

By Robert S. Dudley

## Backfire Bombing

“Adhering to a zero civilian casualty goal [in air operations against ISIS] is backfiring in ways that those who directed it probably did not intend. It is yielding to the Islamic State an air defense capability they do not have to pay for, equip to attain, or man to employ. Our airmen are performing magnificently at the individual and unit level, doing the most they can while encumbered with incredibly onerous rules of engagement—well in excess to the laws of armed conflict.”—*Retired USAF Lt. Gen. David A. Deptula, quoted in Air Force Times, July 8.*

## War, Take 1

“This will not be quick. This is a long-term campaign. ISIL ... is nimble. In ... urban areas, it is dug in among innocent civilian populations. ... Our coalition [has] now hit ISIL with more than 5,000 air strikes. We have taken out thousands of ... tanks, vehicles, bomb factories, and training camps. We have eliminated thousands of fighters, including senior ISIL commanders. ... We have seen, when we have an effective partner on the ground, ISIL can be pushed back. ... ISIL's recent losses in both Iraq and Syria prove that they can and will be defeated.”—*President Obama, statement at the Pentagon on the status of war with Islamic State fighters, July 6.*

## War, Take 2

“President Obama's comments today reveal the disturbing degree of self-delusion that characterizes the Administration's campaign. None of the so-called progress that the President cited suggests that we are on a path to success, and when you are not winning in warfare, you are losing.”—*Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.), Senate Armed Services Committee, statement issued July 6.*

## Raptor Days?

“I would say the biggest threat on my mind is what's happening with Russia and the activities of Russia, and indeed that's a big part of why I'm here in Europe. ... It's extremely worrisome on what's going on in the Ukraine. We've seen the type of warfare—which someone dubbed [as] hybrid warfare—which is somewhat new. So I would put that at the top of my list. I could easily see the

day—though I couldn't tell you the day exactly—when the F-22, for example, rotates in [to European bases]. ... I don't see why that couldn't happen in the future.”—*Secretary of the Air Force Deborah Lee James, remarks at the Paris Air Show, June 15.*

## Going, Going ...

“Aerospace power has always been and will always be fundamental to our ability to project power across transoceanic distances, to conduct theater entry operations, and to mount joint combined arms operations. ... The thing that bothers me the most is that in 2001, the United States Air Force had 88 tactical fighter squadrons [but] today, and primarily due to intense budget pressures, they have 54, moving to 49. ... We're [at] about the same place ... in ground forces [and] we're [at] about the same place ... in naval forces. But in aerospace capacity and capability, we have dropped significantly.”—*Deputy Secretary of Defense Robert O. Work, address to RAND Corp., June 22.*

## Space Under Siege

“All of our global command and control and space capabilities are under increasing threat and, in an unclassified environment, I can't speak too deeply about this, but let me just say that it is very concerning. Our potential adversaries are pursuing a wide range of cyber and kinetic attack capabilities, and we are going to have to expend a lot of effort to maintain our C2 network and our space capabilities in any future fight.”—*Deputy Secretary of Defense Robert O. Work, address to RAND Corp., June 22.*

## Phalanx, Longbow, Battleship

“Between 1990 and 2014, the United States went to war against regional or lesser powers that had no means to challenge US air superiority and therefore no means to threaten the American way of war. That attractive state of affairs possessed a superficial permanence similar to earlier dominant military concepts and technologies such as the Greek phalanx, longbow, and battleship. ... Today, it appears that the proliferation of long-range precision strike capabilities, accurate and reliable ballistic and cruise missiles especially, is bringing

an end to the American era of rear-area sanctuary. ... USAF is no newcomer to the problems of air base defense. ... [It] can meet and overcome them just as it did in earlier conflicts. ... We can, however, be sure [that] ... winning the battle of the airfields will require a level of institutional commitment to air base defense ... not seen since the height of the Cold War.”—*RAND analyst Alan J. Vick, in “Air Base Attacks and Defensive Counters,” released June 12.*

## Et Tu, Jimmy?

“On the world stage, I think they [President Obama's successes] have been minimal. ... Just to be as objective about it as I can, I can't think of many nations in the world where we have a better relationship now than ... when he took over—you know, if you look at Russia, if you look at England, if you look at China, if you look at Egypt, and so forth. ... I would say that the United States' influence and prestige and respect in the world is probably lower now than it was six or seven years ago.”—*Former President Jimmy Carter, remarks at the Aspen Institute in Colorado, June 25.*

## Paint It Black

“Almost exactly a century ago, crazy concepts like ‘flying machines,’ ‘undersea boats,’ and ‘land ironclads’ appeared in novels, while Andrew Carnegie dedicated his new Palace of Peace with a speech predicting that the end of war was ‘as certain to come, and come soon, as day follows night.’ Yet a real war emerged out of a crisis and the real airplane, submarine, and tank were fighting in it. Likewise today, the wars of the Middle East could be looked back upon as equivalent to the Boer Wars and other small wars of that period. There is a real arms race and real tensions. ... A conflict could start by an accident—two planes accidentally smashing together over an uninhabited island that no one should really care about—or through a deliberate choice in the 2020s to reorder the global system. The risks of World War III may seem like something in the distant past but, as the Rolling Stones sang in ‘Gimme Shelter,’ ‘It's just a shot away.’”—*Military futurist Peter W. Singer of New America Foundation, writing in Defense One, July 7.*