

PRESENTING AIR FORCE FORCES

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Modern operations require flexibility in execution to adapt to a wide variety of scenarios, which drives a need to assemble the right mix of forces from the appropriate Services tailored to the operation. This flexibility drives a corresponding need for adjustable organization, [command and control \(C2\) mechanisms](#), and appropriate [command relationships](#).

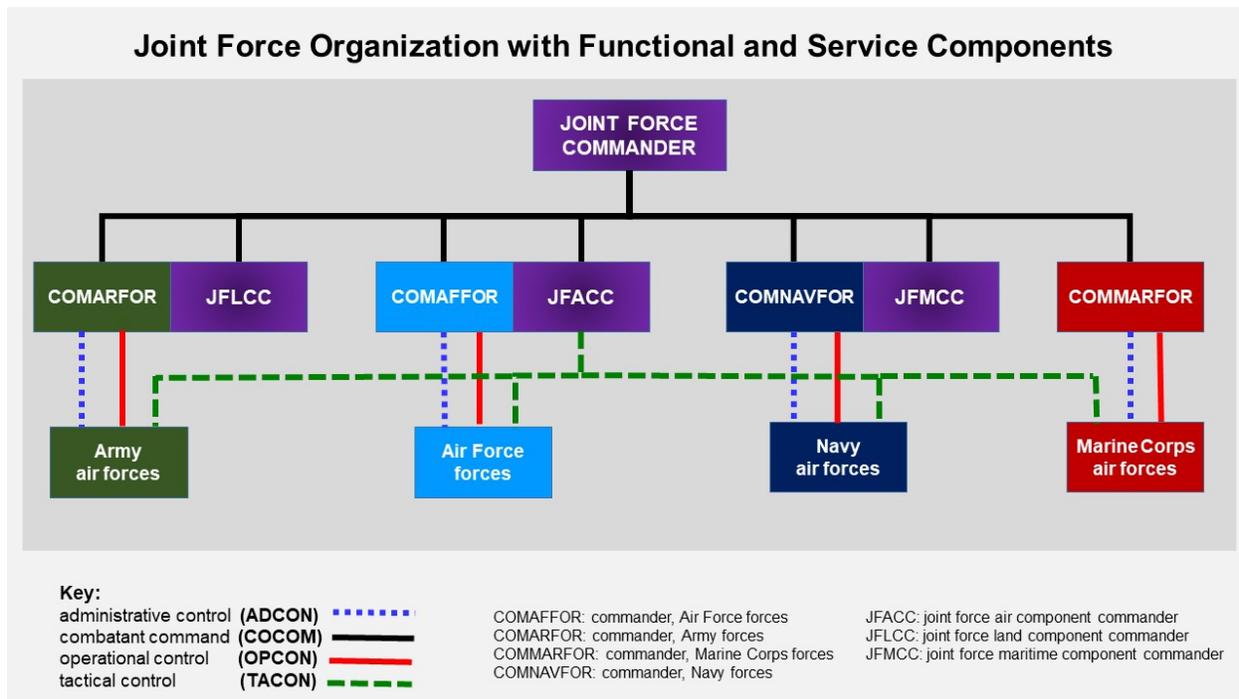
JOINT FORCE ORGANIZATIONAL BASICS

When a crisis requires a military response, the Secretary of Defense, [combatant commander](#) (CCDR), a subordinate unified commander, or an existing joint force commander can form a [joint task force](#) (JTF) tailored to address the crisis. If Air Force forces are attached to the JTF, they stand up as an [air expeditionary task force](#) (AETF). The [joint force commander](#) (JFC) at any echelon is responsible for delineating the [command relationships](#) between forces under his or her [operational control](#) (OPCON) and empowering subordinate commanders appropriately (see [Appendix A](#) for more detail). Normally, a subordinate JFC receives OPCON of [assigned](#) or [attached](#) forces and delegates OPCON to the appropriate Service component commanders.

Surface forces are usually assigned individual [areas of operations](#) (AOs) within the JFC's [joint operations area](#) (JOA); a less-than-total view of the theater. By comparison, an air component commander typically has an operational-level, JOA-wide perspective similar to the JFC's.

Because all four Services have forces that operate in the [air domain](#), the designation of functional commanders allows greater synergy by integrating similar activities across Service boundaries. The designation of joint force air, land, maritime and special operations component commanders (the [joint force air component commander](#) [JFACC], [joint force land component commander](#) [JFLCC], [joint force maritime component commander](#) [JFMCC], and [joint force special operations component commander](#) [JFSOCC] respectively) is at the discretion of the JFC. This functional component model most easily transitions to one that supports [combined](#) (or [coalition](#)) employment, and the functional component commanders become combined component commanders (e.g. combined force air component commander [CFACC], combined

force maritime component commander [CFMCC], etc.). See figure, “Joint Force Organization with Functional and Service Components.”



Joint Force Organization with Functional and Service Components

In accordance with joint doctrine, designation of a functional component commander (e.g., a JFACC) should not adversely affect the command relationship between the Service component (e.g., the [commander, Air Force forces](#) [COMAFFOR]) and the JFC. Normally, the JFC designates the COMAFFOR as the JFACC. The air component commander retains OPCON over Air Force forces and gains [tactical control](#) (TACON) over joint air forces made available for tasking. In practice, the JFACC commands and controls the joint air forces, including Air Force forces, through exercising TACON.

AIR COMPONENT RELATIONSHIPS WITHIN A JOINT FORCE

The JFC normally assigns broad missions to the component commanders; with each mission comes a specification of [supported commander](#) for that mission. As an example, the JFC may designate the air component commander as the supported commander for counter air, [strategic attack](#), [air interdiction](#), and theater airborne [intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance](#) (ISR) (among other missions). As such, the air component commander would be responsible to the JFC for planning, coordinating, executing, and assessing these missions, while other component commanders [support](#) the air component commander. Subordinate commanders normally work out the support relationships.

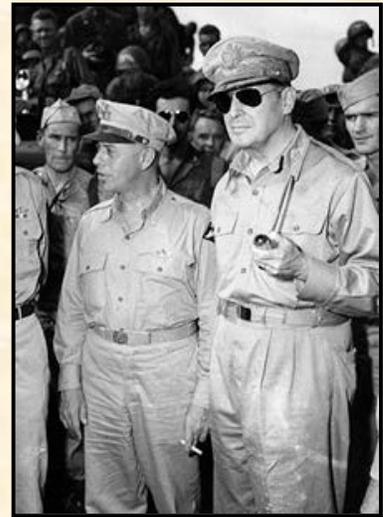
The commander responsible for a mission should be given the requisite authority to carry out that mission. For some missions or functions, specification of support alone may be insufficient in order for a functional component commander to fully integrate and employ forces made available. In such instances, the JFC may delegate to a subordinate commander TACON of specific elements of another component's resources (this, in fact, is the usual command authority exercised by functional component commanders over forces made available to them). This provides that commander with a better degree of control. Finally, written [establishing directives](#) are extremely useful in clearly outlining the supporting / supported relationship between commanders and providing guidance for staffs.

The air component commander should establish a close working relationship with the JFC to ensure the best representation of airpower's potential. When possible, the air component commander should collocate with, or at least be positioned close to, the JFC, so they may benefit from frequent personal interaction. It also helps keep a greater air component presence in the joint force headquarters, as well as aiding the joint force headquarters staff planning and running air component operations.

AIR FORCE COMPONENT PRESENTATION CONSIDERATIONS

There are three general models for presenting Air Force components in support of a JFC: ⁶

- ★ **Theater-level component.** This model establishes an Air Force component at the CCDR level, attached with specification of OPCON and commanded by a theater COMAFFOR who the CCDR will normally also designate as a theater JFACC.
- ★ **Sub-theater-level component.** There are two different sub-theater level component possibilities: a subordinate unified command or a joint task force. An Air Force component at the [subordinate unified command](#) will normally be attached with specification of OPCON and will include a COMAFFOR prepared to execute as a JFACC over assigned and attached joint forces. An Air Force component at the JTF level will normally be an AETF with a designated COMAFFOR, and will include a JACCE that is the theater level JFACC's liaison to the JTF commander.



During World War II, General MacArthur (right) and his senior Airman, Lt Gen Kenney (left), had a close working relationship. As a result, General Kenney enjoyed a high level of trust to employ air power as best fit his commander's objectives.

⁶ There may be additional considerations during homeland operations that impact command arrangements and command relationships. See AFDP 3-27, [Homeland Operations](#).

- ✦ **Sub-theater-level AETF in support of a JTF.** This model establishes an AETF, in [direct support](#) of a subordinate JTF, with OPCON retained by the theater COMAFFOR. In this model, the AETF commander is not a COMAFFOR or JFACC.

LEVELS OF FORCE PRESENTATION

Joint and Service doctrine explicitly describe three levels for organizing joint forces within a geographic CCDR's [area of responsibility](#) (AOR): the CCDR level (i.e., the CCDR acts as the JFC), the subordinate unified command, as in Korea; and at the subordinate JTF level. The three force presentation models discussed above are not meant to limit the CCDR's authority to organize forces to best accomplish assigned missions but instead to enable the Air Force to effectively support the CCDR and any subordinate organizations. The following discussion summarizes some of the considerations that may affect the CCDR's organizational construct and force attachment decisions, and require appropriately tailored C2.

Theater-Level Component

This unified command-level model establishes an air component commander (both Service component and JFACC) at the CCDR level. This model optimizes allocation of scarce airpower assets and commander's priorities across the AOR. As the JFC, the CCDR establishes priorities for employment of all assigned and attached forces, and resolves competing demands among the subordinate commands. In this model, the forces form up under the CCDR's Air Force component command.

When the CCDR decides the most effective way to accomplish the

“Deputy Commander—Air” in the Afghanistan Joint Operations Area

Due to the complexity of operations in the US Central Command's AOR, the US Air Forces Central Command commander created two subordinate AETFs (9 AETF-Iraq and 9 AETF-Afghanistan) to better focus airpower support in those two joint operations areas. In Afghanistan, a North Atlantic Treaty Organization operation, the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) also required a clearly identified command relationship with Air Force forces.

To support US force presentation to ISAF, the commander of 9 AETF-Afghanistan was also designated as the “Deputy Commander-Air” to the commander, US Forces-Afghanistan, the US component to ISAF. This arrangement provided ISAF with an Air Force commander who could exercise command authorities over Air Force forces in support of ISAF.

While a non-standard organization structure, the Deputy Commander-Air leverages basic doctrinal concepts to achieve unity of command within a complex command structure.

mission is by retaining forces at the theater level, the theater-level air component commander will operate in support of the subordinate JTF commander(s) according to the CCDR's theater-wide priorities.

To support planning and operations with subordinate JTFs and other components, the theater-level air component commander may then deploy [joint air component coordination elements](#) (JACCEs) to ensure the JTFs receive appropriate support. The JACCE provides on-hand air component expertise and the direct link back to the theater air component commander and the [air operations center](#) (AOC).

Sub-Theater-Level Component

This model establishes an Air Force Service component and air component commander within a sub-theater level JFC (i.e., subordinate unified command or JTF commander), responsible for an operational area below the CCDR level. This model may be preferable when the span or scope of operations is less than theater-wide, or when operations are sufficiently fluid to require planning and execution at more tactical levels.

Under this model, the CCDR-level COMAFFOR, as directed by the CCDR, relinquishes OPCON of the forces attached to the sub-theater JFC, and the designated commander of the sub-theater JFC accepts OPCON for the duration of the attachment. In accordance with joint and Air Force doctrine, the sub-theater JFC then normally delegates OPCON of attached Air Force forces to the identified sub-theater COMAFFOR. [Administrative control](#) (ADCON) is retained within the Service chain from the CCDR-level COMAFFOR downward to the sub-theater level COMAFFOR. This COMAFFOR is poised to also act as a JFACC, if so designated by the sub-theater JFC.

The key advantage of this model is that it provides fully integrated airpower to a sub-theater JFC, while the theater air component commander maintains control of high-demand, low density capabilities. The key disadvantage is that Air Force forces attached to the sub-theater JFC are not normally available to address demands outside their operational area.

An AETF attached with specification of OPCON to a JTF will include a COMAFFOR under OPCON of that JTF commander. However, the AETF will not have a command and control capability adequate to being designated as a JTF-level JFACC. Under these conditions, the CCDR may direct the theater air component commander to retain TACON over joint air forces and be established in support to the JTF commander, exercised through the JACCE.

Mix of Theater- and Sub-Theater-Level Components

Some theater requirements may drive a mix of the two previous models. This may be desirable when there are competing requirements for low density/high demand Service capabilities (e.g., ISR, remotely piloted aircraft; and [air refueling](#)) across the AOR, yet

there is also sufficient demand for dedicated airpower at subordinate levels to drive attachment of Air Force forces to a subordinate JTF.

Sub-Theater-Level AETF In Support of a JTF

When the CCDR establishes one or more sub-theater JFCs but elects to retain all (or most) Air Force forces at the theater level, the size and complexity of the mission would typically drive establishment of subordinate AETFs in direct support of the sub-theater JFCs.

Under this construct, the theater COMAFFOR retains OPCON and delegates appropriate aspects of OPCON, TACON, and ADCON to the AETF commander while maintaining theater-wide perspective and responsibility for recommending apportionment of airpower capabilities across the theater of operations to the CCDR. The AETF commander remains subordinate to the theater COMAFFOR.

The key advantage of this model is that it provides an Airman empowered with command authorities to the sub-theater JFC while allowing the theater COMAFFOR to retain OPCON of forces across the AOR to address the CCDR's priorities. This model normally requires a significantly smaller command and control capability than would an AETF attached with specification of OPCON to a sub-theater JFC.

FORCE ATTACHMENT CONSIDERATIONS

When the operational mission at the JTF level outweighs competing missions at the CCDR's AOR level, the CCDR should consider attaching Air Force forces to the JTF commander. Considerations include:

- ★ Do the operational tempo, intensity, duration, and scope warrant near full-time use of an attached AETF?
- ★ Do the operational tempo, intensity, duration, and scope justify a dedicated AETF that, once attached to the JTF, may not be available to support operations elsewhere?
- ★ Does the priority of the JTF mission, relative to other theater missions, justify a dedicated AETF that, once attached to the JTF, may not be available to support operations elsewhere?
- ★ If the choice is to attach an AETF to a JTF, does the Air Force have the ability to provide the required C2 of Air Force forces?
- ★ Does the provision of forces to a subordinate JTF, either by attachment or direct support, effectively demonstrate and enable the Air Force component's commitment to the joint force effort?

If the decision is to attach forces, the follow-on question is whether the forces should be attached with specification of either OPCON or TACON.

- ✦ **Specification of OPCON:** OPCON includes organizing and employing commands and forces, assigning tasks, designating objectives, and giving authoritative direction necessary to accomplish the mission, to include repositioning of forces.
- ✦ **Specification of TACON:** TACON is limited to the detailed direction and control of movements or maneuvers. TACON may provide sufficient authority for controlling and directing the application of force or tactical use of [combat support](#) assets within the assigned mission or task. Attaching forces with specification of only TACON splits OPCON and TACON between two different commanders, but allows for quick action and decisions at lower levels.

These situations require careful and continuing dialogue between the respective joint and Service component commanders and their common superior commander. Finally, the decisions, including the delineation of operational and administrative authorities to be held among the involved commanders, should be captured in written orders such as [operation orders](#), [execute orders](#), or [fragmentary orders](#); Air Force decisions may also be captured in G-series orders, such as those appointing the COMAFFOR.

ACHIEVING UNITY OF EFFORT

To achieve [unity of effort](#) across an AOR, the CCDR should provide the requisite guidance for the interaction between theater-level and subordinate components. This should include clarity of supported and supporting command relationships between the JTFs and theater air component commander, together with clear priorities of effort and support, and apportionment. The theater air component commander should then allocate effort across the AOR using CCDR guidance and priorities.

The CCDR sets the conditions for success by clearly stating and emphasizing the supported command status of subordinate JTFs and the supporting command role of a theater-level air component commander and by providing sufficient guidance for the theater subsequent [allocation](#) decision. The CCDR is the ultimate arbiter for prioritization and [apportionment](#) decisions among subordinate JTF commanders.

AIR COMPONENT C2 STRUCTURES

The air component commander requires an appropriately sized and configured C2 capability to effectively command and control the Air Force Service component and joint air forces made available for tasking. At the combatant command level this C2 capability includes an AOC and an air component staff to enable the air component commander to command and control air forces in both the operational and administrative branches of the chain of command.

The AOC and air component staff need to be fully integrated to cover the totality of the COMAFFOR's responsibilities as a component major command (C-MAJCOM) or component numbered air force (C-NAF) commander, and to be prepared to assume the duties of a JFACC when designated by the CCDR. Division of workload and responsibilities between the AOC and air component staff depend upon the requirements of the air component commander, mission requirements, and resources available. In general, the AOC normally will plan for and employ the forces provided, while the air component staff is normally focused on long-range theater strategy and Service "organize, train, and equip" (OT&E) responsibilities in order to provide Air Force forces that will be employed under CCDR orders and direction. Synergies of operational mission accomplishment are gained by integrating the staffs in support of the JFACC mission.

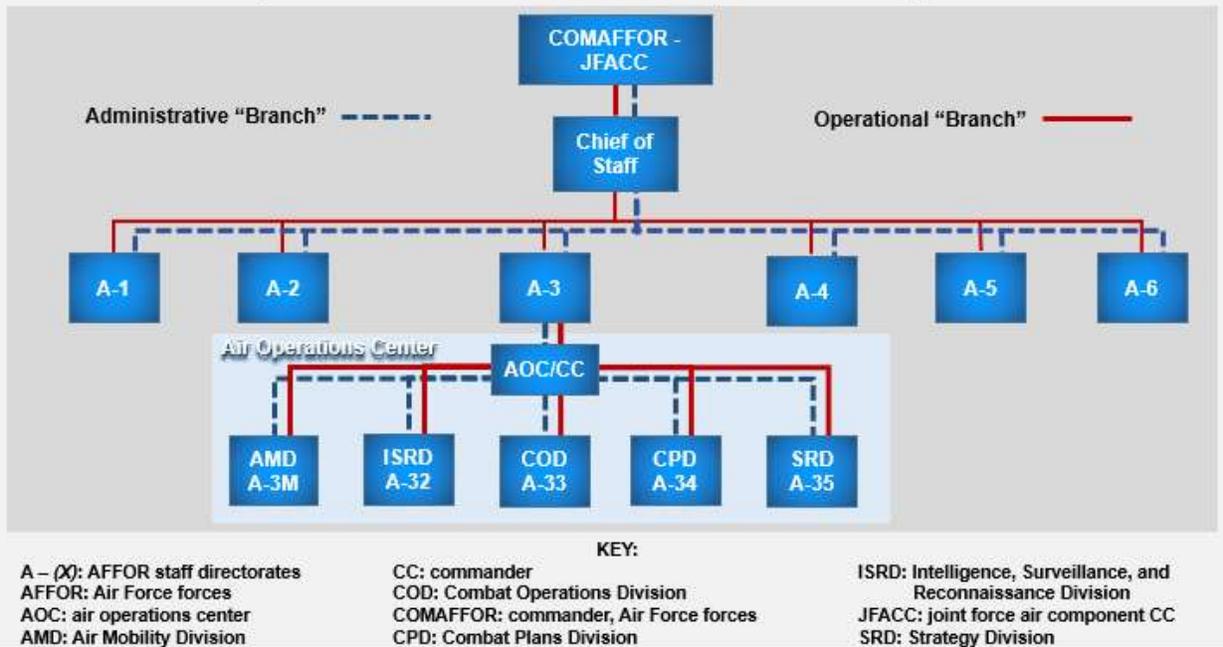
Mission requirements, manning, and rank structure differences between the various C-MAJCOMs and C-NAFs do not readily support a "one size fits all" structure for the air component commander's C2 organization. Two structures in current use are: AOC under the AFFOR A-3, and the AOC/CC and AFFOR A-3 separate individuals each reporting directly to the air component commander.

AOC as Part of AFFOR/Air Component A-3

Under this structure the AOC commander works for the AFFOR / Air Component A-3, where the core element of the air component staff is the AFFOR staff. The AOC retains its divisions but the AOC is now a part of the AFFOR A-3 staff. To improve staff-to-staff coordination with the JFC's staff and the other components, the AOC divisions are also identified with an appropriate A-3 staff number (e.g., Combat Operations Division is also designated as A-33). This structure is illustrated in the figure, "AOC as Part of AFFOR/Air Component A-3."

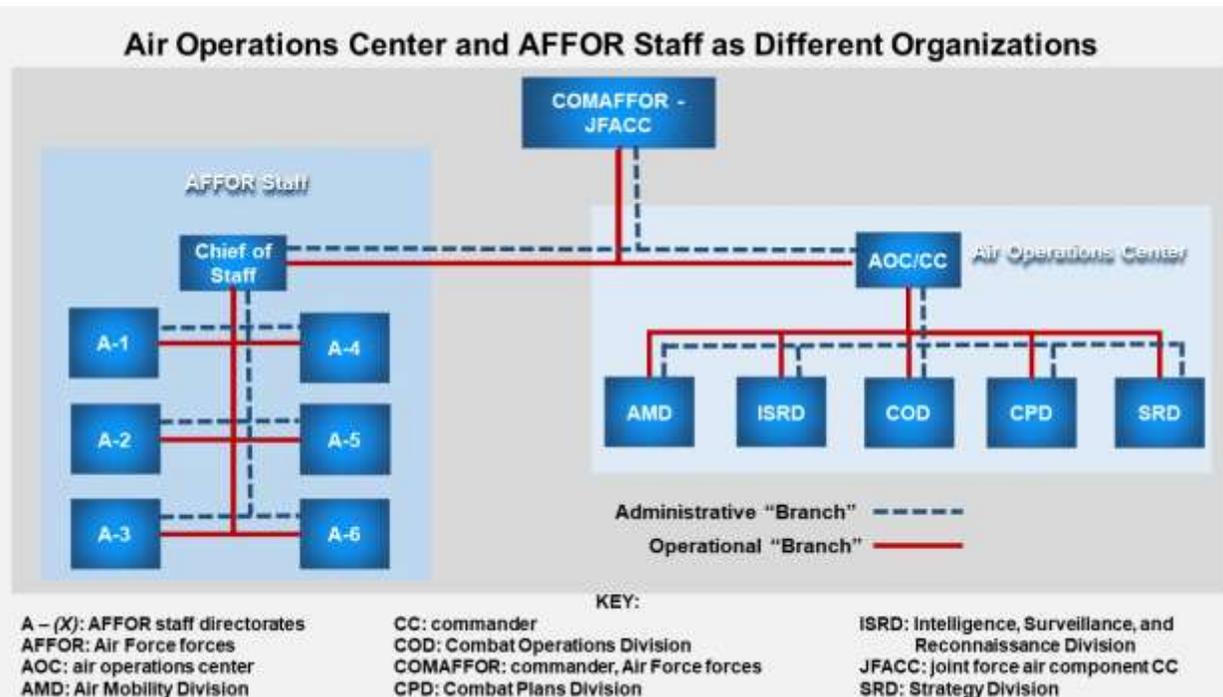
This structure improves integration between Air Component Staff and the AOC and provides easier cross-component staff-to-staff integration. While providing synergies and manpower savings, this structure also requires the AFFOR/Air Component A-3 and joint / combined AOC staffs to have clearly defined roles and responsibilities.

Air Operations Center as Part of AFFOR / Air Component A-3



Air Operations Center as Part of AFFOR / Air Component A-3

AOC and AFFOR Staff as Different Organizations



AOC and AFFOR Staff as Different Organizations

In this structure, the AOC and Air Force Service component staff are separate organizations, each reporting directly to the air component commander. This structure is illustrated in the figure, "AOC and AFFOR Staff as Different Organizations."

This structure provides manpower focused at appropriate levels for the AFFOR staff and the AOC, and provides redundant capability for additional taskings (e.g., sub-theater AETF, JTF headquarters). The structure enables parallel operations between the separate COMAFFOR and AOC staffs, separating responsibilities and simultaneously accomplishing OT&E and combat operations, respectively. While providing more flexibility in the different COMAFFOR and JFACC roles, this structure requires a substantial manpower bill, requires that cross-component staff-to-staff channels have robust interaction, and requires that internal staff integration be clearly defined.
