



APPENDIX A: AIRLIFT MISSION TYPES

Last Updated: 28 June 2019

The following information briefly describes the types of airlift missions. Refer to Joint Publication (JP) 3-36, [Joint Air Mobility and Sealift Operations](#)⁸, JP 4-01, [The Defense Transportation System](#), and JP 4-09, [Distribution Operations](#), for additional information concerning airlift missions.

Aerial Delivery Missions

Aerial delivery missions employ [airdrop](#) of personnel, equipment, and supplies into potentially hostile environments, locations lacking adequate access by other means, or when [airland](#) is insufficient to meet closure times. It requires specially trained crews, special equipment, and additional mission planning.

Aeromedical Evacuation

[Aeromedical evacuation](#) (AE) provides time-sensitive in-flight care of patients or casualties to and between higher levels of medical treatment facilities and care, using military airlift or contracted aircraft (civilian air ambulance) with medical aircrew trained specifically for this mission. AE forces can operate as far forward as aircraft are able to conduct air operations, across the range of military operations, and in all operating environments. Specialty medical teams may be assigned to work with the AE aircrew to support patients requiring more intensive en route care.

Banner Missions

Banner missions require close coordination with the White House Military Office (WHMO). These highest priority missions require aircrews to be postured in an enhanced alert status to be flexible to the user requirements. See Air Force Instruction 11-289, [Phoenix Banner, Silver, and Copper Operations](#), for additional guidance. A subset of missions tasked by the WHMO in support of White House operations are the following:

A **PHOENIX BANNER** mission is a special assignment airlift mission (SAAM)

⁸ Common Access Card enabled site

supporting the President of the United States.

A **PHOENIX SILVER** mission is a SAAM supporting the Vice President of the United States.

A **PHOENIX COPPER** mission is a SAAM supporting White House-directed missions when not supporting the President or Vice President.

Channel

Channel missions are taskings flown over fixed routes. By default, all channels are considered common-user distribution channels. Contingency channels support ongoing Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS)-approved contingency operations. These channels can serve intertheater or intratheater needs. The majority of airlifted sustainment moves on channel missions. At the request of the supported combatant commander (CCDR), the commander of [US Transportation Command](#) (USTRANSCOM) can establish a special channel mission called air mobility express (AMX) to move critically needed items rapidly to an area of responsibility. The supported CCDR may apportion part of the cargo space on AMX by pallet positions to each component. For AMX missions to be effective, the supported CCDR should establish a theater distribution system to deliver express cargo from aerial port of debarkation to final destination.

Executive Airlift Missions

The executive airlift (EA) mission provides safe, reliable, connected, and protected air transportation for national leadership in direct support of national security objectives, while ensuring continuity of government. EA is a strategic mobility enabler dedicated to transporting the President, Vice President, Cabinet and Congress members, and other Department of Defense (DOD)-approved senior officials and foreign dignitaries.

EA uses specially configured and modified aircraft to conduct highly sensitive, often classified, worldwide/theater missions enabling senior leadership to employ diplomatic, informational, military, and economic instruments of power. These special air missions (SAM) are primarily executed using VC-25, C-32, C-40, C-37, and C-20 aircraft. However, due to the high-demand, low-density nature of the mission, EA leverages aircraft including operational support airlift, Service secretary, CCDR, and other mobility assets to fulfill time-sensitive senior leader requirements. User-specified communication requirements drive the need for the very latest capabilities and technologies. Commander, USTRANSCOM is the overall manager for USAF's SAM fleet.

Under direction of the Assistant Vice Chief of Staff of the Air Force, the Chief of the US Air Force Special Air Missions Division (CVAM) is the coordinating authority and serves as the chief of executive airlift scheduling activity (EASA) for EA missions originating in the continental US (CONUS) that are supported by USTRANSCOM assigned EA assets. CVAM receives EA taskings from the WHMO, Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) Executive Secretariat, Senior DOD leadership and OSD Legislative

Affairs. EASA is the point of contact when collaborative scheduling is required for combat support mission aircraft and executive aircraft. EA missions originating outside the CONUS (OCONUS) are supported by geographic combatant commander (GCC)-assigned EA assets and coordinated through the GCC's [air operations center](#) (AOC). CVAM and the theater AOC's air mobility division (AMD) collaborate regarding asset availability to ensure required SAM users have the needed airlift to meet requirements.

Mission efficiency, effectiveness, and urgency require customized mission dispatch, execution, and visibility tools and [command and control](#) (C2) structure. Commander, USTRANSCOM is the overall manager for USAF's SAM fleet and maintains [operational control](#) (OPCON) of CONUS-based SAM assets through the commander, [Air Mobility Command](#) (AMC/CC). OCONUS-based SAM assets are under OPCON to the respective GCC who normally delegates OPCON to the theater [commander, Air Force forces](#) (COMAFFOR). CVAM and WHMO provide detailed mission planning. Execution and C2 for missions conducted with CONUS-based assets occurs either in the unit itself or with the 89th Airlift Wing depending on the aircraft tasked. The theater AOC's AMD performs these functions for OCONUS-based assets. CVAM and theater AMD collaborate regarding asset availability to ensure required SAM users have the needed airlift to meet requirements.

Exercise and Contingency Support

Exercise and contingency missions involve deployment, sustainment, and redeployment via intertheater or intratheater airlift. Mobility assets participating in exercises enable units to gain additional training from unique mission scenarios and objectives that are not regularly accomplished during normal or contingency operations. Exercise and contingency operations are normally shaped by the functional or geographic CCDRs who develop an exercise directive, operation plan, or operation order with specific logistical requirements for operations directed by the President, the Secretary of Defense (SecDef), or the JCS.

Deployment and redeployment transportation requirements are planned using the joint operation planning and execution system. [Joint force commanders](#) (JFCs) validate their intratheater [time-phased force and deployment data](#) (TPFDD) to the theater AOC's AMD (if assigned) for planning and execution, while intertheater TPFDD requirements are sent to USTRANSCOM for planning and execution. The TPFDD details the CCDR's deployment and redeployment priorities, enabling air mobility planners to build air movement plans.

Human Remains

Human remains missions seek to return human remains with the highest dignity and respect. These missions are often high priority, closely watched missions requiring high levels of coordination for ceremonies and handling.

Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief

Humanitarian assistance and disaster relief operations provide assistance to areas suffering from natural or manmade disasters to relieve or reduce human suffering, disease, hunger, or privation. These operations may be in support of the Department of Homeland Security, directed by the State Department or the GCC, or conducted in support of other national objectives. Refer to JP 3-27, [Homeland Defense](#), JP 3-28, [Defense Support of Civil Authorities](#), and JP 3-29, [Foreign Humanitarian Assistance](#).

Joint Airborne / Air Transportability Training (JA/ATT)

These airlift missions are Chairman of the JCS-directed and provide continuation and proficiency training to Air Force air mobility providers and joint air mobility users. Missions may include airdrop, air assault, aircraft load training, air refueling, and Service school support. Air Force major commands with air mobility forces manage their JA/ATT program.

Noncombatant Evacuation Operations (NEO)

NEO are directed by the Department of State or other appropriate authority, in conjunction with the DOD, whereby noncombatants are evacuated from foreign countries when their lives are endangered by war, civil unrest, or natural disaster to safe havens or to the US. These missions are characterized by short timelines, increased coordination and oversight, and public affairs involvement. See JP 3-68, [Noncombatant Evacuation Operations](#), for additional guidance.

Operational Support Airlift (OSA)

OSA provides a means of airlift for high-priority passengers and cargo with time, place, or mission-sensitive requirements, including validated AE patient movement. The DOD employs overarching guidelines for the approval and use of OSA. OSA supports authorized DOD travelers and cargo, which includes GCC and Service component needs. CONUS requirements are validated and scheduled by the joint operational support airlift center (JOSAC) at USTRANSCOM. Flying units, via JCS- and Service-established procedures, indicate specific aircraft availability for Service, JOSAC, and AE missions. OCONUS requirements are authorized, validated, and scheduled in accordance with Service and/or CCDR and component-defined processes. During contingencies, JFCs should utilize their OSA assets to supplement the theater's air mobility capability.

Prime Nuclear Airlift Force (PNAF) / Emergency Nuclear Airlift Operations (ENAO)

Airlift missions supporting nuclear operations are classified as PNAF or ENAO. PNAF refers to the aircraft and aircrews that provide peacetime logistical support for the movement of nuclear weapons and nuclear components. The objective of ENAO is to move nuclear cargo safely under US custody during emergency operations. Cargo aircrew may be tasked at any time to airlift nuclear weapons. The amount of preparation time and degree of assistance received depends on the length of time the major command has to move the weapons.

Special Assignment Airlift Mission (SAAM)

SAAMs support movements requiring special consideration due to the number of passengers, weight or size of cargo, urgency of movement, sensitivity, or other valid factors that preclude the use of channel airlift. SAAMs support DOD users as well as other government agencies.
