



BASE FORCES

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For the Air Force, opening and establishing an operating location (OL) normally entails opening and establishing an airbase. Establishing OLs encompasses assessing, planning, reconfiguring, modifying, building, and inspecting infrastructure and utilities to support the mission, personnel, and equipment at specific OLs. The minimal infrastructure required to operate an airbase includes: runways, taxiways, ramps, roads, building sites, utility grids, communications grids, aviation fuels grids, munitions storage and assembly areas, facilities, entry control points, barriers, and defensive positions.

Airbase Opening

Airbase opening facilitates strategic and operational reach, paves the way for deployment and sustainment operations, and eases the transition between operational-level objectives and subsequent tactical-level operations. Airbase opening initiates and achieves initial operating capability of an airbase to execute its assigned operational mission by providing functional capabilities for command and control (C2), force protection (FP), cargo and passenger handling, logistics, airfield operations, force accountability, finance and contracting, and reception and beddown of follow-on forces. [Open the Airbase forces](#) normally arrive first and assess the airbase for establishment of minimum airfield operating parameters, C2, and supporting host-nation support capabilities. It may support any Service or nation and provides capabilities to transition responsibilities to the follow-on forces. Open the Airbase forces are presented in standard force modules, which are tailored to the specific situation based on Air Force forces planning.

Senior Airfield Authority

A [senior airfield authority](#) (SAA) is an important position during airbase opening and the transition following airbase opening. The SAA is responsible for the control, operation, and maintenance of the airfield to include the runways, associated taxiways, and parking ramps as well as land and facilities affecting airfield operations. The SAA is also responsible for coordination of all component or joint task force aircraft and airfield facilities to avoid splitting responsibilities among the Services. The SAA controls flightline access and is responsible for the safe movement of aircraft. The joint force commander should designate the Service component responsible for airbase operations. That designated Service component should appoint an SAA for airfield operations. The SAA should have aviation experience. If the designated SAA is not available at the start of operations, an on-site field grade air mobility liaison officer or the initial airbase opening forces commander (e.g., contingency response force commander, or the mission support group commander trained and certified in SAA duties and responsibilities including air traffic control and airfield/airspace

management) may serve as acting SAA.
