THE AIR EXPEDITIONARY TASK FORCE

Last Updated: 22 Nov 2016

- The air expeditionary task force (AETF) is the organizational structure for Air Force forces in response to operational tasking (i.e., established for a temporary period of time to perform a specified mission). It provides a task-organized, integrated package with the appropriate balance of force, sustainment, control, and force protection.

- AETFs may be established as an Air Force Service component to a joint task force (JTF), or as a subordinate task force within a larger Air Force Service component to address specific internal tasks. If an AETF is formed as the former, the AETF commander is also a commander, Air Force forces (COMAFFOR). Otherwise, the AETF commander is not a COMAFFOR, but reports to a COMAFFOR.

- A single commander presents a single Air Force face to the joint force commander (JFC) and results in clear lines of authority both ways.
  - Internal to the task force, there is only one person clearly in charge; for a JFC, there is only one person to deal with on matters regarding Air Force issues.
  - The AETF commander is the senior Air Force warfighter and exercises the appropriate degree of control over the forces assigned, attached, or in support of the AETF.
  - Within the joint force, these degrees of control are formally expressed as operational control (OPCON), tactical control (TACON), or support. Within Service lines, the AETF commander exercises administrative control (ADCON).

- Appropriate Command and Control Mechanisms. If acting as a COMAFFOR, the AETF commander exercises command in both the operational and administrative branches of the chain of command through an air operations center (AOC), an Air Force forces (AFFOR) staff (sometimes colloquially called an “A-staff”), and appropriate subordinate C2 elements. The AOC and the AFFOR staff are discussed in more detail in Annex 3-30, Command and Control.

- Tailored and Fully Supported Forces. The AETF should be tailored to the mission; this includes not only forces, but also the ability to command and control those forces for the missions assigned.
In summary, the AETF is an expeditionary force established for a temporary period of time to perform a specified mission. The AETF provides a tailored package of air, space, and cyberspace capabilities in a structure that preserves Air Force unity of command. An AETF can be tailored in size and composition as appropriate for the mission.

For more complete overview of the AETF, See Annex 3-30.