



USAF DOCTRINE UPDATE on COMAFFOR and JFACC Relationship

Based on discussions with units in the field, it is time to reiterate some of the core concepts in doctrine regarding the COMAFFOR and the JFACC. Understanding that an Airman is first and always a COMAFFOR before assuming the additional job as a JFACC is the primary guiding principle to sorting out the relationship between the COMAFFOR and JFACC roles. When the COMAFFOR is also the JFACC, it is important to ascertain what role, COMAFFOR or JFACC, that individual is exercising when issuing guidance and orders.

The COMAFFOR commands the Air Force component within a joint force.

There should be only one COMAFFOR¹ in each joint force² that has an Air Force assigned or attached component. Other key elements Airmen need to remember about a COMAFFOR are:

- A COMAFFOR exists **only** within the context of a **joint force**.
- The JFC exercises operational control (OPCON) of the COMAFFOR and the other Service component commanders.
- The JFC normally delegates OPCON of the Air Force component to the COMAFFOR.
- The Air Force chain of command delegates complete administrative control (ADCON) over assigned AF forces and specified ADCON over attached forces to a COMAFFOR.³
- **The COMAFFOR is a warfighter and remains one when designated as a JFACC.**

The JFC's options for command and control of joint air operations

Joint air operations are those performed by forces made available for joint air tasking.

- Depending on the situation, the JFC may 1) choose to designate a functional component commander, i.e. a JFACC, 2) conduct operations through a Service component commander, i.e. a COMAFFOR, or 3) use the joint force's staff.⁴ JFCs establish functional component commands that have "authority over forces or military capability made available."⁵ Functional component commanders are not JFCs.
- When the projected scope and complexity of joint air operations is significant, the JFC usually chooses to designate a Service component commander to be the JFACC.
 - A JFACC is normally designated to achieve unity of command and unity of effort for joint air operations.
- The JFACC is the commander in a joint force "responsible for tasking joint air forces, planning and coordinating joint air operations, or accomplishing such operational missions as... assigned."⁶
 - **JFCs have routinely selected the COMAFFOR to be the JFACC because the Air Force component has the preponderance of air assets, and the ability to plan, task, and control joint air operations.**

COMAFFOR and JFACC command authorities

- An individual dual-designated as the COMAFFOR/JFACC, in addition to exercising OPCON over Air Force forces, normally exercises "TACON over other Service's forces made available for tasking."⁷
 - "Joint air operations do not include... air operations that a component conducts as an integral and organic part of its own operations."
 - JFCs have almost never delegated TACON over other Service's units to the JFACC. Rather, other components make sorties available for tasking.
- The JFC normally uses the support command relationship to enable joint operations.
 - "Each component commander may be tasked to support other components and /or provide support to the joint force as a whole."

- The JFC designates the JFACC as the supported commander for strategic attack, the overall air interdiction effort, personnel recovery, and airborne ISR among others missions with other component commanders supporting.
 - The land and maritime component commanders are supported for interdiction in their areas of operations with the JFACC supporting them.
- Reduced to its essence, the commander of the Air Force Service component conducts operations as COMAFFOR and, when designated as a JFACC, conducts joint air operations with units or forces provided.
- Many make the mistake of thinking that the JFACC is a separate individual, and superior to a COMAFFOR. In reality, the COMAFFOR is the more powerful position: it combines complete authority to employ forces (OPCON) with complete authority to organize and sustain forces (ADCON). For example, a JFACC cannot reposition forces, but a COMAFFOR can, because the COMAFFOR has the means to realign Service logistics to support a repositioning. A COMAFFOR, has the ability to backfill capabilities as they are applied during the conduct of operations. By comparison, a JFACC, empowered only with TACON, is only concerned (and can only influence) the execution of forces.

“To simplify nomenclature in doctrine, Air Force doctrine... simply use[s] the term "COMAFFOR" with the assumption that, unless stated otherwise, the COMAFFOR is dual-hatted as the JFACC and perhaps CFACC. Air Force doctrine recognizes that the two responsibilities are different and should be executed through different staffs. Similarly, Air Force doctrine recognizes that the air operations center (AOC), in joint or combined operations is correctly known as a joint AOC (JAOC) or combined AOC (CAOC). However, [Air Force] doctrine simply uses the term "AOC." (Volume I, *Air Force Basic Doctrine*)

Command and Control (C2) of joint air operations

Never forget that the Air Force component’s C2 structure is organic and remains under the COMAFFOR’s OPCON. This means the Theater Air Control System and, especially its air operations center, stay in the Air Force component unless a JFC is responding to a situation so extreme that the solution warrants denying a COMAFFOR the ability to C2 Air Force forces.

- The C2 system for joint air operations is built around the organic C2 system of the Service component commander designated as the JFACC. The other Services’ C2 systems are integrated as needed to support the JFC’s overall concept of operations. Theater Air Ground System elements may be made available for tasking by the JFACC “to enhance joint air operations.”⁸ When a COMAFFOR is designated a JFACC the air operations center is renamed the joint air operations center and augmented with joint personnel while the rest of the TACS is unaffected.

Making the AOC “joint” and manning the JFACC’s staff

“The JAOC... should be staffed by members of all participating components, to include key staff positions...” In addition to a JAOC, joint doctrine calls for a JFACC staff separate and distinct from the JAOC.

- The JAOC receives liaison teams⁹ who represent their components and whose presence enables sound joint air operations planning. These teams remain under the command of their components and work “with” the JFACC to help accomplish the JFC’s objectives.
- Other than having liaison personnel distributed throughout a JAOC, doctrine is silent on how to make an AOC joint or create a JFACC staff that is “joint.” This is in contrast to JP 1-0, *Joint Personnel Support* guidance on how a Joint Manning Document is used to man a JTF headquarters with the right number and type of Service members.
- Air Force component staff should not be “dual-hatted” either as members of the JAOC or the JFACC staff.¹⁰ For example, the AFFOR staff entities are manned distinctly separate and have different roles and responsibilities.

Published 26 September 2014. For more information, e-mail LeMayCtr.weworkflow@maxwell.af.mil. Follow us on Facebook or Twitter (#AFDoctrine) to stay up to date with the changes to doctrine!

¹ There is an exception to this doctrinal tenet. US Strategic Command has two Air Force Components – AFSPC and AFGSC

² Combatant Command, Subordinate Unified Commands, and Joint Task Forces

³ <https://doctrine.af.mil/download.jsp?filename=V1-D26-COMAFFOR.pdf>

⁴ JP 3-30, II-1

⁵ JP 1, IV-17

⁶ JP 3-30, I-2

⁷ <https://doctrine.af.mil/download.jsp?filename=V1-D43-JFACC.pdf>

⁸ JP 3-30, II-8.

⁹ BCD – Battlefield Coordination Detachment, NALE – Naval Air Liaison Element, MARLE – Marine Liaison Element, SOLE – Special Operations Liaison Element and others.

¹⁰ <https://doctrine.af.mil/download.jsp?filename=V1-D50-Joint-Staffs.pdf>