

## COMMAND RELATIONSHIPS

Last Updated: 27 October 2015

[Airmen](#) should expect most counterair operations to be joint and combined efforts. Therefore, it is essential that Airmen understand the counterair capabilities of other components of the joint force and participating allies and how to integrate those capabilities with those of the US Air Force. The [commander, Air Force forces](#) (COMAFFOR) normally exercises his command function of Air Force component forces through the [air operations center](#) (AOC). The joint force commander (JFC) normally designates the COMAFFOR as the joint force air component commander (JFACC, or combined force air component commander [CFACC] in the case of combined operations). In this case, the AOC will become the core of the joint (or combined) air operations center (JAOC or CAOC). For the rest of this publication, it will be assumed that the COMAFFOR is also the JFACC.

Although assets capable of performing counterair missions are assigned to different components, the JFACC is normally the supported commander for counterair operations. The JFACC's responsibilities normally include planning, coordination, allocation, and tasking based on the JFC's priorities and guidance. Additional responsibilities include [air defense](#), [airspace control](#), and intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) efforts. As such, the JFACC is normally appointed the roles of [area air defense commander](#) (AADC) and [airspace control authority](#) (ACA). Assigning responsibility and authority to coordinate and integrate airspace control and counterair operations to one air commander greatly enhances the effort to gain and maintain control of the air.

**Area Air Defense Commander.** The AADC is responsible for integrating the entire (air, maritime, and land based) air defense effort and should be the component commander with the command and control (C2) capability to plan, execute, and assess integrated air defense operations with other air operations. Splitting the assets among multiple commanders reduces their effectiveness. Any attempt to separate missile defense from the overall air defense structure has the potential to seriously degrade the overall air defense effort and increase the risk of fratricide among multi-layered air defense assets. The AADC is also the engagement authority for air defense operations and normally will not delegate that authority below the regional or sector air defense commander (RADC or SADC) or the theater air control system (TACS) control and reporting center (CRC). (See below for an explanation of these elements of the TACS.)

For further details, see *AFTTP 3-2.31 Multi-Service Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures for the Theater Air Ground System*.

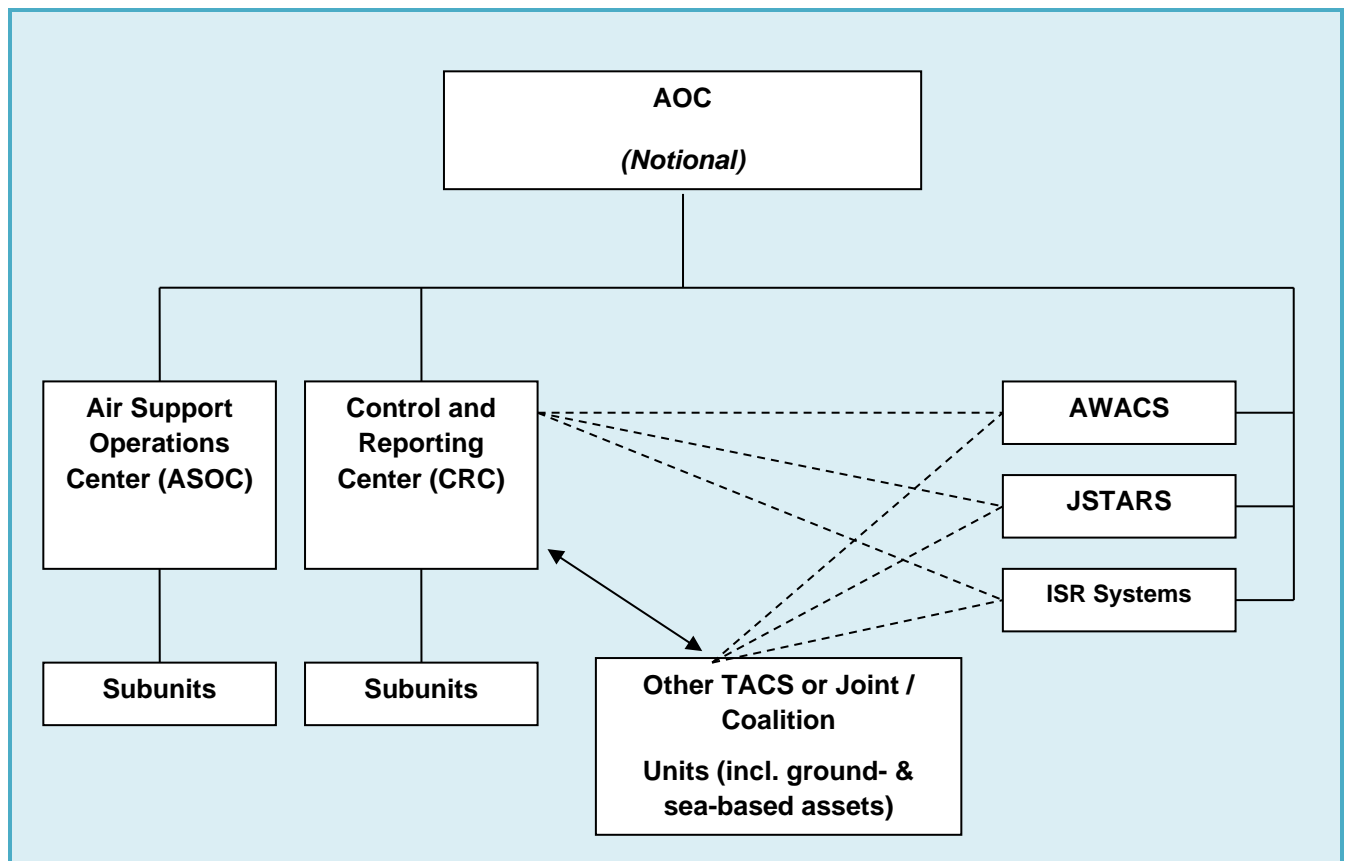
With the support of the Service or functional component commanders, the AADC develops, integrates, and distributes the area air defense plan (AADP). This plan should be closely integrated with the airspace control plan (ACP). Planners should strive to create a reliable and consistent common operational picture (COP) (i.e., a fused and correlated air, ground, maritime, space, and cyberspace picture) available to all supporting C2 facilities. The AADP should arrange a layered, overlapping defense to allow for multiple engagement opportunities, contain detailed weapons control and engagement procedures, and specify airspace control measures (ACM). More detailed descriptions of the AADP and the ACP are available in *AFTTP 3-2.31, Multi-Service Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures for an Integrated Air Defense System (IADS)*.

One of the most critical responsibilities of the AADC is to provide guidance and articulate procedures for combat identification (CID). CID is defined in JP 3-09.3, *Close Air Support*, as “the process of attaining an accurate characterization of detected objects to the extent that high confidence and timely application of military options and weapons resources can occur.” Annex 3-60, *Targeting*, depicts three levels of CID. The first level identifies the track or entity as friendly, foe, or neutral. The second level identifies platform type, while the third level attempts to determine the target’s intent. Accurate and timely identification enhances real-time tactical decisions by allowing timely, beyond-visual-range engagement of enemy aircraft and missiles while conserving resources and reducing the risk to friendly forces. CID information may be obtained from various land-, air-, and space-based systems, along with ACM documented in the ACP or the airspace control order (ACO). To be most effective, this CID “system of systems” requires effective guidance from the AADC and a common data link backbone with the goal of seamless near-real-time information sharing among platforms. To avoid a single point of failure, no one node acts as an exclusive conduit of all CID information. Electronic methods, which provide the most rapid and reliable means of identification, are normally used when available. Visual and procedural means of identification are not as practical but may be required in some situations. Some individual weapons systems retain an autonomous CID capability. For details on CID, see AFTTP 3-2.31.

**Airspace Control Authority.** The airspace control authority (ACA) is responsible for airspace control and for coordinating the use of the airspace. Normally, the JFC will designate the JFACC as the ACA. The ACA develops policies and procedures for airspace control and for the coordination required among components within the theater. The ACA establishes an airspace control system for the JFC, integrates that system with host nations, and coordinates user requirements. The ACA develops these procedures into an ACP and, after JFC approval, promulgates it throughout the theater. The ACP is then implemented through the ACO. The ACO is an order that provides the details of the approved requests for ACM. While the ACP provides general guidance for control of the airspace, the ACO implements specific control procedures for established time periods. It is published either as part of the air tasking order (ATO) or as a

separate document. The ACO may include ACMs and fire support coordinating measures such as air routes, base boundaries, and restricted operations zones. A key responsibility of the ACA is to provide the flexibility needed within the airspace control system to rapidly employ forces.

## AIRSPACE CONTROL



**Notional C2 Arrangement for Airspace Control**

The JFC establishes the geographic boundaries within which airspace control is to be exercised and also provides priorities and restrictions regarding use of the airspace. Airspace control is normally one of the primary functions of the Air Force TACS. The figure **Notional C2 Arrangement for Airspace Control** depicts several major elements of the TACS involved in airspace control and shows how they interrelate. The TACS is structured to conduct airspace control, OCA and DCA operations, and other air operations. A secondary function of the TACS is to minimize the risk of harm to friendly forces. Since different Service components have [operational control](#) (OPCON) of specific counterair assets, the C2 structure is designed to integrate with other components to provide responsive and timely support. See also AFTTP 3-2.31 for details concerning other components' contributions to joint theater air C2.