



COMMAND RESPONSIBILITIES FOR FORCE PROTECTION

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Centralized control and decentralized execution of force protection measures and resources are essential to protect forces against threats worldwide. Force protection (FP) is a task for every commander at every level. Clarity of command responsibilities for FP is essential for a comprehensive, unambiguous, and integrated response. Integration of all aspects of FP, including interoperability with civilian command and control systems, should enable commanders to react quickly to threats. FP commanders should understand the legal basis of their responsibilities and jurisdictions. Discussion of FP command responsibilities begins above the Air Force organizations in a joint force because of the top-down guidance that permeates the military in support of FP.

The Role of the Geographic Combatant Commander

Force protection is not exclusively a Service responsibility. According to both the Unified Command Plan and Joint Publication (JP) 1, *Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States*, geographic combatant commanders (GCC) have the overall requirement to establish and implement FP in their areas of responsibility (AORs). GCCs exercise authority for force protection over all Department of Defense (DOD) personnel (including their dependents) assigned, attached, transiting through, or training in the GCC's AOR, except for those for whom the Department of State Chief of Mission (COM) retains security responsibility.¹² Examples of the latter include air attachés and Marine Corps embassy security group personnel. Additionally, GCCs develop and maintain memoranda of agreement with COMs that delineate security responsibility for DOD personnel based on whether the COM or the GCC is in the best position to provide FP. This is referred to as "proximity." Examples of this include US military personnel attending a foreign nation's defense college or Air Force personnel supporting military cargo aircraft at an international airport. Although the GCC is ultimately responsible, the GCC can work with the US Embassy to assume FP support duties to include intelligence sharing and threat warning.

Tactical Control Authority for Force Protection

GCCs have the authority to enforce appropriate FP measures to ensure the protection of all DOD elements and personnel subject to their control within their geographic

¹² DOD Instruction 2000.12, *DOD Antiterrorism Program*.

AORs. This includes personnel on temporary duty, with the exception of DOD personnel for whom the COMs have security responsibility. This authority includes tactical control (TACON) for FP over military personnel within a GCC's AOR.

Further, TACON for FP authorizes the GCC to change, modify, prescribe, and enforce FP measures for covered forces. This relationship includes the authority to inspect and assess security requirements, and submit budget requests to parent organizations to fund identified corrections. The GCC may also direct immediate force protection condition measures (including temporary relocation and departure) when in his or her judgment such measures must be accomplished without delay to ensure the safety of the DOD personnel involved. Persons subject to TACON for FP of a GCC include regular and Reserve Component personnel (including National Guard personnel in a Title 10 status) in the AOR.

A commander with TACON for FP can be different from the commander with mission responsibility. For example, 18th Air Force (18 AF) (Air Forces Transportation [AFTRANS]) has strategic airlift assets forward deployed in the US Central Command AOR. Although the aircraft are staged in the Middle East, the commander with mission responsibility is the 18 AF (AFTRANS) commander (CC) and is responsible for securing these assets during mission execution. The 18 AF (AFTRANS)/CC has determined that Phoenix Ravens, specially trained Security Forces who travel with the aircraft, are required to support these missions. Therefore, Phoenix Ravens are forward deployed with these assets to secure the aircraft on missions. The protection of these aircraft and their personnel at their beddown location, however, remains an installation commander responsibility and not an 18 AF (AFTRANS) responsibility.

Although GCCs may delegate authority to accomplish the FP mission, they may not absolve themselves of the responsibility for the accomplishment of those missions. Authority is never absolute; the extent of authority is specified by the establishing authority, directives, and law.

Force Protection in US Northern Command

In most theaters, the senior DOD member serves as the combatant commander and assumes FP responsibilities. In [US Northern Command](#)'s (USNORTHCOM's) AOR, where the Secretary of Defense and other senior DOD officials outrank the USNORTHCOM commander, the combatant commander maintains responsibility for FP. While this is a unique situation for USNORTHCOM, the principle is the same—there must be a commander responsible for the protection of DOD assets in the USNORTHCOM AOR to ensure [unity of effort](#), and that commander is the commander, USNORTHCOM. The Title 10, US Code, requirements of the military departments to support USNORTHCOM are the same as in any other theater, including supporting the USNORTHCOM FP mission.

USNORTHCOM executes a comprehensive all-hazards approach to provide an appropriate level of safety and security for the DOD elements (to include the Reserve components, DOD civilians, family members, and contractors supporting DOD at DOD

facilities or installations), resources, infrastructure, information, and equipment from the threat spectrum to assure mission success. The authorities of commanders in the USNORTHCOM AOR are similar to those of commanders in other AORs.
