



## **AIR FORCE SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND CORE MISSIONS**

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As an Air Force major command and the Air Force component to US Special Operations Command (USSOCOM), Air Force Special Operations Command (AFSOC) is responsible for providing specially tailored aviation related capabilities to conduct or support special operations core activities and other Secretary of Defense directed taskings. AFSOC refers to these capabilities as core missions. AFSOC core missions include:

- ✦ **Agile Combat Support** (ACS). Enables all AFSOC core missions and capabilities across the range of military operations. Protects, fields, prepares, deploys, maintains, sustains, and reconstitutes Air Force special operations personnel, weapons systems, infrastructure, and information in support of special operations core activities.
- ✦ **Aviation Foreign Internal Defense** (AvFID). AFSOC combat aviation advisors (CAA) assess, train, advise, and assist/accompany partnered forces aviation assets in airpower employment, sustainment, and integration. CAA conduct special operations activities by, with, and through foreign aviation forces. CAA mission priorities are focused on mobility, ISR, and precision strike missions, with associated surface integration tasks that enable the air-to-ground integration of partnered forces.
- ✦ **Command and Control** (C2). C2 is the exercise of the commander's authority and direction over assigned and attached forces. Operational C2 elements consist of personnel and equipment with specialized capability to plan, direct, coordinate, and control forces to conduct joint and combined special operations.
- ✦ **Information Operations** (IO). IO is the integrated employment, during military operations, of information-related capabilities in concert with other lines of operation to influence, disrupt, corrupt, or usurp the decision-making of adversaries and potential adversaries while protecting our own by producing effects in and through the information environment. The resulting information superiority allows friendly forces the ability to collect, control, exploit, and defend information without effective opposition.

- ★ **Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance** (ISR). ISR synchronizes and integrates sensors, collection assets, and processing, exploitation and dissemination in direct support of current and future SOF operations. It consists of manned and remotely piloted aircraft and Distributed Common Ground Systems that deliver actionable intelligence to supported special operations forces (SOF). ISR produces detailed, specialized products tailored to mission, customer, and pace of operation that gives SOF a decisive advantage against our adversaries.
  
- ★ **Precision Strike.** Precision strike provides the joint force commander and the SOF operator with specialized capabilities to find, fix, track, target, engage, and assess (F2T2EA) targets. F2T2EA can use a single weapon system or a combination of systems to complete the kill chain. Precision strike missions include close air support, air interdiction, and armed reconnaissance. Attributes associated with precision strike include persistence, robust communications, high situational awareness, precise target identification, lethality, and survivability, as required.
  
- ★ **Specialized Air Mobility.** Specialized air mobility missions include both specialized mobility and refueling. Specialized mobility is the rapid global infiltration, exfiltration, and resupply of personnel, equipment, and material using specialized systems and tactics. Specialized refueling is the rapid, global refueling of both airborne and overland platforms using specialized systems and tactics, thereby increasing mission flexibility and aircraft range. This is done via in-flight refueling either as a tanker or receiver and can additionally be conducted on the ground through a forward arming and refueling point (FARP). These missions may be clandestine, covert, low visibility, or overt and through hostile, denied, or politically sensitive airspace using manned or unmanned platforms with a single aircraft or part of a larger force package. Specialized air mobility aircraft operate across the range of military operations in all environmental regions (e.g., arctic, desert, littoral, mountainous, sea, tropical, etc.), day and night, and during adverse weather conditions to include transient exposure to chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear effects. Specialized air mobility platforms also have capability to conduct limited military information support operations (MISO) via leaflet drops of printed material. Although modern means of communications will most likely be used in MISO, leaflet drops can and will remain an effective MISO medium when the area of interest does not possess modern means of communications, is outside a high threat area, or is affected by natural disasters.
  
- ★ **Special Tactics.** A special tactics team (STT) is a ground force that conducts special operations core activities with expertise in airpower application. Special tactics conducts special operations at the tactical and operational level to solve threat-centric problems and concurrently applies specialized airpower capabilities. Special tactics required capabilities are Global Access, Precision Strike, Personnel Recovery (for more information, see USSOCOM Directive 525-21), and Battlefield Surgery. Special tactics capabilities enable the joint force to gain access, project combat power, and protect the force across the spectrum of conflict. Special tactics capabilities consist of air traffic control; assault zone assessment, establishment and control; terminal attack control; fire support; operational preparation of the

environment; special reconnaissance; command and control; full spectrum personnel and equipment recovery; humanitarian relief; battlefield trauma care; and battlefield surgery. The special tactics squadron is the basic unit of action and task organized with subordinate mission-oriented STTs. Each STT is oriented toward the Global Access, Precision Strike, or Personnel Recovery mission. The Special Operations Surgical Team (SOST) provides a forward resuscitation and surgical capability. Agile special tactics forces enable projection and integration of SOF power across domains, geographic boundaries, and operational environments in support of the special tactics required capabilities of Global Access, Precision Strike, Personnel Recovery, and Battlefield Surgery. Through an integrated warfighting approach, special tactics is uniquely capable of delivering airpower against hard problem sets that are otherwise not within operational reach of the joint force.

### **Operation ENDURING FREEDOM**

The terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center in New York City and the Pentagon in Washington D.C., on September 11, 2001, pushed the nation's special operations forces to the forefront of the war against terrorism. Additionally, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) invoked the "mutual defense clause" for the first time in its history in response to the attacks.

By the end of September 2001, AFSOC deployed forces to southwest Asia for Operation ENDURING FREEDOM (OEF) to help confront and remove the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, along with the Taliban-supported al-Qaeda terrorist organization headed by Osama Bin Laden, who were responsible for the September 11 attacks on the US.

During the initial months of OEF, AFSOC Joint Terminal Attack Control (JTAC) qualified CCTs played a significant role in the campaign as the USAF airpower relied on their expertise for coordinated airstrikes. These strikes were critical in support to the Northern Alliance in their fight against the Taliban and al-Qaeda. The AFSOC CCTs were instrumental in the first major gain of the conflict, leveraging airpower that led to the capture of the northern city of Mazar-e-Sharif on November 9, 2001—a major breakthrough in the struggle to oust the Taliban and al-Qaeda. Airpower provided by AFSOC AC-130s, MC-130s, and special tactics teams significantly diminished the Taliban's and al-Qaeda's capabilities in Afghanistan.

In addition to their support in Afghanistan, AFSOC personnel also deployed to the Philippines, and later to the Horn of Africa, Trans-Saharan Africa, and the Caribbean and Central American regions to help aid partner nation's efforts in combatting terrorism.