

Watson

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OFFICE, CHIEF OF ARMY FIELD FORCES.  
Fort Monroe, Virginia

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ATING-42 373(C) (13 Sep 51) 13 September 1951

SUBJECT: Tactical Air Support of Ground Forces.

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U.S. ARMY MILITARY HISTORY INSTITUTE

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TO: Chief of Staff  
Department of the Army  
Washington 25, D. C.

1. The impending organization of the Joint Tactical Air Support Board introduces a pressing requirement for an explicit statement of the principles, organization, and procedures which the Army regards as essential elements of a satisfactory tactical air support doctrine.

2. As a step toward meeting this requirement, there is inclosed herewith (TAB A) a study on Tactical Air Support of Ground Forces. This study amplifies, in part, the viewpoints expressed in my letter to you on 24 October 1950 (TAB B) and your Memorandum to Chief of Staff, U. S. Air Force (TAB C) with respect to Army requirements for close tactical air support. Although the considerations contained therein cover only broad fundamental principles, this study is designed to furnish a definitive basis for the detailed development of joint doctrine.

3. It will be noted that provision is made for operational control by a field commander of those tactical air elements (offensive and reconnaissance) which are provided for the execution of a ground campaign. I have previously expressed my convictions in this regard, based on my personal experience as an Army and Army Group Commander, in World War II, and on observations in the United States, within the European Command, and in Korea. I am of the firm conviction that in any future war with a major power, nothing less than operational control by the ground commander will provide the requisite assurance that:

- a. Unity of command exists on the field of battle.
- b. Army Commanders will receive appropriate consideration for their requirements in the application of available air support.
- c. A commander can depend on the use of a definite amount of tactical air while it has been allocated for close support and integrate its use in his plan of battle.

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d. The power of decision on targets to be attacked in the execution of the ground campaign will be vested in the responsible Army Commander.

4. I consider that the traditional Air Force doctrine, which provides for co-equal command status between ground and air at all but theater levels, constitutes a fundamental defect in command relationship. This doctrine of command by mutual cooperation is unacceptable because it reserves to the supporting arm the authority to determine whether or not a supporting task should be executed. The theory of divided command in the face of the enemy is foreign to the basic concept of warfare wherein the responsible commander exercises undisputed directive authority over all elements essential to the accomplishment of his mission. The provision for a decision only at the theater or unified command level deprives the Army Commander of this authority and in the case of a conflict of opinion between two co-equal commanders precludes resolution within an acceptable time limit. The necessity for a single command is greatest at the scene of battle.

5. I recommend that the inclosed study on tactical air support of ground forces be forwarded to Brigadier General Thomas E. Lewis, the Army representative on the Joint Tactical Air Support Board, as the framework of the Army's position.

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Tabs A thru C

/s/ Mark W. Clark  
/t/ MARK W. CLARK  
General, U. S. Army  
Chief of Army Field Forces

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TACTICAL AIR SUPPORT OF GROUND FORCES

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1. GENERAL:

a. Tactical air support of ground forces is the application of air power for the destruction or neutralization of enemy aerial or surface activities in the battle area and the interdiction of the battle area in furtherance of a ground campaign as required by the ground force commander to accomplish his mission. This application of air power is achieved by Air Force units operating in close support of Army units. Close air support of Army units consists of:

(1) Close support missions requiring integration of the supporting air effort with the fire and movement of supported ground forces; and

(2) That support which does not require such integration but is of immediate interest to the ground commander as being in the present or projected battle area and is capable of exerting a direct influence on the day-to-day operations of the forces in contact with the enemy.

b. The implications of close support are defined as follows: When by direction of higher authority a force is assigned the mission of close support of a designated force, the commander of the supported force will exercise operational control over the supporting force within the limits permitted by accepted tactical practices of the Service of the supporting force. Such operational control includes designation of targets or objectives, timing, duration of the supporting action, and other instructions necessary for coordination and for gaining the greatest advantage.

2. PRINCIPLES:

a. The theater commander or subordinate unified commander, if designated, is responsible that tactical air power for the support of land forces is made available.

b. Unified commanders, with the advice of the Army and Air commanders, determine the composition, priorities of effort, and zones of responsibility of tactical air commands to operate in close support of army groups, and establish policies with respect to proportions of air effort which may be applied on various Air Force missions.

c. With respect to offensive and reconnaissance air support, tactical air commands are directed by the theater air officer in accordance with policies established by the unified commander (par b above), as to the minimum strength which they will apply against ground targets in support of the ground campaign. This minimum may be exceeded, where appropriate, to include the maximum forces available.

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TAB A

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d. Tactical air commands and army groups establish joint operations centers (JOCs) within which supporting operations are planned. Participating Army personnel represent the army group commander's policies, present his requirements, and provide a media for exchange of operational information and of intelligence.

e. Commanders of tactical air commands designate a tactical air force to operate in support of each field army of the army group. The army group commander with the advice of the tactical air command commander will determine the minimum strength in offensive and reconnaissance air support, to be placed under the operational control of the field army commander. This minimum, which may be exceeded as appropriate, is established in accordance with the limitations imposed by the theater or unified commander.

f. In order to preserve the flexibility of tactical air power no sub-allocation of air units to ground force organizations below the field army level is contemplated. The army commander may, without releasing operational control, authorize all or any portion of the available air effort in support of a given unit which may require it on missions such as spearheading the assault in an attack. The army commander can recall planes allocated to close support missions and direct them to air superiority or interdiction under Air Force control in the event the air situation demands it. A planned ground operation may be delayed to permit diversion of tactical aircraft for the benefit of the over-all situation in the theater. However, the views of the ground force commander must be obtained before depriving him of previously allocated air support effort.

### 3. RESPONSIBILITIES:

a. Tactical air power includes those elements of air power capable of applying fire power (bombers, fighters, and fighter-bombers), those capable of securing intelligence (reconnaissance), and those capable of providing logistic support (transport and troop carrier). Supporting air commanders are charged with the following basic responsibilities:

(1) The direct application of fire power against enemy military forces by:

(a) Gaining and maintaining a favorable degree of air superiority.

(b) Interdicting selected areas.

(c) Providing close support for the supported force (par la above).

(d) Providing air defense.

(2) The provision of aerial reconnaissance to include limited photo reproduction, and in emergency, distribution of aerial photographs.

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TACTICAL AIR SUPPORT OF GROUND FORCES (Cont)

(3) The provision of aerial logistic support.

(4) The command and control of aircraft to insure execution of supporting missions with reasonable safety to the supported forces.

(5) The emergency transmission of requests for air support originating with ground force units in event of failure of normal (Army) means.

b. Supported ground force commanders are charged with the following basic responsibilities:

(1) The processing of requests from the originating ground force unit to air commanders for execution.

(2) The furnishing to air commanders such information concerning targets; friendly ground dispositions; and friendly ground operations as may be necessary for the successful execution of the required mission.

(3) The coordination of friendly ground fires and troop movements with supporting air operations to insure integration of fire power and to insure reasonable safety to friendly ground and air forces involved.

(4) The seizure of terrain vital to supporting air elements for installation of facilities and the security of such installations against enemy ground operations.

(5) The reproduction, interpretation, and distribution of aerial photographs to ground force units as required.

c. Supporting and supported commanders provide cross servicing; logistically, administratively, and operationally, to the maximum practicable extent.

d. The supported commander or his superiors are responsible for selection of ground targets and target systems for the furtherance of the ground campaign, based on intelligence, over-all strategy, and on the advice of the supporting air commander.

e. The supporting air commander or his superiors are responsible for selection of ground targets and target systems for the furtherance of the air campaign, based on intelligence, over-all strategy, and in coordination with the supported land commander.

f. Policies for air defense operations shall be established by appropriate authority.

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4. ORGANIZATION, EQUIPMENT AND PROCEDURES:

a. A senior air force officer will be assigned as the air officer on the staff of the field army commander. (At the present time there is no authorization for this position.) Specific duties of the field army air officer include the following:

- (1) Assisting the operations of the general and special staff sections with respect to air support matters.
- (2) Advising the army commander.
- (3) Making recommendations for procurement and employment of air units.
- (4) Supervising the preparation of detailed plans to include the air annex to the operation order.

b. A tactical air force operating in support of a field army maintains centralized control over all its subordinate units and normally conducts joint operations through the medium of a joint operations center established in conjunction with the supported field army. That part of the tactical air force placed in close support of the field army is retained under operational control of the field army commander. To foster cooperation and to reap the benefits accruing from mutual understanding, whenever possible a specified fighter-bomber wing will fly close support in the geographic area of a given corps. This enables the pilots to become familiar with the terrain and the tactical situation in that particular area. This does not mean that all of the missions flown by that wing will be in support of that corps, nor does it imply that all support flown for the corps will be by the specified wing. Flexibility of these air units is still paramount. In addition to the field army ground liaison officer team at each fighter-bomber unit and the tactical air force air liaison party at each tactical corps, corps exchange liaison with the fighter-bomber wing which normally provides its close support.

c. The tactical air force provides a tactical air direction center (TADC) and a minimum of one tactical air direct post (TADP) to operate in each corps zone of responsibility. These installations are in communication with the corps fire support coordination center.

d. When it is determined by the field army commander that all or part of the available air effort will be in support of a given corps, which is making the main effort, the fighter-bomber wing normally operating in a specific tactical corps zone is placed in "direct support" of that corps. Divisions of the corps process their requests for offensive air support to the corps fire support coordination center where the supporting fighter-bomber wing is authoritatively represented and from which the necessary orders may be issued for the execution of the mission. Information is passed to the associated tactical air direction center enabling this facility to control aircraft as required. The joint operations

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TACTICAL AIR SUPPORT OF GROUND FORCES (Cont)

center is notified so that centralized control may be maintained at the field army/tactical air force level. The joint operations center notifies corps fire support coordination centers in advance, as to requirements for air superiority and deep interdiction missions which the field army and tactical air force commander may impose upon the "direct support" units.

f. When fighter-bomber units are placed in "direct support" of corps, certain other such units are normally retained for support of the field army as a whole. Corps with direct support fighter-bomber units may request additional support, when necessary, through the joint operations center.

g. Tactical reconnaissance units are normally retained for support of the field army as a whole.

h. Tactical air forces will normally consist of fighter-bomber groups on a minimum basis of one per division of the field army and a minimum of two tactical reconnaissance groups.

i. Infantry regiments, armored combat commands, and infantry and armored battalions should have a staff officer with the primary duty of S-3 Air with the necessary communication facilities (ground-to-ground and ground-to-air).

j. S-3 Air officers and artillery forward observers should be trained to identify and mark targets and to direct aircraft to targets.

(1) The tactical air force provides one air liaison officer to each tactical corps, division and regiment (combat command). Communication equipment, transportation, and necessary logistic and administrative support are provided by the corps, division and regiment (combat command). In addition to their other functions, these liaison officers arrange for the call signs and frequencies of corps, division and regiment (combat command) communication equipment operating in tactical air force nets.

(2) The tactical air force provides a minimum of nine forward air controllers to each division of the field army. When practicable, one or more of these controllers operates from division organic aircraft, maintaining contact with forward air controllers or battalion S-3 Air officers and forward observers in areas where there are no forward air controllers and controlling attacks of high performance aircraft from their elevated observation posts. When operations with division organic aircraft are not feasible or are undesirable, the forward air controllers operate from forward positions on the ground, assisted by artillery forward observers. When necessary, operations patterned after the "Mosquito" technique presently employed in Korea are conducted; "Mosquito" pilots are in communication with forward air controllers or battalion S-3 Air officers and artillery forward observers on the ground.

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k. Procedures will be established which will permit the unhampered flow of requests for immediate offensive air support from infantry company commander or artillery forward observer to the infantry battalion, thence directly to the division fire support coordination center (FSCC), thence directly to the joint operations center. When "direct support" air units are provided to corps, requests go from division direct to the corps fire support coordination center. Intermediate commanders monitor or are otherwise notified concurrently.

l. Fire support coordination centers (FSCCs) are established as indicated in Department of the Army Training Circular 23, dated 3 August 1951. It is emphasized that the FSCC is a command agency of the supported commander and is located in physical proximity to the supported unit operations section to permit ready coordination.

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TAB B

OFFICE, CHIEF OF ARMY FIELD FORCES  
Fort Monroe, Virginia

ATSEC 360(C) (24 Oct 50)

24 October 1950

SUBJECT: Army Requirements for Close Tactical Air Support

TO: Chief of Staff  
United States Army  
Washington 25, D. C.

1. The availability at all times of effective tactical air support is one of the most urgent requirements for assurance of the success of our ground forces in combat. I am deeply concerned by the fact that this requirement is not being satisfactorily met. While I fully appreciate the importance of strategic bombing and the need for gaining and maintaining air superiority, I wish to emphasize the need for concurrent provision of adequate air support for ground operations. This support can never be wholly satisfactory if developed and furnished without assured consideration of the Army's views and the Army's requirements for training and combat support. Consequently, I feel that immediate and positive action must be taken at high level to require such consideration, to insure that the Air Force executes its support of ground operations in a manner commensurate with the importance of that role.

2. My conclusions regarding the above are based on training in the United States; on the situation existing in the European Command; and on conditions that obtained in Korea.

a. In the United States considerable progress has been made in training with the Air Force as a result of working agreements with the Tactical Air Command. However, the Air Force has not met minimum aircraft and qualified personnel requirements for training of the desired magnitude. An Army Air Support Center has been established at Fort Bragg as a part of this Office to field test air-ground operations doctrine and equipment, and to assist in the dissemination of this doctrine throughout the Army. This Center constitutes a nucleus around which a true Joint Air Support Center should be formed.

b. In Europe there was an inadequate air support organization. Air support operations are not conducted in accordance with jointly accepted doctrine (Field Manual 31-35). USAFE had insufficient fighter-bomber strength and no tactical air reconnaissance units. There is no provision in the EUCOM troop basis for Army and Air Force personnel designated specifically for support of air-ground operations, particularly signal units required to operate a tactical air control system.

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c. In Korea, in both the Army and the Air Force, there was initially a serious shortage of essential equipment, trained personnel and a lack of proper organization for air-ground operations. Makeshift arrangements based upon local expedients resulted in the attainment of tactical air support that was valuable, but failed to attain optimum effectiveness. The aircraft used by the Air Force in the ground support role were not fully satisfactory. The Jet Type lacked endurance over the battlefield, was not equipped with sufficient armament, and could not be operated off fields available in Korea without extensive enlargement of the runways. More recently, the operation of Marine Air in Korea in direct support of Army and Marine Corps units has demonstrated a great advantage which the Marine Close Air Support System has over the Army-Air Force system. The Marine System operated on command instead of a cooperative basis, thus assuring the ground commander operational control of his supporting air units. The Navy and the Marines have recognized the importance of close air support; as a result, adequately trained personnel, adequate communications and equipment, and a sufficient number of tactical control parties were provided.

3. Fulfillment of the tactical air support responsibilities on the part of the Air Force requires the following action:

a. A tactical air force troop basis designed to provide, in peacetime overseas, a minimum of one fighter bomber group per Army division and one reconnaissance wing for each field army or its equivalent. For mobilization, sufficient fighter-bomber groups should be provided to insure the support of at least one group to each division engaged in combat, and a minimum of two reconnaissance groups for each Field Army.

b. The training requirement in the United States can be met with one fighter bomber group per two Army divisions, and one tactical air reconnaissance group for the present troop basis of seven divisions in the continental United States.

c. The initiation of an aircraft development program to develop and produce aircraft primarily designed for tactical support roles; with Army participation in the determination of military characteristics and subsequent evaluation and testing of the finished product.

d. Establishment of a Joint Air Support Center, to include Army Air Force and Navy (including Marine) participation, for the formulation of joint doctrine, conduct of joint training and operational research, and analysis of technique and materiel.

e. Provision by the Air Force for adequate T/O&E's to support the tactical air operations system, with particular emphasis on additional air liaison officers, additional air liaison parties, and a portable air-ground radio to supplement the heavy Air Force equipment which now requires vehicle transportation.

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24 October 1950

Subj: Army Requirements for Close Tactical Air Support

f. Agreement by the Air Force to accept Army personnel, and provision for the training and use of such personnel, at battalion level, with adequate communications, to direct close air support aircraft at times when Air Force Controllers are not available or provided. In addition, provision must be made in a like manner for the training and use of Army aviation personnel as airborne controllers.

4. If action proposed above is taken the means would exist for providing proper close air support. The true solution of the entire problem would rest nevertheless in resolving the command relationship and control features. One solution to this problem would be to provide an Army Air Force. I do not recommend this action, however, as it would result in duplication of effort and excessive cost. Furthermore, the Air Force is fully capable of providing the desired type and amount of tactical air support for our ground troops provided there is insistence that this problem be fully met.

5. I accept the unified command concept at theater and task force levels, but deem it mandatory that except in special circumstances the ground tactical commander exercise operational control over all supporting elements, to include tactical air, particularly at Army group and Army level and that he should be required to release elements of his tactical air force to a higher air commander, only by command of the next higher joint commander.

6. Resolution of the differences existing between the Army and Air Force is needed now in order to conduct joint training, and to prepare firm doctrine, organizational documents, and training guides. As acceptance of anything less than the best possible tactical air support and the most effective control of that support would constitute a serious neglect in view of the present world situation. I strongly recommend an immediate solution.

/s/ MARK W. CLARK  
General, U. S. Army  
Chief of Army Field Forces

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TAB C

November 1950

MEMORANDUM FOR: CHIEF OF STAFF, UNITED STATES AIR FORCE

SUBJECT: Close Air Support of Ground Operations

1. The purpose of this memorandum is to re-state my views with respect to Army requirements for close air support of ground operations and to propose the initiation of action designed to correct current deficiencies at the earliest possible date.

2. The following elements, each presented in more detail in the inclosure herewith, summarize my views:

a. The Army has no intention of attempting to take over the Tactical Air Force, nor to form its own Tactical Air Force.

b. There is an indispensable requirement for adequate, effective air support for ground operations at all times.

c. This requirement is currently not being met satisfactorily.

d. This requirement should be met at the earliest possible date under conditions, and on a minimum scale, as follows:

(1) For overseas, provision of one (1) fighter-bomber group per Army division and one (1) reconnaissance group per field army or equivalent force, increased to two (2) reconnaissance groups on full mobilization.

(2) For the Zone of Interior, provision of one (1) fighter-bomber group per two (2) Army divisions and one (1) reconnaissance group for the present troop basis of seven (7) divisions.

(3) The Army tactical commander, down to include Corps level in some instances, should exercise operational control of close air support units engaged in providing reconnaissance and fire support to the ground operation.

e. The Army should participate in the determination of general requirements for close support aircraft, which should be designed primarily for close air support roles, to include types of missions and targets, necessity for all weather operations, reasonable operational endurance, and ability to operate from advance strips in combat zones.

f. The Army should be consulted in the development and standardization of close air support aircraft and in testing and evaluating the end product.

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g. The Air Force should make provision in its organizational structure for adequate numbers of air liaison officers and tactical air control parties, and for adequate and suitable communications equipment.

3. I request you agree to the foregoing views. If you so desire, I would be glad to confer with you personally, at an early date, to discuss these elements.

1 Incl

Inclosure to Memorandum, Subject: Close Air Support of Ground Operations.

1. Although many observers have suggested that the Tactical Air Force should be integral in the Army, or that an Army Air Force should be provided, it is considered that such action would result in duplication of effort and excessive cost. The Army continues convinced of the practicability and desirability of unification as promulgated by law.

2. The availability at all times of effective tactical air support is one of the most urgent requirements for the success of our ground forces in combat. The importance of strategic bombing and the need for gaining and maintaining air superiority is fully appreciated; however, an indispensable requirement is the concurrent provision of adequate air support for ground operations. This support will continue to be unsatisfactory, if developed and furnished without assured consideration of the Army's views and the Army's requirements for training and combat support.

3. a. Experience in World War II and a study of the campaign in Korea indicate that Air Force units should be provided on the scale indicated in paragraph 2d(1) and (2) of the basic memorandum. It is emphasized that these are minimum requirements to permit fulfillment of close air support responsibilities by the Air Force, and are so established to insure the least possible interference with the flexibility of the Air Force.

b. To resolve a more workable command relationship together with essential control features for close air support of ground operations, an agreement should be consummated at the earliest possible date. As set forth in the Agreement of 1 August 1950, covering certain aspects of the control of Army antiaircraft units by the Air Force, the air defense commander has been given the responsibility for announcing the basic principles of engagement for antiaircraft fire units and fighter units in the Air Defense of the United States.

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SUBJECT: Close Air Support of Ground Operations (Cont)

Similarly, the ground tactical commander should be afforded the same prerogatives in exercising operational control over tactical air units engaged in providing reconnaissance and fire support to the ground combat operation. To permit exploitation of the inherent flexibility of air fire power and to provide appropriate Army tactical commanders with a powerful resource in mass with which to influence the course of an action on the battlefield, this operational control should not be exercised below Army Corps level. This should not preclude the use of tactical air units, primarily assigned for close air support, in other roles, when not required for ground missions and when approved by the Army Group Commander or by the next higher Joint Commander.

c. It is a recognized fact that, in each theater, there should be a senior Air Force Commander who retains and exercises the prerogative of re-allocating tactical air units from one subordinate Air Force command to another to fit changing requirements within the theater. It is emphasized, however, that close air support units once they are allocated should remain under operational control of the designated Army tactical commander, until an actual re-allocation is effected. Under this concept, the close air support units are clearly assigned a definite supporting role, under control of the commander upon whom rests the responsibility for success of the operation which the units are supporting. At the same time, the flexibility inherent in air power is retained for exploitation by re-allocation.

4. With regard to equipment studies, the Army has no vested interest in the detailed characteristics of Air Force equipment, but should participate in the determination of broad military characteristics, development, subsequent testing, and evaluation of the finished products in the field of close air support. That component of tactical air operation is so closely integrated with ground combat operations that the determination of operational capabilities and of certain military characteristics is considered to be a joint function of the Air Force and the Army. In this regard, these aircraft should be designed primarily for close support missions, with other missions such as air-to-air attack being of secondary importance in design. Aircraft employed for close support should have the maximum practical capability of locating and attacking promptly, under all conditions of weather and visibility, all targets which might threaten or impede, or be in close proximity to the supported unit.

5. With the acceptance of the "Operational Control" concept of close tactical air support a joint re-examination of the personnel and equipment requirements, of each Service, necessary to operate an effective air support system, should be undertaken.

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In conjunction therewith, effective training institutions, in communications training, in communications progress being made in joint Field Forces level has been that optimum results are b

doctrine should be established and to include joint and cross-service tactical air control functions. The training at Tactical Air Command-Army considerable. However, it does not appear attained.

6. Immediate resolution of these important issues is of the most vital nature. An accommodation of anything less, by the Air Force and Army, than the best possible tactical air support and the most effective command relationships to obtain this objective would constitute a serious neglect in view of the present work situation.

/s/ J. LAWTON COLLINS

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