



APPENDIX C: THE AIR FORCE FORCES (AFFOR) STAFF

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This appendix supports the basic discussion of the AFFOR staff. More specific guidance can be found in Air Force Instruction 13-103, [AFFOR Staff Operations, Readiness and Structures](#).

An AFFOR staff (sometimes also called an A-Staff) supports the air component commander at the [combatant command](#) (CCMD), [subordinate unified command](#), or [joint task force](#) level. The AFFOR staff is the vehicle through which the air component commander fulfills operational and administrative responsibilities for [assigned](#) and [attached](#) forces across the [competition continuum](#). In the steady state, the AFFOR staff performs administrative responsibilities (organize, train, equip, and sustain), and also plans, executes, and assesses operations in support of the [combatant commander's](#) (CCDR's) theater campaign strategies and plans. The AFFOR staff is also responsible for the operational planning that occurs outside the air tasking cycle (e.g., contingency planning). The AFFOR staff consists of functionally oriented directorates, a command section,

Pacific Air Forces (PACAF) Staff: Synchronizing Orders and Execution in Great Power Competition

To facilitate the planning, direction, distribution, and sustainment of air forces in the Indo-Pacific theater against near peer adversaries, the Commander, Pacific Air Forces (COMPACAF) organizes the [air operations center](#) (AOC) under the PACAF A-3/6. Subordination of the combined force air component commander's operational-level command and control (C2) center under the Air Force Service component's staff officer responsible for operations and communications allows the COMPACAF's staff to coordinate the functions necessary to deploy, maintain, and maneuver expeditionary Air Force forces in the theater's anti-access / area denial environment. The alignment also facilitates staff-to-staff integration of effort with CCMD/J3 and joint operations center, across components and within the air component, which is necessary to synchronize operations and maintain initiative while achieving redundancy and resiliency forward.

a personal staff, and any required liaisons. The AFFOR staff issues [mission-type orders](#) on behalf of the air component commander to direct subordinate units to execute actions outside of the scope of the air, space, or cyberspace tasking orders (ATO, STO, and CTO, respectively). Examples of such orders may include setting a baseline force protection condition, directing the move of a unit to another operating base, and overseeing the execution of steady-state or security cooperation operations.

AFFOR STAFF ORGANIZATION

The following discussion of AFFOR staff duties is not intended to be all-inclusive. The differing mission requirements of any given operation may dictate different task emphasis and staff arrangements. Very large or complex operations, for example, may require all staff directorates. In some cases, senior component liaison elements may not be needed, while some of the required support may be obtained through [reachback](#). For very small or limited operations, a full AFFOR staff may not be required. As a rule of thumb, the size and span of the AFFOR staff should normally be held to the smallest number of divisions necessary to handle the demands of the operation; in some cases, the air component commander may combine some leadership positions (e.g., A-3/5). Other operations may employ an AFFOR staff split into forward and rear elements, using reachback to maintain [unity of effort](#). In each case, based upon regional requirements, the air component commander determines the size, shape, and location of the AFFOR staff, AOC, and liaisons to best support the operation.

Command Section

The command section is normally composed of the air component commander, vice commander, chief of staff, command chief master sergeant, executive assistant, and appropriate administrative support personnel. Within the command section, the chief of staff coordinates and directs the daily activities of the AFFOR staff; approves actions, orders, and plans, as authorized by the air component commander; and ensures air component commander decisions and concepts are implemented by directing and assigning staff responsibilities.

Personal Staff

The air component commander has several staff activities that normally function outside the AFFOR staff directorates. These activities fulfill specific responsibilities usually related to providing close, personal advice or services to the commander, or assist the commander and the component staff with technical, administrative, or tactical matters. These activities may include the commander's legal advisor; political advisor; public affairs advisor; inspector general; protocol advisor; historian; chaplain; and advisors or directors for counterintelligence and special investigations, financial management, force protection, air mobility operations, space operations, cyberspace operations, medical, knowledge operations management, and safety . Based on the needs of the operation

and the requirements of the AFFOR staff, some of these activities may be located within the AFFOR staff directorates.

Knowledge Management Enabling Decision Superiority

Prior to exercise Austere Challenge 2015, US Air Forces in Europe-Air Forces Africa experienced significant challenges in trying to achieve decision superiority due to a lack of knowledge management (KM) governance. Applying the joint KM operational design approach, the chief of staff created a civilian KM officer position, KM cell, and established a KM working group to plan, operate, and maintain four lines of effort (decision support, process management, KM governance, and a knowledge-sharing culture). The goal was to enable decision superiority through improved shared situational awareness and understanding, and to better support the commander's decision-making process.

Working for the chief of staff, the KM team first analyzed what information the commander and other senior leaders required. They then examined what information the staff needed to improve their shared situational awareness and inform their recommendations to the commander. Next, the KM team analyzed, streamlined, and standardized the information flow processes used to gather, input, and distribute operational knowledge products (e.g., operation plans and orders, courses of action, and staff estimates). They then applied enabling technologies, tools, business rules, and training to achieve the goal.

They created a Secret Internet Protocol Router Network-based "situation room" architecture using SharePoint (IntelShare) with workflows and site-wide metadata to consolidate and automate processes, and to increase search and archive capabilities. This framework facilitated knowledge and information flows across organizational lines within the command structure and with other Department of Defense agencies. The staff became more effective at locating data and information, and was better able to support the commander's decision making. Lessons learned and continuous process improvement methodologies empowered the team to develop, implement, and sustain incremental improvements across many exercises and operations since 2015.

Senior Component Liaisons

The senior liaison officer (LNO) from each component represents his or her respective commander to the air component commander. Subordinate LNOs from each component may perform duties throughout the staff as required, providing weapon system expertise. LNOs should be knowledgeable of the capabilities and limitations of their units and Service.

Manpower, Personnel, and Services (A-1)

The director of manpower, personnel, and services is the principal staff assistant to the air component commander for total force accountability, personnel policy and procedures, the establishment and documentation of manpower requirements, organizational structures, mortuary affairs, food and [force beddown](#) operations, the coordination of exchange services, and the provision of quality of life programs to enable and sustain forces assigned and attached.

Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (A-2)

The director of [intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance](#) (ISR) is the principal staff assistant for policy and guidance for all Air Force ISR operational architectures, personnel, systems, training, and intelligence preparation of the operational environment (IPOE). The A-2 provides intelligence support to forces within the assigned [area of operations](#). The A-2 does not normally direct ISR collection assets when an ISR division is resident in the AOC; this is normally directed by AOC's ISR division chief.

Operations (A-3)

The director of operations serves as the principal staff assistant in the direction and control of all assigned and attached Air Force forces. When [operational control](#) of Air Force units is formally transferred to the air component commander, the A-3 ensures they are capable of performing tasked missions. This includes monitoring unit deployments and beddown locations, combat readiness, mission rehearsals, force protection, and training activities. The A-3 is the focal point for executing component operations outside the purview of the AOC.

Logistics (A-4)

The director of logistics is the principal staff assistant for logistics and sustainment

PACAF Watch Center: Synergizing Staff Functions for Agile Combat Employment

The deployment, dispersal, and maneuver of operations and support units forward for adaptive basing in the Indo-Pacific Theater is a formidable challenge for the PACAF staff, including the PACAF A-4. The PACAF chief of staff directs an operations center called the Pacific Air Forces Watch Center (PAFWC) to synchronize PACAF A-4 functions with the PACAF staff, the air component's AOC, and Logistics Combat Support Teams in theater. In addition to synergizing PACAF's daily staff functions overall, the PAFWC facilitates the maintenance and sustainment of dispersed forces for agile combat employment and enables the air component commander to distribute commander's intent, direction, and guidance in a dynamic and competitive environment.

support. The A-4 staff is a broad, multi-disciplined organization, generally comprised of logistics plans, munitions, fuels, vehicle management, materiel management, maintenance, host nation support, contracting, distribution and combat logistics support. On some AFFOR staffs, the director of logistics also serves as the advisor for civil engineer installation management, security forces, fire emergency services, explosive ordnance disposal, emergency management, agile combat support, planning for commercial support, integrated defense, weapons system security, antiterrorism, force protection, and the senior maintenance officer.

Plans and Requirements (A-5)

The director of plans and requirements serves as the principal staff assistant for all consolidated planning functions. In coordination with the A-4, the A-5 conducts comprehensive force-level movement and execution planning throughout the campaign. This involves preparation and subsequent refinement of the force flow, beddown, and redeployment in the [time-phased force and deployment data](#). The A-5 is the focal point for planning not under the purview of the AOC, to include the campaign support plan and security cooperation country plans. This planning is normally preceded by the development of a strategy. The A-5 is also the focal point for the operational [assessment](#) of such plans. In addition, the A-5 leads in the development of the organizational structure and [command relationships](#) for the Air Force component within the framework of the joint operation. The A-5 normally publishes the Air Force component [operations order](#) to support the JFC's campaign.

Communications (A-6)

The director of communications is the principal staff assistant for communications-electronics and certain information capabilities. This includes establishing the theater communications and automated systems architecture to support operational and command requirements.

Installations and Mission Support (A-7)

Current AFFOR staffs no longer include the A-7, but have incorporated the duties under the A-4 and Air Force installation and mission support. However, CCMD joint staffs still retain this directorate as the J-7. Should the air component commander create such a directorate, duties include being primary advisor for installations; mission support; [force protection](#); [explosive ordnance disposal](#); civil engineering; firefighting; emergency management; chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear passive defense and response; contracting; and all cross-functional expeditionary combat support.

Strategic Plans and Programs (A-8)

The director of strategic plans and programs provides comprehensive advice on all aspects of strategic planning and programming. The A-8 also conducts program

assessment and provides coordinated resource inputs to the supporting Air Force major command's program objective memorandum processes.

Studies, Analyses, Assessments, and Lessons Learned (A-9)

The director of studies, analyses, assessments, and lessons learned, collects, documents, reports, and disseminates critical information necessary to analyze, assess, and document Air Force aspects of campaigns and [contingencies](#), and to document lessons identified. This information provides the primary source documents for both contemporary and future Air Force planning and analysis. Moreover, they serve as a baseline for component mission accomplishment.

Strategic Deterrence and Nuclear Integration (A-10)

The director of strategic deterrence and nuclear integration is the primary advisor for strategic deterrence, conventional/nuclear integration, and Air Force nuclear enterprise matters. This includes nuclear force structure, readiness, sustainability, and vulnerability data, as well as nuclear command, control and communications, and nuclear weapons employment.
