The commander, Air Force forces (COMAFFOR) requires command and control (C2) assets to assist in exercising operational control (OPCON), tactical control (TACON), and administrative control (ADCON). The COMAFFOR normally uses some form of an air operations center (AOC) to exercise control of operations and a Service component staff, commonly called the AFFOR staff, to exercise support operations and administrative control.

The core capabilities of the AOC and AFFOR staff are well established, but they should be tailored in size and function according to the operation.

Not all operations require a “full-up” AOC with over 1,000 people or a large AFFOR staff. Smaller operations, such as some humanitarian operations, can in fact make do with a small control center that does little more than scheduling and reporting.

Not all elements of the operations center or AFFOR staff need be forward; some may operate “over the horizon,” using reachback to reduce the forward footprint. The goal is to maximize reachback and minimize forward presence as much as possible.

Air Operations Center. In general terms, an AOC is the Air Force component commander’s C2 center that provides the capability to plan, direct, and assess the activities of assigned and attached forces.

AOCs do not work in isolation; they require appropriate connectivity to operations centers of higher headquarters (e.g., to the joint force headquarters for the operational branch, and to senior Air Force headquarters for the administrative branch), to lateral headquarters (e.g., other joint force components), to subordinate assigned and attached Air Force units, and to other functional and geographic AOCs as necessary. The overall C2 structure should make maximum use of reachback.

An AOC, along with subordinate C2 elements, should be tailored in size and capability to the mission. An AOC should generally be capable of the following basic tasks:

- Develop the component strategy and requisite planning products.
- Task, execute, and assess day-to-day component operations.
- Plan and execute intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) tasks appropriate to assigned missions.
- Conduct operational-level assessment.

For an AOC baseline description, see Annex 3-30, appendix B.

**AFFOR Staff.** The AFFOR staff is the mechanism through which the COMAFFOR exercises Service responsibilities and is also responsible for the long-range planning and theater engagement operations that fall outside the AOC’s current operational focus.

An AFFOR staff should be ready to fill one or more roles: that of a theater-wide Air Force Service component, an Air Force warfighting component within a JTF, or the core or “plug” within a JTF headquarters.

The COMAFFOR should avoid dual- or triple-hatting the AFFOR staff to the maximum extent possible. Dual- or triple-hatting may have detrimental consequences as the staff struggles to focus at the right level of war at the right time. Manning and distribution of workload may limit the staff’s ability to cover all involved duties simultaneously and augmentation may be necessary.

The AFFOR staff’s function is to support and assist the COMAFFOR in preparing the Air Force component to carry out the functions and tasks assigned by the joint force commander (JFC).

See baseline AFFOR staff description in Annex 3-30, appendix C.