



THE AIR EXPEDITIONARY TASK FORCE

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- 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](#).*
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