



INTRODUCTION TO LEGAL SUPPORT

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The Air Force's legal support doctrine is constantly evolving. It should guide us to effectively organize and employ through the complexities of employing airpower in steady-state operations, and help us re-learn the lessons of large-scale peer and near-peer conflict in contested environments. As we continuously improve our airpower capabilities and capacities in air, space, and cyberspace, our ability to revolutionize legal support operations and incorporate new concepts and technologies will identify new best practices that shape future legal support doctrine. The [range of military operations](#) across the competition continuum, from peacetime through large-scale combat operations, is always a consideration when determining the best practices for our Air Force; consideration of peer and near-peer competition is a continuing necessity for doctrine as the Air Force supports the joint fight. Every Airman is an innovator and is integral to this continuous development process – we must all connect, share, and learn together to succeed.

Air Force Doctrine Publication (AFDP) 3-84, *Legal Support*, establishes Air Force [doctrine](#) focused on legal advice and considerations for Air Force operations. The Air Force, like other Services, continues to operate in an increasingly complex environment around the world, demanding nothing less than the very best in legal capability. This document represents best practices and other sanctioned ideas regarding legal aspects of Air Force operations. For over 70 years, the Air Force has possessed organic legal support in both the Office of the General Counsel and the Office of The Judge Advocate General (AF/JA). On 25 June 1948, the US Congress established The Judge Advocate General (TJAG), and, a year later, the Air Force Chief of Staff designated Air Force officers—who are attorneys—to serve as judge advocates. In 2003, the Judge Advocate General's Department was renamed the "Judge Advocate General's Corps" by order of the Secretary of the Air Force.

The Office of The Judge Advocate General (AF/JA) and the Office of the General Counsel of the Department of the Air Force (SAF/GC) work together to serve the Department of the Air Force. The relationship between the Office of the General Counsel of the Department of the Air Force (SAF/GC) and the Office of The Judge Advocate General (AF/JA) is based on the complementary roles that Congress intended for these offices when it established SAF/GC as part of the Office of the

Secretary of the Air Force and TJAG as part of the Air Staff. Both are legal advisors to SECAF and CSAF, with right of direct access and the ability to provide independent legal advice to those officials. SAF/GC and TJAG are independent of each other for the purposes of rating, reporting, and the accomplishment of their responsibilities. They perform their missions in an environment of collaboration and information sharing.

[Legal support to Air Force commanders](#) is critical to mission success. Air Force commanders turn to their judge advocates for insight into the law and its impact on Air Force operations. Proper legal counsel enhances commanders' successful decision-making ability, aiding in mission success.

Future legal support operations in a contested environment against a peer or near-peer adversary will require the air component to be more adaptive, resilient, and agile in its deployment and employment plans and leadership philosophies. The Air Force should be ready to provide resilient and redundant legal support capabilities in an environment of peer competition.
