



# Operational Art and The Sustainment Warfighting Function

*US Army, Major Jason A. Ballard*

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With the rapidly changing and unfamiliar global environment, the U.S. Army must require its planners to have an understanding of operational art within the context of their warfighting function and combat power. How can an operational planner ensure that the warfighting functions are integrated and contribute to the planning team's mutual understanding of the environment? More specifically, what must a planner do to increase his contribution to a planning team? This monograph asserts that knowledge of operational art is necessary in order for the six warfighting functions to integrate effectively during the planning process. From the viewpoint of sustainment, this monograph explores the possibilities of the sustainment warfighting function implementing the common language of operational art. This can enable an understanding of the capabilities and requirements both inside and outside the warfighting function. The sustainment principles, derived from both historic case studies and experiences gained from previous operations, can be translated into useful terminology that illustrates best practices. The principles are a collection of best practices that describe important considerations during sustainment operations. Principles of sustainment provide a frame of reference and terminology to describe a desired output for sustaining military operations. In addition to the common language, the monograph shows the relationship between combat power and the sustainment warfighting function to suggest that combat power is the common thread that exists among all warfighting functions. Case studies provide evidence that use of operational art can increase the sustainment warfighting function's overall contribution to the planning process by translating sustainment principles into useful operational art terms. Operational art and combat power are the concepts that unite all warfighting functions. Capitalizing on this assessment can provide a planner the approach necessary to improve his contribution and improve the effectiveness of the planning team. All in all the responsibility to practice operational art falls to the individual planner. This will be the only method to implement the foundations of operational art until each warfighting function standardizes the education of its members. The concepts of operational art are too useful to wait until the future staff planner is formally educated. This monograph recommends that the elements of operational art be introduced to an officer earlier in their career.

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