



COMMAND AND ORGANIZATION

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Targeting occurs from the [combatant command](#) level to the tactical unit level. Across this organizational span, Air Force targeting focuses on a wide variety of targeting issues both within and outside of the targeting cycle such as: target planning, target materials production, targeting database maintenance, target systems analysis, targeting automation and support to weapons acquisition. The air component is responsible for enacting the targeting process for the [joint force commander](#) (JFC) and servicing approved targets, regardless of which service or functional component nominates them. Within this command structure the targeting cycle of planning, execution and assessment occurs under a very structured process, and normally under a compressed timeline.

JFCs have many options for organizing the joint force. JFCs organize forces to accomplish the mission based on their vision and concept of operations and they provide direction and guidance on command relationships. How the JFC chooses to organize impacts where certain targeting responsibilities are retained, either at the JFC level or delegated to the [commander, Air Force forces](#) (COMAFFOR). Regardless of the organizational option chosen, fundamental doctrinal principles of the joint targeting process should be employed.

The COMAFFOR establishes a close working relationship with the JFC. This relationship extends through the JFC and COMAFFOR staffs and other component staffs with a role in supporting the JFC with targeting capabilities. The COMAFFOR normally operates from an [air operations center](#) (AOC). The AOC and the COMAFFOR's staff are manned with subject matter experts who reflect the capabilities/forces available to the COMAFFOR for tasking and include appropriate component representation.

Air Operations Center (AOC). During day-to-day operations, the AOC plans, directs, and monitors theater air component operations including integrated targeting activities.¹ It continually surveys the environment and provides predictive awareness so the

¹ 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, doctrine simply uses the term "AOC."

COMAFFOR can effectively prepare for crisis operations. AOC members also plan and coordinate future air operations with the AFFOR staff.

In most joint and coalition operations, the AOC forms around the AOC crew as augmented by allied/coalition/joint personnel. The COMAFFOR employs the AOC to maneuver and mass [airpower](#) through [centralized control and decentralized execution](#) to produce desired strategic, operational, and tactical effects in support of the JFC's intent.

The AOC operates as a fully integrated command center and is staffed by all participating components. The AOC provides the capability to plan, coordinate, allocate, task, execute, monitor, and assess the activities of assigned or attached forces. Staffing includes functional area experts [e.g., [Intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance](#) (ISR)], meteorological and oceanographic, logistics, space operations, legal, airspace, plans, and communications personnel) and mission experts (e.g., air-to-air, air-to-ground, ground-to-air, information operations, reconnaissance, air refueling, and other areas). Liaison elements and joint/coalition participants are embedded in this structure.² The nucleus of the COMAFFOR staff should be trained in joint air operations and be representative of the joint force. The COMAFFOR normally has a [targeting effects team](#) (TET) as part of the AOC, with responsibilities varied but key to the targeting process. The TET includes embedded personnel from the [targets and tactical assessment](#) (TGT/TA) Team of the ISR division. It links targets and capabilities to guidance on desired effects, deconflicts and coordinates target nominations and provides other targeting support requiring component input at the operational level. If the JFC delegates joint targeting coordination authority to the COMAFFOR, the TET also receives all target nominations and prioritizes them to form the draft [joint integrated prioritized target list](#) (JIPTL).

US Air Force C2 System

[The theater air ground system](#) (TAGS) is a system of systems that consists of component C2 elements for the purpose of working together in planning and executing operations. TAGS enables employment of the air targeting cycle from the operational to the tactical level. Comprised of airborne and ground elements, the Theater Air Control System (TACS) is the Air Force component of TAGS and the mechanism for C2 of airpower.³ The AOC is the senior C2 element of the TACS.

The [air support operations center](#) (ASOC) is the tactical level organization that facilitates Air Force-Army integration and provides primary control of air power in support of the Army continuing down through the TACS Air Force component liaisons aligned with land combat forces. The ASOC's primary mission is to provide direction and control of air operations directly supporting Army ground forces. Within the targeting arena, this is a critical component in that it supports deliberate targeting

² IRC requirements may entail IO, space, and cyberspace integrated elements or liaisons that provide the functional expertise to integrate target development, approval, and capabilities employment through the appropriate command chain for every phase of the planning cycle.

³ [AFTTP\(I\) 3-2.17, TAGS, Multi-Service Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures for the Theater Air Ground System.](#)

requirements during planning and fulfills the dynamic targeting role where immediate targeting supports Army forces.

[The Joint Air Component Coordination Element](#) (JACCE). The COMAFFOR may establish one or more joint air component coordination elements (JACCEs) with other commanders' headquarters to better integrate joint air operations with their operations. The JACCE is a service/functional component level liaison that serves as the direct representative of the COMAFFOR/JFACC.⁴ The JACCE can be critical to targeting processes. For example, the JACCE located with the joint force land component commander (JFLCC) provides valuable assistance and liaison from the JFACC/COMAFFOR and assists the JFLCC in planning and synchronizing operational fires and the establishment and control of [fire support coordination measures](#) (FSCMs).⁵

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

⁵ [JP 3-31, Command and Control of Joint Land Operations.](#)