged enemy troop targets and maneuver hard at under 300 kts; fight under 1000' weather ceilings, loiter many hours (no tankers) over supported troops; talk directly via radio with ground squad leaders, survive machine gun fire, small AA and shoulder-fired missiles under 1000'; fly sustained multi-sortie-per-day combat ops out of dirt runways, roads and grass fields with no hangars.

### 4. WHAT ARE THE REAL CONSEQUENCES OF A-10 “DIVESTMENT”?

- a. Dispersing to the four winds the only cadre of people in the Air Force both skilled in—and committed to—close support. And ensuring that future USAF Chiefs will never again build such a cadre.
- b. Replacing this cadre with multi-mission pilots/commanders focused on target list bombing and air superiority, with little to no interest in CAS and certainly zero incentive to do combined air-ground operations.
- c. Guaranteeing that, after 2015, USAF aircraft will be unable to find and destroy camouflaged enemy infantry targets; unable provide CAS to troops in trouble in poor weather; unable to annihilate close-in threats to our troops; unable to deliver support from anything less than fully-equipped airbases with at least 8000' concrete runways. And that the USAF will never again develop an airplane capable of these essential tasks.
- d. In sum, after 2015 divestment, the USAF message to American combat troops in trouble is, “You’re on your own, we have more important things to do.”