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NATIONAL WAR COLLEGE

THE WARTHOG

THE BEST DEAL THE AIR FORCE NEVER WANTED

ARDEN B. DAHL

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THE WARTHOG
THE BEST DEAL THE AIR FORCE NEVER WANTED

The A-10 may be slow...but the earth is patient.

Anonymous Hog Pilot

Introduction

Nearly 30 years ago the United States Air Force (USAF) developed and fielded the A-10 Thunderbolt II. Nicknamed the “Warthog,” the A-10 was built as a highly maneuverable aircraft, heavily armored and armed—specifically intended for the Close Air Support (CAS) mission.¹ For those of us who came into the A-10 community during the 1980’s, it was common knowledge that the aircraft was not popular among USAF senior leadership. A-10 folklore also held that the Warthog had strong congressional support on Long Island, which helped overcome opposition in the service. The purpose of this paper is to analyze the significant actors and major issues of the A-10 acquisition to answer the following question: Why did the Air Force buy the A-10 aircraft?

The Political Landscape During the 1970’s

In 1973, the A-10 program was but one of a number of acquisition battles under consideration within the Department of Defense. These battles took place during the country’s painful withdrawal from Vietnam and amidst an American public tired of war and skeptical of large

¹ The agreed definition of CAS at the time is the essentially the same as today’s. “Air attacks against hostile targets which are in close proximity to friendly forces and which require detailed integration of each air mission with the fire and movement of those forces.” W. W. Momyer, “Close Air Support in the USAF,” International Defense Review, vol 1, (1974), 77.

defense funding outlays. Money was scarce. At same time, the Joint Chiefs of Staff were worrying about a Soviet build-up of conventional and nuclear forces that threatened the superpower balance. By the summer of 1974 everything was overshadowed by President's Nixon's Watergate scandal.² It was a difficult time to buy airplanes for a lot of reasons. The genesis for the A-10 buy originated from a bit of historical baggage.

Army and USAF Rivalry over CAS

The USAF A-10 acquisition story was part of a long running battle between the Army and the USAF over the CAS mission. Shortly after becoming a separate service, the interservice Key West Agreement of 1948 specifically assigned the USAF the task to provide CAS for the Army. Over the next two decades, the two services rehashed this division of responsibility in a number of supplemental agreements.³ The periodic clash over CAS responsibilities stemmed from the Army's lack of satisfaction of USAF CAS responsiveness and coordination during the Korean War.⁴ In general, the Army also felt that the USAF did not put enough priority on the CAS mission. Through the 1950s and early 1960s, the USAF made no effort to field an aircraft specifically designed for CAS. In contrast, the USAF preference pursued multi-mission supersonic aircraft that were optimized for long-range strike and air superiority missions.⁵ One

² Mark Perry, Four Stars, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1989), 244-263. This section provides great detail on the politics of the period between the OSD, the White House and Congress.

³ Report of The Special Subcommittee on Close Air Support, Preparedness Investigating Subcommittee, Committee on Armed Services, U.S. Senate, 92d Congress, 1st Session, 1972, (Washington DC: GPO, 1972), 15-16. The Key West 1948 Agreement intended to reduce service duplication. Agreements and Department of Defense directives in 1952, 1956 and 1957 all reaffirmed the Key West decision and denied Army aviation the CAS mission.

⁴The Army thought that they should have a say on CAS aircraft design and control. The USAF successfully countered each Army bid for CAS autonomy with strong congressional support. Richard A. Stubbing and Richard A. Mendel, The Defense Game, (Harper & Row, Publishers: New York, 1986), 139-140. Also see David C. Isby, Statement, Hearing on Roles and Missions of Close Air Support Investigations Subcommittee, Committee on Armed Services U.S. House of Representatives, 27 Sep 90.

⁵Richard A. Stubbing and Richard A. Mendel, 140. During the late 1950's, the Army had attempted to procure some Italian G-91 Fiat jet fighters to use for close air support. The USAF quickly killed the idea. Also see William D. White, U.S. Tactical Air Power, (The Brookings Institution: Washington DC, 1974), 59. John C.

could argue that this preference made sense for an independent air force responsible for air superiority, nuclear strike and deep interdiction. To conduct the CAS mission, however, the USAF improvised by hanging bomb racks on supersonic fighters and putting World War II propeller driven aircraft like the A-1 Skyraider into the battle.⁶ The lack of a dedicated CAS platform made the Army wonder what priority the USAF put on CAS, especially since multi-purpose fighter aircraft could be diverted to other missions. This concern drove a persistent Army quest for an organic close air support capability, a quest the USAF persistently frustrated.⁷ In 1962, with Secretary of Defense McNamara's support and over USAF objections, the Army started to build up a significant helicopter force to provide close fires for airmobile infantry operations in Vietnam.⁸ Subsequently, the USAF came to terms with the Army's new capabilities, confirmed in the 1966 Johnson-McConnell agreement between the respective service chiefs.⁹ While the USAF acknowledged the Army's use of rotary wing aircraft for battlefield fire support, it also reconfirmed the USAF's exclusive hold on the fixed-wing CAS mission. However, with a helicopter toe-hold in the CAS battle, the Army quickly "upped the ante."

Bahnsen, "A New Army Air Corps or a Full Combat Arms Team Member?" Armed Forces Journal International, October 86: 70.

⁶ The Army and Marines view CAS as an essential component of their battlefield firepower. The USAF and Navy see the CAS battle as one of the several missions in the scope of an air campaign. While the Marines owned this component in their air-land team, the Army depends on the USAF to support their battle. See Report of The Special Subcommittee on Close Air Support, 7-8.

⁷ Charles.E. Meyers, Jr., interview by author, 10 January 2003. As an USAF test pilot, Myers witnessed Army aviation efforts to develop organic fire support using various rotary-wing aircraft as early as 1960.

⁸ Richard A. Stubbing and Richard A. Mendel, 140-141.

⁹ In the 1966 agreement, the USAF Chief of Staff, John McConnell agreed to cede USAF claims to current and future rotary wing aircraft for Army "intra-theater movement, fire support, supply--." It was the first time the USAF acknowledged the Army's "jurisdiction to operate armed helicopters." The agreement conformed to earlier joint stipulations that assigned Army helicopters to maneuver units (division size or smaller), and operated them inside the ground commander's prescribed combat zone. See the Report of The Special Subcommittee on Close Air Support, 16.

The Rivalry Intensifies: The Cheyenne and the A-X Programs

After the 1966 Johnson-McConnell agreement, the Army sought a more capable attack helicopter, the AH-56 Cheyenne.¹⁰ The USAF responded vigorously and made the Cheyenne a hot controversy. Air Force leadership saw the Cheyenne as an Army ploy to grab the CAS mission.¹¹ General John P. McConnell, the USAF Chief of Staff, countered with the A-X program, a move to produce the USAF's first pure CAS aircraft. McConnell did not want to lose the CAS mission to the Army. He especially did not want to have this happen on his watch as the Chief of Staff.¹² This was a significant watershed event for a service that considered any specialized aircraft a threat to its traditional multi-mission tactical aircraft. Not surprising, the response from senior USAF leadership was unenthusiastic. McConnell placed the A-X program in his "roles and missions" office and depended on a small group of officers and civilians, which included a handful of A-1 pilots with Vietnam experience, to work the details.¹³ This group noted that no three or four-star flag officer below the Chief of Staff supported the program. General McConnell had to fire one USAF colonel for trying to "sabotage" the A-X program through his contacts in Congress. The lack of support made the initial A-X concept formulation

¹⁰ The Lockheed AH-56A Cheyenne was the winner of the Army's Advanced Aerial Fire Support competition. It was a revolutionary hybrid machine with a rigid rotor, pusher tail propeller and small wings. It had attributes of a helicopter or a fixed-wing aircraft depending on the flight regime. Ten were built out of the original 375 ordered. "Lockheed AH-56 "Cheyenne," Helicopter History Site, <<http://www.helis.com/>> (10 January 2003).

¹¹ USAF testimony before Congress in 1971 complained that the Cheyenne impinged on the service's CAS mission. Report of The Special Subcommittee on Close Air Support, 18.

¹² Thomas Christie, interview by author, 8 January 2003. At the time, Christie was the Director of Programs Analysis and Evaluation (PA&E) under the Office of Secretary of Defense (OSD).

¹³ Pierre Sprey, interview by author, 3 and 12 January 2003. Sprey was an analyst in OSD PA&E at the time. He helped write the A-X requirement for McConnell's working group assigned to the Air Staff's Concepts and Doctrine Division under Major General Richard Yudkin. The Concepts and Doctrine Division was actually a "roles and missions" function whose job was to protect USAF turf from the other services. Yudkin's primary action officer was Colonel Avery Kay, the lead B-17 navigator on the Schweinfurt raid. Avery believed that the USAF had never adequately supported the CAS mission. He convinced Yudkin that this was a worthy battle. Their advocacy of the program became a special project, done in the face of opposition from USAF leadership and the "high tech" fighter lobby. Sprey states that McConnell "stuffed the A-X down TAC's throat." Sprey later wrote the requirements for the A-9 and A-10 fly-off.

very difficult, much of which had to be worked outside normal Air Staff and Tactical Air Command (TAC) requirements channels. Eventually, the initial A-X program Request for Proposals (RFP) went out to 21 companies in March 1967. The USAF issued the final RFP in May 1970. Four months later, the USAF selected Northrop and Fairchild to build A-X prototypes for a fly-off competition.¹⁴

The Senate CAS Investigation, 1971

By early 1970, the services were at an impasse concerning the future of CAS force structure and service roles. In October 1971, the Senate Committee Armed Services convened a special subcommittee to investigate the issue.¹⁵ The subcommittee reviewed all service CAS programs to include service requirements, command and control procedures and current/future weapons platforms. The subcommittee's primary recommendation was for the Department of Defense to redefine and assign CAS roles and missions to reduce counterproductive interservice rivalry. Until this happened, the special committee recommended each service pursue its acquisition programs. Final decisions on the A-X and Cheyenne programs would come after they were fully tested.¹⁶ The subcommittee's other recommendations had something for everyone. It declared that the Marines' AV-8 Harrier was not a duplicate CAS platform; therefore, the Marines could work the AV-8 program independently of the A-X. The subcommittee thought the competitive A-X fly-off program was a good idea. However, it also recommended a fly-off between the A-X winner and the A-7 aircraft, a concession to congressional supporters of LTV (formerly Ling-

¹⁴ Bill Sweetman, *Thunderbolt II*, vol 6 of *Modern Fighting Aircraft A-10*, (Arco Publishing, Inc: New York, 1984), 6, 8-9. The A-X program was the first to conduct a competitive prototype fly-off, something that Secretary of the Air Force John McLucas strongly advocated. Walton Moody, interview by author, 8 January 2003. Moody is an Air Force historian.

¹⁵ USAF Secretary Seamans and Army Secretary Resor both wanted to continue their respective programs. Although the Army supported the A-X program, the USAF did not support the Cheyenne beyond prototype development. Report of The Special Subcommittee on Close Air Support, 18.

¹⁶ Report of The Special Subcommittee on Close Air Support, 26.

Temco-Vought), the maker of the A-7. The subcommittee also determined that the Army had a valid requirement for a more capable attack helicopter. Thus the subcommittee established the battle lines for follow-on congressional battles over CAS platforms.¹⁷

The Cheyenne Cancellation and the A-X Fly-off

In August 1972, the Army cancelled the Cheyenne program. The Cheyenne had been plagued by accidents and frustrated by technical difficulties. Although these faults had been fixed, the aircraft had been long delayed and become too expensive. Instead, the Army shifted its efforts to procure a smaller, more agile and cheaper attack helicopter.¹⁸ The demise of the Cheyenne precipitated a move by USAF senior leadership to kill the A-X program. General Ryan, McConnell's successor, kept the A-X program on track. There is little doubt that congressional interest in the A-X also played a part in keeping the program moving.¹⁹

The Northrop A-9 and Fairchild A-10 competed against each other in a fly-off competition starting in mid-1972. After several months of competition and 284 flight test hours, Secretary of the Air Force McLucas, named the Fairchild A-10 the winner in January 1973. The USAF awarded funding for 10 pre-production test aircraft and other long lead-time items to permit full-scale production in 1975.²⁰ Regarding the A-10 selection, some observers emphasize the

¹⁷ Report of The Special Subcommittee on Close Air Support, 26. The subcommittee also suggested a fly-off with the Navy's A-4 Skyhawk fighter, a concession to McDonald-Douglass.

¹⁸ The Army cancelled the Cheyenne in August 1972 during the middle of the A-X fly-off. The follow on program eventually produced the Boeing AH-64 Apache. See "Lockheed Cheyenne AH56A," CarterCopter, <<http://www.internetage.com/cartercopters/>>(10 Jan 2003). Also see "U.S. Army Aircraft since 1947," Lockheed AH-56, <http://avia.russian.ee/vertigo/lok_cheyenne-r.html> (10 Jan 200).

¹⁹ Pierre Sprey, interview by author, 12 January 2003. Some members of Congress, such as Representative Otis Price of New York, had a keen interest in getting the USAF to develop a specialized CAS aircraft. See Hearings on Military Posture and H.R. 12564, 687.

²⁰ J. Philip Geddes, "USAF Choice for the Close Air Support Role," International Defense Review, vol 1, 1974, 71. Also see Hearings on Military Posture and H.R. 12564, Committee on Armed Services House of Representatives, 93d Congress, 2nd Session, 686.

congressional pressure put on the USAF to select Fairchild in order to keep the company alive.²¹ Others closer to the technical decision assert that Fairchild A-10 had delivered the better aircraft. In any case, Northrop supporters did not raise much of a complaint.²²

After winning the fly-off, the A-10 program, with its 4,000 plus jobs, could count on strong congressional support from the New York and Maryland delegations.²³ Fairchild's main plant was located in Farmingdale, NY on Long Island. Most Fairchild workers were constituents of Representatives Joseph Addabbo (D) and Tom Downey (D). Fairchild had another plant in Hagerstown, Maryland, which was in the district of Representative Beverly Byron (D). Fairchild also had the support from a number of northeast corridor congressmen and senators. The A-10's primary congressional opponents supported the LTV A-7, built in Fort Worth Texas. Other A-10 critics in Congress were allied to the "high-tech" multi-mission fighter lobby. Senators Barry Goldwater (R-AZ) and Howard Cannon (D-NV) were prominent members of this group.²⁴

A Package Deal for the USAF and the A-10

When James Schlesinger took over as the Secretary of Defense in 1973, he brought with him a retired Army Colonel and RAND Corporation associate named Richard Hallock. Hallock

²¹ Sweetman, 11. James R. Kurth postulates that Congress generally works weapons system contracts as "follow-on" and "bail-out" imperatives. The former is a political jobs move to keep a production line open. The "bail-out" imperative rescues an industry that is in trouble. The Fairchild selection favors the "bail-out" imperative. See James R. Kurth, "Why We Buy the Weapons We Do," The Political Economy, edited by Thomas Ferguson and Joel Rogers, (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharp, Inc, 1984), 317-322.

²² Sprey, 3 January 2003. Sprey asserts that the Northrop A-9 had a number of problems to work out. Notably, it was overweight and strafed poorly due to a poorly designed flight control system.

²³ Full Committee Consideration of H.R. 8591, H.R. 11144, H.R. 15406, Committee on Armed Services, U.S. House of Representatives, 93d Congress, 2nd Session, 20 June 1974, (Washington DC: GPO, 1974), 4661. At full production in 1979, 4,462 workers were employed by Fairchild on the A-10. 3,339 were at Farmingdale, NY, 1,117 were at Hagerstown, MD, and 126 were at other locations.

²⁴ Peter Iovino, interview by author, 3 January 2003. Iovino was a Fairchild lobbyist during the late 1970's. He also lists Representative Sam Stratten (NY) a former Marine and Chairman of the Subcommittee for Tactical Aircraft Procurement with General Electric Engine connections as a staunch ally. During the 1980s, Senator D'Amatto was also a strong advocate for Fairchild. This list is also based on interviews by the author with Christie, 3 January 2003, Anthony Battista, 3 January 2003 and Bert Cooper, 6 January 2003. Battista was a House Armed Services Committee (HASC) staff member. Bert Cooper worked CAS issues at the Congressional Research Service.

viewed the A-10 as the right answer to the nation's CAS requirement and convinced Schlesinger. To overcome USAF resistance, Schlesinger brought in the USAF Chief of Staff, General George S. Brown, to make a deal. The deal offered to take the "lid" off the USAF's fighter wing cap as long as Brown would support the A-10 and the Light Weight Fighter (LWF) program, which would later produce the F-16. Personally, Brown did not like the A-10 or LWF. But the deal enabled the USAF to pursue the F-15, its biggest priority program, and expand the active fighter force structure with four new wings. No ambitious Chief of Staff could refuse such a deal. Brown took it.²⁵

The Texas Skirmish

The A-10 program later came under attack from supporters of the LTV A-7, notably the Texas delegation with Senator John Tower (R) in the lead.²⁶ The Senate Armed Services Committee (SASC) forced a competitive fly-off between the A-7 and A-10 and cut the A-10's previously approved funding to the point that the program was delayed for about a year. The fly-off was conducted in April 1974. This is where the story really gets interesting. Although USAF senior leadership had little enthusiasm for the A-10, its resistance against the A-7 was even greater. Despite the A-7's excellent combat record as an interdiction aircraft, the USAF argued that it wasn't the answer for CAS. A month prior to the fly-off the USAF stated before the House Armed Services Committee (HASC) that even if the A-7 won the test, the USAF was

²⁵ The preceding section is based on interviews by the author with Tom Christie, 3 January 2003, Pierre Sprey, 3 and 12 January 2003 and Charles Meyers, 10 January 2003. Sprey states that Brown took a lot of heat from numerous general officers for the deal. Meyers explains that the USAF leadership took awhile to get over their "zero sum" mentality, a distrust that OSD was not going to support a force structure expansion that would accommodate both the F-15 and the low-mix of fighters like the LWF and A-10. For a similar account of Richard Hallock's influence on Schlesinger's decision to support the A-10, see Robert Coram, *Boyd: The Fighter Pilot Who Changed the Art of War*, (Boston: Little, Brown and Company: 2002), 279-280.

²⁶ Winslow Wheeler, interview by author, 8 January 2003. Wheeler was a staff officer for Senator Javits of New York. He states that Senator Tower forced the fly-off between the A-10 and A-7. Tower also made a persistent effort to redirect USAF procurement money from the A-10 to the A-7 to support LTV.

not going to buy more A-7's. The A-10 had been designed for the CAS mission, the A-7 had not. Furthermore, the USAF had not asked for the fly-off. The HASC also uncovered the fact that the USAF had programmed production money for the A-10 but none for the A-7. This put the USAF in a posture of prejudging the fly-off before it occurred.²⁷ In any event, the fly-off used worst-case weather conditions that "stacked the deck" against the faster A-7 aircraft.²⁸ The A-10 won the fly-off because the USAF rigged the test, despite strong Senate backing (from Texas).²⁹ Why? The real issue was the fact that the A-7 was a Navy airplane.³⁰ The Schlesinger-Brown deal for the A-10 was holding.

Flying Against the Undercurrent

The A-7 was a minor threat to the A-10 program compared to the persistent undercurrent of opposition that followed from the USAF "high-tech" fighter faction. The program subsequently struggled for the next several years against subtle attempts to delay and discredit the A-10. The opposition made an indirect attempt to stop A-10 production in 1975 in a program cancellation recommendation to the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Installations and Production. A Staff officer in the Office of Secretary of Defense (OSD) caught wind of the move and alerted the

²⁷ Hearings on Military Posture and H.R. 12564, 622-625. This episode also put the HASC in an embarrassing situation. The HASC supported the A-10. As it was, their bill was going to their Senate counterparts (who supported the A-7) with a "prejudged" A-10 win over the A-7 prior to the fly-off. It is interesting to note how the HASC addresses the problem of legally rewriting the bill's language to make requested A-10 funding contingent on the fly-off outcome. The hearing also enquires about the status of LTV A-7 production line for current and future work, in effect, doing some homework before taking on their Senate counterparts.

²⁸ "Flyoff Between the A-7 and A-10 Aircraft," Briefing before Committee on Armed Services House of Representatives, 93d Congress, 2nd Session, 20 June, 1974, (Washington DC: GPO, 1974), 21-27. USAF test pilot testimony had high marks for the A-7's handling and avionics. The pilots generally preferred flying the A-7, but conceded that the A-10 was the better aircraft in poor visibility and low clouds.

²⁹ Sprey, 3 January 2003. This was an irony, the threat of the A-7 rallied support for the A-10 for a season.

³⁰ Gilmore M. Dahl, interview by author, 11 January 2003. Dahl, a retired USAF colonel, was the A-7 division chief at the Air Logistics Center, Tinker AFB in the early 1980s. He notes the total lack of enthusiasm among senior USAF leadership to upgrade or hang on to a Navy airplane. Tom Christie, Pierre Sprey and Winslow Wheeler also confirm this view. A few years previously, McNamara had ordered an unhappy USAF to buy three wings of A-7s. The USAF did not want anymore. See Stubbing and Mendel, 141.

OSD staff to intervene.³¹ OSD found other A-10 problems as well. In 1977, the USAF needed some help to fix a hole in the budget that omitted a plan to employ A-10's on the European continent.³² Throughout the rest of the decade, Fairchild lobbyists and their supporting New York-Maryland congressional alliance had to frequently shore up voting support for A-10 production in four key House and Senate committees.³³ One such time was when congressional opponents used a highly publicized A-10 crash at the 1977 Paris Air Show as an opportunity to attack the program. Fairchild and its congressional allies also fought an annual battle against USAF initiatives to cut yearly production numbers.³⁴ Ultimately, the A-10 program remained under pressure well into the Reagan era.³⁵

Why did the USAF Buy the A-10? The Outcome of Two Battles

Like most inter-agency processes, a number of complex factors shaped the A-10 acquisition decision. Although the story is complicated, this paper argues there were essentially two main battles that were fought over the A-10. The first was an interservice battle between the Army and USAF over the CAS mission. The A-X was the “pawn” employed to kill the Lockheed

³¹ Christie, 14 January 2003. Programs had to be approved through OSD/DDRE (Engineering and Development) and the DSARC (Defense Systems Acquisition Review Committee). The move to cancel the program at the DSARC was done quietly without OSD/DDRE's coordination. Of note, Christie states that Colonel Perry Smith was the alerting official in the 1975 OSD intervention. Smith was the military assistant to Bill Clements, the Deputy Secretary of Defense. He later became well known in the US as a CNN military analyst during Desert Storm.

³² Christie, 14 January 2003. The first A-10 squadrons moved to the RAF Bentwaters and RAF Woodbridge in 1979. After OSD pointed out there was no plan in the budget to for an A-10 plan on the continent, General David Jones, the USAF Chief of Staff staffed a plan to use four forward operating locations in Germany on a temporary basis.

³³ Iovino, 3 January 2003. The Texas congressional delegation was especially vocal. There were four key committees critical to the program, the respective Armed Services and Appropriations Committees in the Senate and House. Of the four, the A-10's biggest threat was from Senator John Tower in the Senate Armed Services Committee. Iovino also recounts how the USAF tried persistently to reduce the program and tried to kill the remaining production in 1983. It was difficult to sustain A-10 funding with hostile USAF staff agencies.

³⁴ Iovino, 3 January 2003. Though the USAF never explicitly stated how a production slow down would impact the final A-10 fleet size, he suspects that the USAF was trying to reduce the final production figure of 727.

³⁵ Christie, 8 January 2003. By the mid-1980's, the USAF was looking for an A-10 replacement for the CAS mission. The answer was the A-16. This never happened. Among other factors, the A-10's highly successful combat performance in Desert Storm short-circuited this plan.

Cheyenne helicopter program and keep the Army out of CAS. The defense of fighter force structure and a General McConnell's personal prestige framed the interservice "turf" battle. After the service secretaries fought the A-X/Cheyenne CAS battle to a draw within the Department of Defense, the fight played out in Congress. In 1971, Congress compromised down the middle and supported continued development of the Cheyenne and the A-X programs. Figure 1 illustrates the competing networks of contractor, congressional and service alliances up until the Senate's CAS investigation in 1971.³⁶

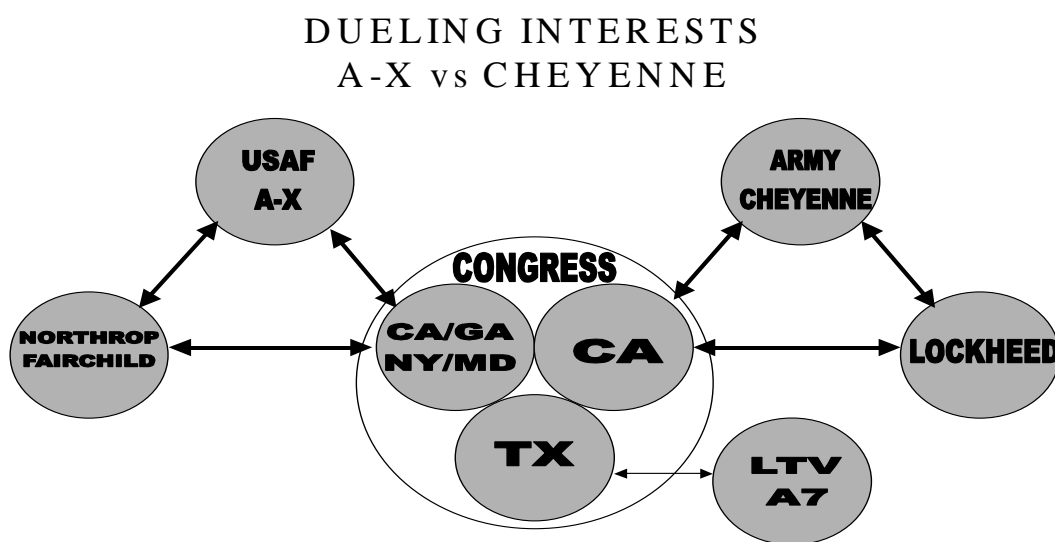


FIGURE 1

The second major battle was fought between a small A-10 lobby and a dominant "high-tech" USAF culture. The latter purposed to kill the A-X after the Army cancelled the Cheyenne program. The A-10 lobby included a few well-placed voices that ultimately influenced the OSD

³⁶ Figure 1 shows Congress as the main battlefield in 1971 between the A-X and the Cheyenne. It does not depict the USAF's internal dissension concerning the A-X. The subsequent A-7 fly-off against the A-10 is ultimately a minor skirmish, although afterwards the A-7's Congressional supporters continue to oppose the A-10.

and the Secretary of Defense to buy the program.³⁷ Along with congressional funding support, the Schlesinger “deal” in late 1973 connected the A-10 program to a USAF fighter expansion to gain support from the USAF Chief of Staff. Although the deal did not relieve anti-A-10 pressure from the “high-tech” faction—it established a sufficient network of contractor, military and congressional interests to weather long-term resistance against the program. Figure 2 illustrates this tangle of competing A-10 interests, both for and against, starting in late 1973.³⁸

A-10 LOBBY vs ANTI A-10 USAF

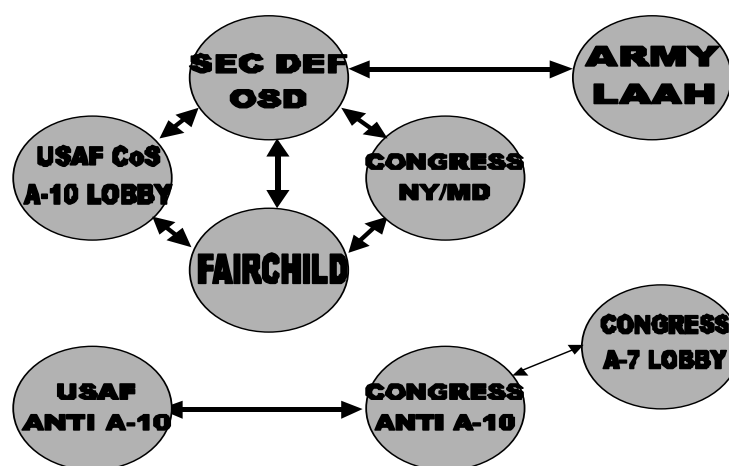


FIGURE 1

³⁷ The A-10 program was the first battle of a reform movement that took on the USAF’s traditional multi-mission fighter lobby. The Reformers argued that high cost and complex systems led to fewer numbers and lower readiness. The two sides have been commonly categorized as the “quantity” versus “quality” schools. However, the reformers were not against advanced technology per se, but fought against high complexity that led to high cost systems. The LWF program was the reformers’ next big battle. See Walter Kross, *Military Reform*, (Washington DC: National Defense University Press, 1985), 15-21.

³⁸ Figure 2 describes a four-way alliance of A-10 supporters. With congressional advocacy and top-cover support from the Secretary of Defense and the USAF Chief of Staff, the small A-10 lobby within the OSD and USAF were able to ward off its “high-tech” service and congressional detractors. The detractors are depicted at the bottom, noticeably without a strong contractor-congressional element in the network. The figure also shows the Army’s pursuit of the Light Advance Attack Helicopter (LAAH) program after the Cheyenne cancellation. Although the LAAH was no longer an immediate threat, the LAAH kept the USAF focused on the CAS issue.

Conclusion

There is a fair amount of evidence to indicate that the USAF did not plan to use the A-10 for any other purpose than to kill the Army's Cheyenne program--to keep the Army out of the CAS mission. It also appears that the USAF "high-tech" culture would not have pursued the A-10 once the Cheyenne was no longer a threat. But by the time this happened, the program had picked up enough Congressional and OSD support to resist the dominant "high-tech" USAF culture and their congressional allies. Influential voices arguing for a true CAS aircraft prompted the Secretary of Defense Schlesinger to support the A-10. This was the key event. Schlesinger in turn got the attention of General Brown, the USAF Chief of Staff, offering a deal he could not refuse. In the end, the USAF procured the A-10 because it got a fighter force expansion it wanted. The inter-agency process was ugly; but it worked out for the small A-10 lobby and in later combat operations. The Air Force just had to take some ugly and slow airplanes with the deal.

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