Company Commander

Suppression of Enemy Air Defences (SEAD)

In Company Commander Aircraft can be very destructive. However, there are many factors determining the level of destruction.
Firstly, lets look at the ease with which the defence and attack can get into the field.

A few specialist anti-aircraft guns with the help of Non specialist weapons like the Browning and small arms fire from any Infantry present, the altitude up to about 1000 feet can very soon become very dangerous for a relatively small outlay.
Higher altitude defence will require bigger calibre or more powerful weapons such as the 20mm, 30mm and 35mm guns and ultimately the 57mm S-60. This will take the air defence to around 5000 feet above the target and up to 2.5 miles distant from the gun in the near horizontal plain.
Once the 5000 feet ceiling is crossed the effectiveness of guns falls, but the presence of a radar will enhance the accuracy even at this altitude.
The area between 2500 feet and 10000 feet is the optimum anti aircraft missile envelope. Ideally the defender will demonstrate the effectiveness of the guns at the location in a bid to force the aircraft to bomb from a higher altitude. This has dual benefits. Firstly, the accuracy of bombing falls the higher that the aircraft flies, and Secondly, the missile defences have a much better chance of a successful engagement.
Remember, all this comes at a relatively modest cost.

The aircraft however is much harder to get into the engagement. Firstly, a lot more PI needs to be invested, Training needs to be much higher and the Infrastructure to enable the aircraft is costly and time consuming to create. A factor that is often missed in warfare is the availability and cost of air to ground munitions.
With all this in mind, electronic warfare should not be ignored. Aircraft need the means to defend themselves against the threats of Radar and heat seeking missiles. Fortunately they have the ECM/Flare/Chaff Pod that you should always make room for.
So, a well trained pilot (20+ on ground attack training), a good aircraft loaded with expensive ordnance and an ECM pod on board should guarantee a massively destructive strike right? Well no not really.
Throughout history the best plans have been thwarted by weather or the inability of a pilot to find the target or the defenders counter action, like smoke and the defenders air defence actions may force the pilot to abort or simply miss the intended target. One eye should always be open for a fighter aircraft that could well be lurking up sun to fire a heat seeking missile.

So our expensive aircraft gull of valuable bombs and electronics needs some tactics to enter the area of a valuable target.
If you look at an airstrike as the culmination of a number of actions you will have more success.
Firstly, never go anywhere where you have no idea as to the scale of air defence. This is achieved by sending a recon mission to determine how well defended the tarted is. If radars are identified, either stand alone or dedicated missile radars, it is a sure sign that your strike will be engaged with accurate anti aircraft fire or effective SAMs.
The second stage is to do something about those weapons. Airstrikes using stand off weapons and anti radar missiles will help to bring down the threat. Even the AGM-122 Sidearm can be effective on lighter aircraft and helicopters.
Once the radars have been dealt with, the AAA positions should be dealt with using rockets and cluster munitions.
Only then can the strike against the real target be carried out.
This is or course a costly way to wage war but your final strike may cause heavy damage and allow the attacking aircraft to return to base for another mission.