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FOR DOCTRINE DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATION



ANNEX 3-52 AIRSPACE CONTROL

COMMAND AND ORGANIZATION

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Air Force and joint doctrine supports the [command and control of joint air operations](#) around three options; a functional component commander, (e.g., a joint force air component commander [JFACC]), a Service component commander, or a staff option. Additionally, both Air Force and joint doctrine support command of airpower through a theater-level commander, Air Force forces (COMAFFOR)/JFACC, a joint task force (JTF)-level COMAFFOR/JFACC, or a mix of the two. The latter requires careful consultation between the respective joint force commanders (JFC) and their COMAFFOR/JFACCs. The geographic combatant commander (GCC) should provide guidance for the interaction between theater-level components and subordinate JTFs. This should include clarity of supported and supporting command relationships between the JTFs and theater COMAFFOR/JFACC, together with clear priorities of effort and support, and apportionment. The theater COMAFFOR/JFACC should then allocate effort across the area of responsibility (AOR) using combatant commander's (CCDR) guidance and priorities. The CCDR sets the conditions for success by clearly stating and emphasizing the supported command status of subordinate JTFs and the supporting command role of a theater-level COMAFFOR/JFACC. The CCDR is the ultimate arbiter for prioritization and apportionment decisions among subordinate JTF commanders and the theater COMAFFOR/JFACC to provide sufficient guidance for the theater COMAFFOR/JFACC's subsequent allocation decisions.

The [air operations center](#) (AOC) is organic to the Air Force and is the senior Air Force command and control (C2) node for command and control of air, space, and [cyberspace forces](#). When employed for joint or coalition operations, the AOC is known as a joint AOC (JAOC) or combined AOC (CAOC) for coalition operations. In the case of a single JFACC, airpower's inherent flexibility can be leveraged through a single commander and subsequently controlled by a single JAOC, even if C2 is exercised over multiple joint operations areas (JOAs) across a single AOR. However, key personal relationships become harder to maintain under this organization due to heavy reliance on virtual vice physical presence and a greater geographical distance between the JAOC and the joint theater headquarters.¹

¹ AF/A9 L2, [Integration of Airpower in Operational Level Planning Report](#)

Roles and Responsibilities of the Commander, Staff, and Subordinate Organization(s)

Airmen, in conjunction with joint and coalition partners, are responsible for planning and integrating [airspace control](#) systems in accordance with JFC guidance. Airspace control systems should maximize the combat effectiveness of all forces, while reducing the risk of fratricide and unintended engagements against civil and neutral aircraft. To do this, Air Force commanders train their personnel to employ risk management principles and to be knowledgeable of all component systems and procedures. The primary purpose of [command relationships](#) is to establish a chain of command so all involved understand who is in charge, who is supported, and who is supporting.

Joint Force Commander

The JFC is responsible for airspace control within the JOA. Although components may use portions of airspace to accomplish the mission, they do so only with the approval of the JFC and in accordance with the JFC's policies and procedures. The control procedures and authorities for the airspace within the JOA are codified in the JFC's airspace control plan (ACP) and executed by the [airspace control authority](#) (ACA). The ACP in combination with the [airspace control order](#) (ACO) expresses how airspace will be used to support mission accomplishment. The air operations directive (AOD) then establishes the priorities among airspace users and missions.²

Commander, Air Force Forces

The COMAFFOR provides the Air Force theater air control system (TACS) and airspace control expertise and resources to the JFC. Each airspace control system can be tailored to support centralized control and decentralized execution of air forces throughout the range of military operations. The Air Force provides the COMAFFOR with the resources necessary to assume the roles of ACA and AADC. Unifying the roles of ACA and area [air defense commander](#) (AADC) ensures unity of effort in all aspects of theater airspace operations. If the JFACC is designated from another component, the COMAFFOR ensures Air Force forces are employed in accordance with the JFACC's guidance and tasking. If the JFC decides not to organize functionally, the COMAFFOR should expect to fulfill the roles of ACA and AADC.^{3 4}

Joint Force Air Component Commander

The JFC normally designates the COMAFFOR as the JFACC and assigns responsibilities accordingly. The JFACC is normally designated by the JFC as the AADC and ACA since air defense and airspace control are an integral part of joint air operations. By design, the AOC is a natural command and control node to integrate these operations. Although the separation of the AADC and the ACA function is not routine, the JFC may designate a separate AADC and ACA (e.g., when a single commander is not capable of performing both roles).

² Joint Publication [JP] 3-52 [Joint Airspace Control](#)

³ Joint Publication [JP] 3-52 [Joint Airspace Control](#)

⁴ Joint Publication [JP] 3-30, [Command and Control of Joint Air Operations](#)

Airspace Control Authority

The component commander designated as the [airspace control authority](#) (ACA) assumes overall responsibility for the operation of the ACS in the JOA and should be the commander with the preponderance of airspace management and control capability, including the ability to plan, promulgate, execute, and assess integrated airspace control operations. The ACA, on behalf of the JFC, develops broad policies and procedures for airspace control and for the coordination required among units within the operational area. When approved by the JFC, these policies and procedures are promulgated via the JFC's ACP.

A key responsibility of the ACA is to provide an effective and adaptive airspace control system to meet contingency situations and necessitate the rapid employment of forces in support of the JFC's mission. Matters on which the ACA is unable to obtain agreement are referred to the JFC for resolution. Key [ACA responsibilities](#) include, but are not limited to:

- ✦ Identifying and coordinating airspace access required for the JFC's mission.
- ✦ Providing effective and timely integration of the airspace control system with that of the host nation, coordinating and deconflicting airspace user requirements to include conduct of operations in support of normal air commerce operators as governed by host nation and International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) guidance.⁵
- ✦ Developing the ACP in accordance with JFC guidance.
- ✦ Developing ACOs in accordance with the ACP.
- ✦ Disseminating the ACP and ACO in a timely manner to all associated joint and coalition units.
- ✦ Integrating Service and joint airspace management and control personnel and systems to support required JFC mission.
- ✦ Establishing liaison with interagency, host nation, regional, or international airspace agencies as required for the deconfliction of civil and military airspace use.
- ✦ Delegating control of a portion of airspace to a commander to accomplish a specified mission or to facilitate decentralized execution (e.g., an amphibious objective area [AOA] or air defense sector).
- ✦ When delegating airspace, retaining overall responsibility for specified airspace and recalling that airspace when required for higher JFC priorities or when the

⁵ Joint Publication [JP] 3-52 [Joint Airspace Control](#); Air and Space Power Journal (04 Oct 05), *The Miracle of Operation Iraqi Freedom Airspace Management*

delegated commander can no longer exercise command and control over the delegated airspace.



Airspace Control Authority Products

To execute airspace control effectively, the ACA provides guidance on airspace use through the ACP and ACO. The ACA also provides airspace usage inputs to the JFACC's ATO and SPINS. The ACP uses the JFACC's operational guidance provided in the AOD to establish airspace control procedures throughout the JOA. The AOD conveys JFC guidance concerning acceptable levels of risk with respect to airspace control. Refer to JP 3-52, [Joint Airspace Control](#), or [Appendix A](#), for topics to consider when developing an ACP. The ACP also establishes the airspace control system, the control nodes, and airspace procedures. The ACO executes the ACP and could contain airspace priorities discussed in the AOD. The AOD, like the ACP, is directive in nature.

The ACP and area air defense plan (AADP) should complement each other to provide effective airspace control. The ACP should consider procedures and interfaces with the international or regional air traffic systems necessary to effectively support air operations, augmenting forces, and JFC objectives. Ideally, the ACP should be developed prior to an expected operational phase to provide advance information to other component and coalition planners. These documents should support continued operations with degraded command and control capabilities. The ACP also supports an orderly transition from peacetime operations to combat operations and back to peacetime. Such a transition could occur during a period of increasing tensions or suddenly without warning.

Activation of the airspace specified in the ACP is through the ACO. While the ACP provides general guidance for the control of the airspace, the ACO implements specific control procedures for established time periods. The ACO is published either as part of the ATO or as a separate document. The ACO defines and establishes airspace for military operations. It contains the details of the structure and effective time of activation for the airspace to be used. The ACO includes airspace coordination measures, air traffic control areas, air defense areas, and fire support coordination measures.

Area Air Defense Commander

The JFC designates the [AADC](#). The AADC is responsible for [defensive counterair](#) (DCA) operations, which includes both air and missile defense. The AADC should identify those volumes of airspace and control measures that support and enhance DCA operations, identify required airspace management systems, establish procedures for systems to operate within the airspace, and ensure they are incorporated into the airspace control system. The AADC may also designate regional air defense commanders and sector air defense commanders to allow for ease of command and control of airspace based on the size and scope of the mission/operation. The successful conduct of air defense operations requires the integrated operation of all available air, land and maritime-based defense systems. The AADC develops the

AADP after JFC approval and ensures it is promulgated. The AADP and ACP should be complementary.

Other Component Commanders

In support of JFC airspace management guidance, component commanders may be required to:

- ✦ Provide airspace control in areas designated in the ACP.
 - ✦ Forward requests for airspace coordination measures to the ACA in accordance with the ACP.
 - ✦ Develop component-specific airspace control instructions, plans, and procedures in accordance with guidance in the ACP; coordinate these plans and procedures with the ACA to ensure consistency with JFC-approved airspace control guidance.
 - ✦ Provide facilities and personnel for airspace control functions in assigned operational areas and identify those facilities and personnel to the ACA for inclusion in the ACP.
 - ✦ When required, provide component airspace liaison personnel to the JFACC or senior air control facility.
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