

Air Force Releases Timely Doctrine Advisory on Airspace Control for UAS-Dominated Battlefields

MAXWELL AIR FORCE BASE, Ala. –The Curtis E. LeMay Center for Doctrine Development and Education released a comprehensive Air Force Doctrine Advisory on 21 August 2025, addressing airspace control challenges below the coordinating altitude, reflecting the service's commitment to adapting doctrine for the rapidly evolving unmanned aircraft systems threat environment across contested battlespaces.

Current joint and service operational doctrine provides the enduring architectural foundation needed to address emergent UAS challenges while demanding continued focus on developing necessary technologies and refining tactics, techniques, and procedures. Airspace control capabilities require doctrine to keep pace with the proliferation of unmanned aircraft systems (UAS), both friendly and adversary, operating in increasingly congested airspace.

This advisory establishes comprehensive direction for managing saturated airspace contours between ground forces and the coordinating altitude, incorporating current proven doctrine while identifying emerging UAS integration challenges. The guidance emphasizes collaborative airspace defense through existing command structures and coordinated response frameworks while maintaining the fundamental principle that control of the air remains a precondition for control of the surface.

"The character of war is changing rapidly, but the axioms that animate airpower doctrine endure," the advisory states, reinforcing that without some degree of air superiority, effective land maneuver and joint force integration remain impossible.

The advisory identifies critical questions for future airspace control solutions, including coordinating altitude definitions for UAS and loitering munitions, systems requirements for airspace deconfliction, and appropriate command authorities to prevent fratricide between manned aircraft, unmanned aircraft, and fires solutions. "Future commanders should not assume that joint capabilities will be available or sufficient and may need to plan to leverage organic capabilities for point defense of widely dispersed operating locations under an Agile Combat Employment scheme of maneuver," the advisory notes.

This doctrinal guidance continues the Air Force's foundational approach supporting joint operations while addressing unique airspace control challenges in environments characterized by UAS proliferation and advanced defensive requirements.

The LeMay Center is responsible for developing, disseminating, and implementing Air Force doctrine and is conducting a comprehensive doctrine review to support Air Force re-

optimization for Great Power Competition. For this advisory and all our doctrine publications, visit <https://www.doctrine.af.mil/>.