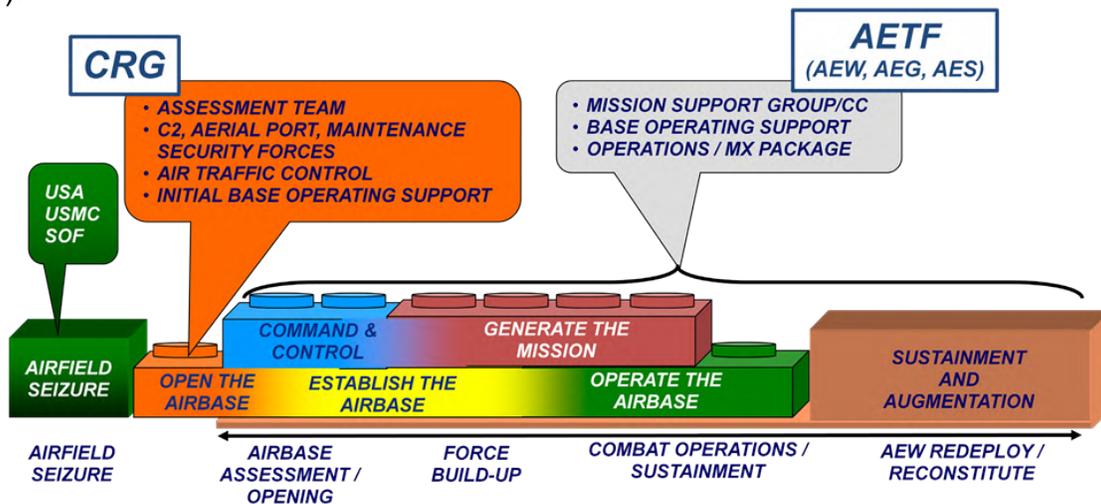


AIRBASE OPENING

Last Updated: 5 April 2016

Contingency response (CR) forces are normally the first Air Force presence on an expeditionary airbase regardless of how the base is gained (e.g., base seizure or acceptance from a host nation) or which follow-on US entity operates the base. CR forces are eventually replaced by follow-on forces (see figure “Airbase Opening Force Module Construct”). When opening a base, CR forces normally coordinate actions with theater command elements to ensure theater-specific responsibilities such as [force protection](#) (FP) meet requirements. All deployed CR forces should integrate with the host for FP and communications. Defined [operational areas](#) and responsibilities for CR personnel should be specified during planning of seizure and airbase opening operations. Additional issues that should be considered during planning may include the handoff of the airfield from any seizure force to the contingency response group (CRG) or other [Global Air Mobility Support System](#) (GAMSS) element, CRG/GAMSS element to follow-on unit, and redeployment and reconstitution of the CRG/GAMSS units once other expeditionary support forces are in place (normally not later than D+45 days).



Airbase Opening Force Module Construct

- | | |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| AEG- air expeditionary group | CRG- contingency response group |
| AES- air expeditionary squadron | MX- maintenance |
| AETF- air expeditionary task force | SOF- special operations forces |
| AEW- air expeditionary wing | USA- US Army |
| C2- command and control | USMC- US Marine Corps |

Operation JUST CAUSE: Air Mobility Liaison Officers Supporting Joint Forcible Entry

On 18 December 1989, the President directed the Joint Chiefs of Staff to execute Operation JUST CAUSE. The US invasion of Panama began on 20 December 1989 with an airborne assault by special operations forces onto strategic installations in Panama City and the airfield at the Rio Hato military complex

At 0100, 20 December 1989, nearly 1,300 Rangers of Task Force RED jumped over multiple objectives. At 0145 an additional 2,700 troopers from the 82d Airborne Division conducted an airborne assault onto Torrijos-Tocumen Airport, joining the Rangers in the largest US airborne operation since World War II. Among those forces parachuting onto the Torrijos-Tocumen Airport was a tactical airlift liaison-officer (TALO) in support of the 82d Airborne Division. (Now designated as air mobility liaison officers [AMLO]). His mission was to support efforts to clear the runway, accomplish drop zone surveys, and communicate when the runway was ready for aircraft.

The airfield was cleared of equipment and debris and capable of receiving aircraft just two days after D-day. Following the capture of General Manuel Noriega, the TALO worked with 82d Airborne Division Headquarters staff to coordinate the redeployment of 82d Airborne Division forces and equipment.

This operation and the similar 26 March 2003 combat airdrop of 954 soldiers of the 173rd Airborne Brigade onto Bashur Airfield in Northern Iraq highlight the value of integrating AMLOs into the assault force during joint forcible entry operations. AMLOs are trained and equipped to employ forward with their aligned Army and USMC units. AMLOs supporting the US Army's airborne units maintain the airborne qualification to support the joint forcible entry capability.

VARIOUS SOURCES, including personal account from Lt Col (ret) William J. McCrindle (3rd Brigade 82d Airborne Division TALO); Operation Just Cause: Lessons for Operations Other Than War, RAND, 1996 (Jennifer Morrison Taw); and Operation JUST CAUSE: The Planning and Execution of Joint Operations in Panama, February 1988–January 1990, Joint History Office, 1995 (Ronald H. Cole).