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Mitchell Institute Releases New Forum Paper: *Targeting the Islamic State*

ARLINGTON, Va (April 14, 2017) —The Mitchell Institute for Aerospace Studies is pleased to announce the release of its newest Forum paper,

Targeting the Islamic State: Activity-Based Intelligence and Modern Airpower, by Maj

Michael P. Kreuzer, USAF, and Maj Denis A.

Dallaire, USAF. Kreuzer and Dallaire, both

experienced intelligence officers, provide a unique perspective into how the US Air Force has adapted its targeting and analysis efforts over time to better dismantle and destroy Islamic State (IS) forces in Iraq and Syria.

The approach, dubbed “activity based intelligence” or ABI, combines targeting lessons gleaned from counterterrorism operations with the deliberate planning and “system of systems” approach to traditional air campaigns, the authors note in their paper. This has helped better target not only top level IS leadership targets, but to go after critical nodes such as infrastructure, financial entities, sustainment nodes, and other aspects of IS’s “proto-state” in Iraq and Syria. As the US and its allies are now squeezing IS strongholds in both Mosul, Iraq and Raqqa, Syria, the authors suggest there are important targeting and intelligence lessons to apply across the US military. The ABI approach is “revolutionizing target development and driving organizational change,” and its lessons should be institutionalized for future campaigns, the authors argue. To be properly organized, trained, and equipped to function in dynamic environments like the counter-IS campaign, the Air Force needs to capture lessons and models for force employment while emphasizing the need for operational and tactical flexibility, they add.

The goal of ABI is to enable a more rapid response against targets to create desired effects against the adversary, Kreuzer and Dallaire note, as analysts have learned lessons and honed techniques over years of supporting counterterrorism and counterinsurgency operations. As the Air Force seeks to capture lessons from conflicts defined by dynamic targeting and reinvigorate the deliberate process in target selection, the need to modernize analysis to meet threats such as proto-state adversaries like IS will only grow, as threat environments around the world continue to evolve rapidly.

The Mitchell Forum series provides a venue for authors with ideas, concepts, and thoughts on national defense and aerospace power to engage with current and emerging policy debates and issues. For more information on the series, and inquiries about submissions, contact Mitchell’s Director of Publications Marc V. Schanz at mschanz@afa.org or visit our website, at www.mitchellaerospacepower.org.



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