



THE JOINT FORCE AIR COMPONENT COMMANDER

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The [commander, Air Force forces](#) (COMAFFOR) will normally serve as the [joint force air component commander](#) (JFACC), exercising [operational control](#) (OPCON) over assigned and attached Air Force assets and [tactical control](#) (TACON) over other components' assets made available for tasking. These forces are generally centrally controlled and tasked from the [air operations center](#) (AOC). Tasking occurs through publication of the [air tasking order](#) (ATO). Countersea operations involving the use of airpower should likewise fall under a single authority capable of planning and directing such operations. There may be cases when, in order to ensure effective integration with carrier-based air, the joint force commander (JFC) may task the JFACC to support the [joint force maritime component commander](#) (JFMCC). Still, the JFACC, by definition, controls and executes the missions assigned to him or her by the JFC, in whole or in part, depending on the situation.

The JFC normally designates a JFACC and apportions air assets for the JFACC to control. The component commander with the preponderance of forces to be tasked and the ability to plan, task, and control air operations should be designated the JFACC. The common practice is that the geographic combatant commander designates his or her assigned COMAFFOR as the theater JFACC to consolidate command and control (C2) and coordinate actions with other joint force component commanders. [Centralized control and decentralized execution](#) serve to focus forces on theater objectives and provide commanders flexibility for employment. The JFACC should make apportionment recommendations to the JFC. Apportionment can change as the campaign progresses or as the operational situation changes. The JFACC should allocate the JFC's apportioned airpower to affect the JFC's intent and priorities most effectively.

Even though the JFACC and COMAFFOR will normally be the same individual, the staffs may be separate and have different functions (see [AFDP 3-30, Command and Control](#)). Furthermore, JFACC staffing requires augmentation within the AOC from relevant Service components and coalition partners to ensure adequate joint and multinational representation. It is important during countersea operations that the naval liaison officer and Marine liaison element assist the JFACC in having a clear understanding of the JFMCC's or commander, Navy forces' (COMNAVFOR's), desired and prioritized effects.

The other Services have developed their air arms with different doctrinal and operating constructs in mind. Maritime forces have allowed for organic asset scheduling, command, and control using their own assets for missions separate from the JFACC's control. For example, the Marine Corps expects that Marine aviation assets will be used organically within the Marine air-ground task force, during both amphibious and land operations. The COMNAVFOR may have other mission priorities, such as undersea warfare or air warfare, constraining asset availability to the JFACC. However, those organic sorties will normally be included on the ATO and the sorties must comply with the air control order if being conducted as part of a joint force. Similar concerns also apply to the aviation arms of our allies. These constraints of air assets by their respective entities are normally limited in time and scope to specific missions during certain phases of operations. The JFACC should account for these dynamics when developing the joint air operations plan (JAOP) and realize that all aircraft flying within the area of responsibility may not be available for tasking.

SEA-BASED JFACC

In operations where no shore-based AOC facility can initially be accommodated, the preponderance of air capability coordination may be located afloat on a US Navy command and control ship. This scenario is most likely during the initial stages of a campaign, in maritime forced entry operations, or prior to shore-based AOC arrival or completion.

The sea-based JFACC positions are jointly manned by officers and enlisted personnel from the other Services who may fill key JFACC staff positions while aboard the command ship. These ships have the ability to host several hundred augmentees and have sufficient connectivity to meet requisite command and control (C2) requirements for initial operations until the JFACC is transitioned ashore.

In this arrangement, Air Force component and joint air component functions and responsibilities remain distinct; both are essential to successful joint air operations. The COMAFFOR maintains OPCON of Air Force forces executed through an AOC and A-staff. When another Service is designated as JFACC, the COMAFFOR provides Air Force forces TACON to the JFACC as directed by the JFC. In addition, the COMAFFOR coordinates with the JFACC through a liaison team and fills designated billets within the JFACC staff and joint AOC (JAOC).

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR COMMAND AND CONTROL OF JOINT AIR OPERATIONS

When the JFACC transitions to a suitable host shore-based facility (or from shore-based to sea-based) and where the preponderance of air assets may be or may become Air Force, several concerns need to be addressed. The following is taken from Joint Publication 3-30, [Command and Control of Joint Air Operations](#):

- ☆ **Planned Transition.** The JFACC should develop a plan for transition of JFACC duties to another component or location. Planned JFACC transitions are possible as a function of buildup or scale down of joint force operations. During transition of JFACC responsibilities, the component passing responsibilities should continue monitoring joint air planning, tasking, and control systems, and remain ready to reassume JFACC responsibilities until the gaining component has achieved full operational capability.

- ☆ **Unplanned Transition.** During unplanned shifts of JFACC responsibility, as a possible result of battle damage or major C2 equipment failure, a smooth transition is unlikely. Therefore, the JFC should predesignate alternates (both inter- and intra-component) and establish preplanned responses/options to the temporary or permanent loss of primary JFACC capability. Frequent backup and exchange of databases is essential to facilitate a rapid resumption of operations should an unplanned transition occur.

- ☆ **Transition Events.** The following events may cause the JFACC responsibilities to shift:
 - ☆☆ Establishment of a subordinate joint task force (JTF) with delegated joint air operations responsibilities and attachment of forces to that JTF.

 - ☆☆ Coordination requirements, related to ATO planning and execution, exceed the component capability.

 - ☆☆ Buildup or relocation of forces shifts preponderance of the air capabilities/forces and the ability to effectively plan, task, and control joint air operations to another component commander; and the JFC decides that the other component is in a better position (location, C2 capability, or other considerations) to accomplish the JFACC responsibilities.

 - ☆☆ C2 systems become unresponsive or unreliable.

- ☆ **Considerations.** Considerations to aid in JFACC transition planning and decisions include:
 - ☆☆ Continuous, uninterrupted, and unambiguous guidance and direction for joint air operations must be the primary objective of any JFACC transition.

 - ☆☆ Appropriate communications system capabilities to ensure shift of JFACC duties are as transparent to the components as possible.

 - ☆☆ Specific procedures for coordinating and executing planned and unplanned shifts of JFACC should be published in the JAOP.

- ✪✪ The relieving component must have adequate communications, connectivity, manning, intelligence support, and C2 capability prior to assuming JFACC responsibilities.
- ✪✪ There must be continuous planning to support both the expansion and transition of the communications system to support the JFC's concept of operations for future operations.
- ✪✪ The ability to plan, publish, and disseminate an ATO and special instructions.
- ✪✪ The JFC's objectives to conduct supporting joint air operations.
- ✪✪ Established timely, reliable, and secure communications links with all appropriate coordination cells to facilitate continuous and dynamic exchange of information.
- ✪✪ Complete familiarity with the area air defense plan and airspace control plans.
- ✪✪ Complete and current databases to expedite the transition.

The JFACC, land or sea-based, is normally also designated by the JFC as the [area air defense commander](#), [airspace control authority](#), and [space coordinating authority](#) responsible for overall defense of the joint operations area and integrating all component requirements for space support. During any JFACC transition, the JFC should ensure any additional authority that had been designated, is transferred as applicable.
