



APPENDIX A: COMMAND AUTHORITIES AND RELATIONSHIPS

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Effective organizations require clear and effective [command relationships](#). A working understanding of command terminology is essential to understanding the relationships among components and the responsibilities inherent in organizations.

COMBATANT COMMAND (COCOM)

[Combatant command \(command authority\)](#) is defined as “nontransferable command authority, which cannot be delegated, of a combatant commander to perform those functions of command over assigned forces involving organizing and employing commands and forces; assigning tasks; designating objectives; and giving authoritative direction over all aspects of military operations, joint training, and logistics necessary to accomplish the missions assigned to the command” (Joint Publication [JP] 1, [Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States](#)).

COCOM is exercised by commanders of [combatant commands](#) (CCMD) as directed by the President or the Secretary of Defense (SecDef). COCOM should be exercised through the commanders of subordinate organizations such as subordinate [joint force commanders](#) (JFCs) and Service or functional component commanders. COCOM provides full authority to organize and employ commands and forces as the [combatant commander](#) considers necessary to accomplish assigned missions. (Note that the acronym “COCOM” refers *only* to the command authority, not to an individual or an organization.)

OPERATIONAL CONTROL (OPCON)

[Operational control](#) is defined as “the authority to perform those functions of command over subordinate forces involving organizing and employing commands and forces, assigning tasks, designating objectives, and giving authoritative direction necessary to accomplish the mission” ([JP 1](#)).

OPCON can be delegated from a lesser authority than COCOM. OPCON normally provides full authority to organize commands and forces and to employ those forces as the commander in operational control considers necessary to accomplish assigned

missions. It does not include authoritative direction for logistics or matters of administration, discipline, internal organization, or unit training.

OPCON should be exercised through the commanders of subordinate organizations, such as subordinate JFCs and Service or functional component commanders. Normally, JFCs exercise OPCON of [assigned](#) and [attached](#) Air Force forces through the [commander, Air Force forces](#) (COMAFFOR).

TACTICAL CONTROL (TACON)

[Tactical control](#) is defined as “**the authority over forces that is limited to the detailed direction and control of movements or maneuvers within the operational area necessary to accomplish missions or tasks assigned**” ([JP 1](#)).

TACON may be delegated to and exercised by commanders at any echelon at or below the level of CCMD. TACON provides sufficient authority for controlling and directing the application of force or tactical use of [combat support](#) assets within the assigned mission or task. TACON does not provide organizational authority or authoritative direction for administrative and logistic support.

SUPPORT

[Support](#) is a command authority that aids, protects, complements, or sustains another force. It is used when neither OPCON nor TACON is appropriate. The SecDef specifies support relationships between CCDRs; the CCDR may establish support relationships between components assigned or attached to the command.

There are four defined categories of support that a CCDR may direct over assigned or attached forces to ensure the appropriate level of support is provided to accomplish mission objectives. These include general support, mutual support, direct support, and close support.

- ✦ **[General support](#)**. That support which is given to the supported force as a whole rather than to a particular subdivision thereof.
- ✦ **[Mutual support](#)**. That support which units render each other against an enemy because of their assigned tasks, their position relative to each other and to the enemy, and their inherent capabilities.
- ✦ **[Direct support](#)**. A mission requiring a force to support another specific force and authorizing it to answer directly to the supported force’s request for assistance.
- ✦ **[Close support](#)**. That action of the supporting force against targets or objectives that are sufficiently near the supported force as to require detailed integration or coordination of the supporting action with the fire, movement, or other actions of the supported force.

ADMINISTRATIVE CONTROL (ADCON)

[Administrative control](#) is defined as the “**direction or exercise of authority over subordinate or other organizations with respect to administration and support**” ([JP 1](#)). This includes organization of Service forces, control of resources and equipment, personnel management, unit logistics, individual and unit training, readiness, mobilization, demobilization, discipline, and other matters not included in the operational missions of the subordinate or other organizations.

ADCON is not a warfighting authority like that found in COCOM, OPCON, TACON, or support relationships. Normally the COMAFFOR exercises ADCON over assigned Air Force personnel, and at least those elements of ADCON that are necessary to ensure mission accomplishment over those Air Force personnel attached to the Air Force component command. It is through ADCON that the COMAFFOR provides properly organized, trained, and equipped Air Force forces to be employed under the OPCON of the JFC.

COORDINATING AUTHORITY

[Coordinating authority](#) is defined as “**the commander or individual who has the authority to require consultation between the specific functions or activities involving forces of two or more Services, joint force components, or forces of the same Service or agencies, but does not have the authority to compel agreement**” ([JP 1](#)). In the event that essential agreement cannot be obtained, the matter shall be referred to the appointing authority. Coordinating authority is a consultation relationship, not an authority through which command may be exercised.

DIRECT LIAISON AUTHORIZED (DIRLAUTH)

[Direct liaison authorized](#) is defined as “**that authority granted by a commander (any level) to a subordinate to directly consult or coordinate an action with a command or agency within or outside of the granting command.**” ([JP 1](#)).
