



COMBAT AVIATION ADVISORS

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While most Air Force units can conduct [foreign internal defense](#) (FID) operations, the USAF maintains units specifically tasked with advisory functions.

Air Force Special Operations Command (AFSOC) organizes, trains, and equips a subset of air advisors known as combat aviation advisors (CAAs). CAAs are responsible for the conduct of special operations activities with, through, and by foreign aviation forces. CAA units are tasked with FID, security force assistance, and unconventional warfare (UW). CAAs maintain advisor certifications from both the USAF and United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM). These certifications ensure that both USAF and USSOCOM-defined special operations joint interoperability standards are maintained to ensure that CAAs can quickly and reliably integrate into advisory efforts alongside US Army special operations forces (SOF), Naval Special Warfare contingents, and Marine Special Operations Command.

THE CAA OPERATIONAL AVIATION DETACHMENT

The CAA weapon system is the operational aviation detachment (OAD). The OAD is designed to integrate and operationalize a composite wing-sized partnered aviation unit into joint and combined operations. Fully mission capable OADs can consist of the following and are tailorable to the mission:

- ✦ Mission Commander / officer in charge.
- ✦ Team Sergeant / non-commissioned officer in charge.
- ✦ Communications specialist.
- ✦ Special operations mobility instructor pilot.
- ✦ Special operations mobility special mission aviator (SMA).
- ✦ Intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) instructor pilot.

- ✦ ISR instructor sensor operator.
- ✦ Precision strike instructor pilot.
- ✦ Precision strike instructor sensor operator.
- ✦ Joint terminal attack controller instructor (JTAC-I).
- ✦ Intelligence specialist.
- ✦ Force protection specialist.
- ✦ Maintenance specialist.
- ✦ Medical specialist.
- ✦ Aircrew flight equipment specialist.
- ✦ Personnel recovery and survival, evasion, resistance, and escape specialist.

OADs are optimized for integrating and operationalizing airpower functions into joint special operations while maintaining a small logistical footprint and signature. Proper employment of the OAD requires thorough mission assessment to determine specific, measurable, attainable, results-oriented, and time-bound objectives. Where requirements exist outside of OAD capabilities, augmentation may be required.

Specialized Characteristics of CAA Forces

CAA readiness places high emphasis on adaptability. In accordance with USAF and USSOCOM certification criteria, CAAs maintain a wide variety of tactical, linguistic skillsets. Specifically, CAAs must be able to adapt to and integrate a variety of partners, platforms, methodologies, all in a variety of environments. CAA forces provide commanders foreign language skills, tailored force packaging, and competency in nonstandard aircraft and equipment, and adaptive aviation support programs.

CAA forces are best suited to conduct operations and activities where the following conditions are present:

- ✦ Joint advisory effort alongside joint SOF advisors (e.g. US Army special forces). This condition allows a joint team of advisors to address institutional stove-piping in the partnered force to allow for joint combat effects.
- ✦ **Complementary Authorities:** This condition ensures that authorities match the task and support the desired end-state to reduce risks to the mission, and that CAAs have complementary authorities to help provide partnered airpower to US advisors partnered with HN surface units to reduce risks to forces.

- ✦ Use or availability of US-unilateral airpower is limited or untenable for political or capacity reasons.
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