



COMMAND AND CONTROL MECHANISMS

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AIR COMPONENT STAFF

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. This C2 capability includes an air component staff and an AOC. When the JFC follows normal doctrinal recommendation and practice and designates the COMAFFOR to be the JFACC then the COMAFFOR's C2 structure, with joint augmentation, forms the basis for the JFACC's C2 structure.

The staff of the air component (both Service and joint functional) is the mechanism through which the commander exercises responsibilities across the [continuum of conflict](#).⁴ These responsibilities include the deployment, basing, sustainment, and redeployment of Air Force forces. The staff supports the commander in both operational and administrative responsibilities. The operational responsibilities include the planning, execution, and assessment of steady-state operations in support of the [combatant commander's](#) (CCDR's) theater campaign plan. The administrative responsibilities include those activities for organizing, training, and equipping Air Force forces.

An air component staff should be ready to fill one or more roles: that of a theater-wide Air Force Service component, an Air Force warfighting component within a [joint task force](#) (JTF), or the core within a JTF headquarters. In the latter case, the air component staff would require augmentation from outside the theater and by other Service personnel to meet manning requirements. Regardless, the air component staff should be trained and ready to transition from steady state to contingency operations. When able, commanders should avoid dual- or triple-hatting their staff.⁵

The staff's function is to support and assist the air component commander in preparing to carry out the functions and tasks assigned by the [joint force commander](#) (JFC). The

⁴ The "conflict continuum" described in Joint Publication (JP) 3-0, [Joint Operations](#), is expanded by Joint Doctrine Note 1-19, [Competition Continuum](#), 3 Jun 19. "Competition continuum" is expected to be the accepted phrase in the next iteration of JP 3-0, but "conflict continuum" remains in joint doctrine at present.

⁵ Workload distribution and recommendations on augmentation derived from lessons learned during Exercise AUSTERE CHALLENGE 2010.

staff's responsibilities will vary depending on the level of the JFC to which the air component is assigned or attached.

See [Appendix B](#), which outlines C2 structures and the basic [air operations center](#) (AOC). [Appendix C](#) provides a summary of baseline Air Force forces (AFFOR) and air component staff organization.

AIR OPERATIONS CENTER

With joint augmentation, the AOC becomes the joint AOC (JAOC). With joint, coalition, or other multinational augmentation, the AOC becomes the combined AOC (CAOC).

AOCs do not work in isolation; they require connectivity to operations centers of higher headquarters, to lateral headquarters (e.g., other joint force components), to subordinate assigned and attached Air Force units, and to other functional and geographic AOCs.

Both the air component staff and the AOC perform warfighting functions and should work together to fulfill air component responsibilities to the JFC. An AOC, along with subordinate C2 elements, should be tailored to the requirements of the mission. An AOC should be capable of performing the following tasks:

- ★ Develop the component [strategy](#) and requisite planning products.
- ★ Task, execute, and assess day-to-day component operations.
- ★ Plan and execute [intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance](#) (ISR) tasks appropriate to assigned missions.
- ★ Conduct [operation assessment](#).

AOC tasks may include integrating [intertheater air mobility](#) support; developing and issuing [airspace control procedures](#); and providing direction for theater air and missile defense. Defensive cyberspace operations and defensive counterspace activities are coordinated with responsible operations centers and headquarters through the DIRSPACEFOR and DIRCYBERFOR.

AOCs and their subordinate C2 elements may be geographically oriented or functionally oriented. To bring all the Air Force's capabilities together for a given operation or activity, the AOCs normally work together in a mutually supporting command arrangement, with one of them designated as the supported center.

For more detailed guidance on internal structure and procedures, refer to Air Force Instruction 13-1AOC, Volume 3, [Operational Procedures-Air Operations Center](#).

Liaisons in the AOC

The air component commander may have a number of liaison teams and liaison officers (LNOs) within the AOC to facilitate planning and execution among the other components in the joint force.

Component Liaisons. Component liaisons work for their component commanders and with the air component commander and staff. Each component provides liaison elements that work within the AOC and AFFOR staff. These liaison elements consist of specialists who provide component planning and tasking expertise and coordination capabilities. They integrate, coordinate, and deconflict their component's participation in joint air component operations. The air component may require other liaison augmentation to support AOC functions such as security, intelligence and other aviation elements.

Battlefield Coordination Detachment (BCD). The BCD supports integration of air component operations with Army operations. BCD personnel are integrated into AOC divisions to support planning, operations, air defense, ISR, airlift, logistics, airspace control, and communications. The BCD coordinates ground force priorities, requests, and items of interest. One of the BCD's most important functions is to coordinate boundary line and [fire support coordination measures](#) changes and timing. The BCD provides ground [order of battle](#) situational awareness and expertise to the AOC.

Naval and Amphibious Liaison Element (NALE). The NALE personnel from the maritime components support the AOC in integrating maritime air, fires, [amphibious operations](#), and other activities into theater air operations, and monitor and interpret the maritime battle situation for the AOC. When required, the NALE brings maritime order of battle (both friendly and enemy) situational awareness, and provides update and intelligence briefings.

Marine Liaison Element (MARLE). MARLEs are representatives of the commander, Marine Forces and the associated aviation combat element commander. The MARLEs support the air component commander in integrating Marine air-ground task force (MAGTF) fires, maneuver, and Marine air into the theater campaign and supporting [joint air operations plan](#). This team should be well versed in the MAGTF commander's guidance, intentions, schemes of maneuver, and direct support aviation plan.

Special Operations Liaison Element (SOLE). The [joint force special operations component commander](#) (JFSOCC) provides a SOLE to the air component commander. The SOLE coordinates, synchronizes, and deconflicts special operations forces' air, surface, and subsurface operations within the [operational area](#) through the [air tasking order](#) and [airspace control order](#). The SOLE chief, serving as the JFSOCC's representative to the air component commander, places LNOs throughout the AOC staff.

Coalition and Allied LNOs. LNOs representing coalition and allied forces may improve AOC situational awareness regarding the disposition of friendly forces, especially when

those forces do not have a mature theater air control system. They are essential for [unity of effort](#) for coalition or allied air defense operations and airspace deconfliction. AOC directors should anticipate the need for LNOs in an immature theater and seek them out via the JFC's staff, in-country military group, staff country team, or direct contact with coalition forces.

JOINT AIR COMPONENT COORDINATION ELEMENT

The air component commander may establish one or more [joint air component coordination elements](#) (JACCEs) with other component commanders' headquarters, and the supported JTF headquarters, to better integrate operations. These elements act as the air component commander's primary representatives to the respective commanders and facilitate interaction with their staffs.

It is recommended that a JACCE be provided to any sub-theater JFC below the 3-star level of command. This enables the theater air component commander to provide Air Force forces in a supporting role as required, while maintaining the proper level of required command and control be retained at the theater commander level for JOA-wide operations.

The JACCE facilitates integration by exchanging intelligence, operational data, and support requirements. The JACCE coordinates the integration of [airspace coordinating measures](#), fire support coordination measures, [close air support](#), and air mobility. The JACCE is a liaison element, not a command and control node, and has no authority to direct or employ forces. However, a joint force air component commander, and other Service components, may delegate certain authorities to a JFC assigned JACCE, based on operational requirements and to enhance overall C2 and integration and employment. Element expertise may include plans, operations, intelligence, [airspace management](#), logistics, space, cyberspace, and air mobility. The JACCE communicates the supported JTFs or component commander's decisions and interests to the theater air component commander. The JACCE director is the air component commander's personal and official representative and should have sufficient rank to effectively work with the component or JTF commander to which he or she is attached. Finally, the JACCE director should not be dual-hatted as the commander of a tactical unit.

The JACCE should:

- ★ Ensure the air component commander is aware of each commander's priorities and plans.
- ★ Ensure the air component commander staff coordinates with components or JTF headquarters counterparts.
- ★ Ensure appropriate commanders are aware of the air component commander's capabilities and limitations.

- ✦ Ensure appropriate commanders are aware of the air component commander's plan to support the JFC's intent and objectives.
- ✦ Facilitate air component commander processes with component and JTF commanders.
- ✦ Provide oversight of other air component commander liaisons to component and JTF headquarters staffs.
- ✦ Ensure information flows properly between the AOC, sister components, and JFC.

For further readings on recent JACCE operations in Afghanistan, see the article "[NATO Air Command–Afghanistan: The Continuing Evolution of Airpower Command and Control](#)" in Volume 28, No. 1 of [Air and Space Power Journal](#).
