



ORGANIZATION

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Unlike other geographic combatant commands, there are Air Force forces permanently located within the boundaries of the [US Northern Command](#) (USNORTHCOM) [area of responsibility](#) (AOR) that are not assigned or attached to that combatant command.

Joint and Multinational C2 Elements

While all combatant commanders have a role in [homeland defense](#) (HD), USNORTHCOM and [US Pacific Command](#) (USPACOM) share the primary role in direct defense of the homeland. USNORTHCOM's mission is to conduct HD within its assigned AOR of the continental US, Alaska, Canada, Mexico, and parts of the Caribbean.¹⁸ It conducts defense support of civil authorities in the continental US, Alaska, Puerto Rico, and the US Virgin Islands. USNORTHCOM has Air Forces Northern (AFNORTH) as its Air Force component. USNORTHCOM and AFNORTH are assisted by [North American Aerospace Defense](#) (NORAD) Command, which is a binational command (US and Canada) that conducts aerospace warning, control, and maritime warning in defense of North America. The NORAD focus is on three regions: Continental NORAD Region (CONR), Alaskan NORAD Region (ANR), and Canadian NORAD Region. To achieve unity of effort, USNORTHCOM has designated the First Air Force (1 AF) commander as commander and commander, Air Force Forces (COMAFFOR) for both AFNORTH and CONR.

USPACOM's AOR includes Hawaii, the US territories of Guam and American Samoa, and several smaller nations in free association with the US such as Micronesia, the Marshall Islands, and Palau. Pacific Air Forces (PACAF) serves as USPACOM's Air Force component. The Air Force component in Alaska, PACAF's 11 AF, serves multiple roles. USNORTHCOM has established the subunified Alaska Command, with 11 AF as the air component. The 11 AF commander serves as both commander of Alaskan Command and its COMAFFOR. The 11 AF commander also serves as commander of NORAD's ANR.

Aligning joint and combined commands and responsibilities with identified Service components achieves unity of effort if not unity of command. When several senior level commands are operating within the same geospatial areas, arranging to have one

¹⁸ *Unified Command Plan*

Service component support all the different higher headquarters achieves unity of effort. Resourcing the Service component and enabling subordinate commands assist in maintaining unity of effort.

Service Force Provider Responsibility for Organizing the Force

With the exception of these command and control nodes, few standing organizations are in place to accomplish homeland operations. Since many homeland operations are in response to emergency or crisis-driven events, organizations should be pre-established to cover response activities.¹⁹ Advance documentation to activate the organization and attach forces can speed the overall deployment process. Force providing organizations should ensure responding forces are provided with the appropriate level of administrative support.

The COMAFFOR, in conjunction with the [joint force commander](#), may create organizational templates during the deliberate planning process. They can be built within the joint adaptive planning and execution system, deliberate and crisis action planning and execution segments, concept plans, or standing operation orders as a starting point to establish organizational structures that can ease the transition to contingency operations. These documents can be refined in crisis action planning (for example, if threatening weather is developing, or there is an increased terrorist threat).

Air Expeditionary Task Force and Subordinate Organizations

A theater COMAFFOR, such as the AFNORTH commander, should be prepared to transfer Air Force forces to a [joint task force](#) (JTF) upon direction. In such cases, the COMAFFOR should establish an [air expeditionary task force](#) (AETF) attached to the JTF as in any other AOR. For example, when Air Force forces are employed in support of USNORTHCOM, they should be presented in the form of an AETF.

Regardless of the organizational model used, Airmen tend to be spread out during homeland operations, both geographically and organizationally. It is critical that Air Force leadership at all levels maintain accountability of—and full support to—their [Airmen](#).

Integrating with National Guard Operating in Support of Civil Authorities

During an operation, the COMAFFOR should be aware that the initial Air Force response will likely be from the state National Guard. Coordination or integration of the federal response with ongoing state operations supporting civil authorities is arranged through the state joint force headquarters.²⁰

¹⁹ For specific guidance, see AFI 38-101, [Air Force Organization](#)

²⁰ For specific guidance, see AFTTP 3-2.67, [Multi-Service Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures for Defense Support of Civil Authorities and Integrating with National Guard Civil Support](#).

Force Presentation for Defense Support of Civil Authorities (DSCA)

DSCA may be provided to civil organizations through a variety of methods. The vehicle by which the request is made will shape how the Department of Defense (DOD) response occurs. For instance, the [National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration](#) (NOAA) receives support from an Air Force Reserve [weather](#) reconnaissance squadron (the “Hurricane Hunters”) via memoranda of agreement between Air Force Reserve Command and NOAA, by congressional stipulation in the annual DOD appropriation process. Alternatively, the National Interagency Fire Center receives the support of C-130s carrying modular airborne firefighting systems through Economy Act agreements. The most visible means of providing DSCA, particularly when natural disasters occur, is when Air Force capabilities are provided to assist through the [national response framework](#) (NRF), as authorized by the [Stafford Act](#).

The overall coordination of federal response activities is implemented through the Secretary of the [Department of Homeland Security](#) (DHS) consistent with Homeland Security Presidential Directive #5 and the NRF. Other federal departments and agencies carry out their response authorities and responsibilities within this overarching construct. The DHS Secretary appoints a primary federal officer as the on-scene coordinator known as the federal coordinating officer (FCO). If DOD involvement is needed, the Secretary of Defense (SecDef) directs commander, [US Northern Command](#) (CDRUSNORTHCOM) or commander, [US Pacific Command](#) (CDRUSPACOM), as appropriate, to activate the defense coordinating officer (DCO) as the single voice for the DOD.

The DCO’s role may vary depending upon the scale of an event. The DCO, along with the defense coordinating element staff, coordinates DOD capabilities between the FCO and DOD. Additionally, for a small event, the DCO may direct USNORTHCOM or USPACOM Service component response efforts. If DOD involvement becomes extensive, then CDRUSNORTHCOM or CDRUSPACOM may establish a [joint task force](#) (JTF) or response task force that would receive [operational control](#) of forces. In this case, the DCO becomes the JTF or response task force commander’s liaison to the federal agencies.

Air Force Capabilities for DSCA

Most Air Force support to civil authorities will be in already familiar roles such as conducting [airlift](#) of supplies to affected areas or providing medical or engineering assistance to people in need. Examples of Air Force capabilities that may be requested in a domestic disaster or emergency may include:

- ✦ **Air mobility.** The Air Force may provide airlift to support local, state, DOD, or other federal agencies (e.g., aeromedical evacuation).
- ✦ **Airbase opening and sustainment.** The Air Force provides AETF modules to open an airbase, provide command and control, establish an airbase, generate the

mission, operate an airbase, and robust the airbase. These modules can be used to establish remote, abandoned, or inactive airfields with capabilities to accomplish an assigned mission; the capabilities can also be used to augment existing airfield facilities to handle the demands of a homeland security incident.

- ★ **Communications.** Deployable Air Force communications systems can provide worldwide, single-channel, secure voice and record communications, and secure on-site communications at or away from home stations.
- ★ **Incident Awareness and Assessment.** Incident awareness and assessment (IAA) refers to the Secretary of Defense (SecDef)-approved use of DOD intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance and other intelligence capabilities for domestic non-intelligence support for DSCA. When a Title 10 DOD intelligence component asset or capability is needed for a non-intelligence activity, specific SecDef authorization is required for both the mission and use of the DOD intelligence component capability or asset. The intelligence oversight rules do not apply to non-intelligence activities so the SecDef authorization includes any restrictions placed on the assets or capabilities used in a domestic support operation. Examples of IAA capabilities include monitoring floodwaters and wildfires, or assessing natural disasters. Whether DOD intelligence components are conducting an intelligence activity or a non-intelligence activity, certain rules universally apply to data and imagery collected from overhead and airborne sensors. No intelligence activities should take place while conducting DSCA unless authorized by appropriate authorities in accordance with Executive Order 12333, *United States Intelligence Activities*; DODD 5240.01, *Defense Intelligence Activities*; and DOD 5240.1-R, *Procedures Governing the Activities of DOD Intelligence Components that Affect United States Persons*.
- ★ **Space and cyberspace support.** The Air Force has extensive space communications and situational awareness infrastructure on orbit, as well as both defensive and offensive cyberspace operational capabilities. These assets can provide valuable support to civil authorities if agreements are arranged with DOD authorities in advance.
- ★ **Investigative support.** Air Force Office of Special Investigations (AFOSI) can provide investigative expertise to support criminal investigations and counterintelligence services.
- ★ **Search and rescue.** Air Force assets can provide rapid response capability for search, transportation, insertion, and extraction functions in support of rescue activities, as well as initial treatment of medical and other needs.
- ★ **Civil engineer support.** Air Force civil engineer forces are capable of rapidly responding to worldwide contingency operations. Capabilities include operation and maintenance of facilities and infrastructure; aircraft rescue and facility fire suppression; construction management of emergency repair activities; emergency

management program integrating preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation activities in an all-hazards threat environment helping commanders maintain and restore mission capability; and [explosive ordnance disposal](#) (EOD). EOD responds to all incidents involving military munitions and provides assistance to federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies with EOD matters when determined to be in the interest of public safety. EOD supports specialized JTF operations and hazardous materials response for incidents involving explosives.

- ★ **Health Services.** Air Force Medical Service capabilities, while primarily designed to meet a wartime mission, are easily adaptable for civil disaster response. Small, incremental packages of tailored medical capability can be rapidly deployed to meet immediate and short-term civilian requirements.

The list above is intended to provide examples of the breadth of capabilities the Air Force can bring to its DSCA role. It is not all-inclusive, but conveys the large variety of responses to DSCA needs the Air Force can perform.

Opportune Law Enforcement Agency Support

The [Posse Comitatus Act](#) restricts direct military involvement for law enforcement purposes, except as authorized by Congress and the US Constitution. If Air Force forces are used in a law enforcement role they must be in compliance with law and policy. Normally Air Force force protection assets, such as Security Forces and AFOSI, may be called on for their expertise and the tactical level employment of these forces should be in accordance with their training. Intelligence components and intelligence component capabilities may also be used to support law enforcement agencies. Such support requires SecDef approval unless information is acquired in an incidental manner.²¹ Additionally, other support can also be provided (training, expert advice, etc.) per applicable authorities.²²

²¹ See DoDD 5240.01, [DOD Intelligence Activities](#); DoDI 3025.21, [Defense Support of Civilian Law Enforcement Agencies](#); and AFI 14-104, [Oversight of Intelligence Activities](#)

²² DoDD 3025.18, [Defense Support of Civil Authorities \(DSCA\)](#); and AFI 10-801, [Defense Support of Civil Authorities \(DSCA\)](#)