



[ANNEX 3-30 COMMAND AND CONTROL](#)

**COMMAND RELATIONSHIP MODELS FOR
AIR FORCE FORCES**

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When employing military forces, a [combatant commander](#) (CCDR) first turns to those forces already [assigned](#). Assigned forces are delineated in the Secretary of Defense's (SecDef's) "*Forces for Unified Commands*" memorandum, and the CCDR exercises [combatant command \(command authority\)](#) (COCOM) over them. Additional forces beyond those assigned to the CCDR may be [attached](#) by SecDef action. Under current policies, attached forces may be provided through one of two specific Global Force Management allocation supporting processes: rotational force allocation in support of CCDR annual force needs, and emergent force allocation in support of CCDR emerging or crisis-based requests for capabilities and forces. The [deployment order](#) (DEPOD) should clearly delineate the degree of command authority to be exercised by the gaining commander. Forces temporarily transferred via SecDef action are normally attached with specification of [operational control](#) (OPCON) to the gaining CCDR.

The DEPOD is the primary instrument for transferring forces and establishing supported and supporting relationships between CCDRs. Forces may also be transferred by an [execute order](#) which executes an approved [operation plan](#). Other orders created during the planning process, such as [warning orders](#), [alert orders](#), [planning orders](#), and [fragmentary orders](#), may also specify or shape [command relationships](#), but they do not transfer forces. The SecDef, as the only authority for transferring forces between CCDRs, normally approves DEPODs. This DEPOD should specify to which CCDR the deployed forces are assigned or attached and the command relationship (OPCON or [tactical control](#) [TACON]) to be exercised by the gaining commander. Air Force component commanders may shape command and support relationships by working through their [chains of command](#) to refine the details of orders being drafted by the Joint Staff. While the [joint force commander](#) (JFC) ultimately has the authority to determine the delegation of command among subordinates, Air Force commanders should make consistent recommendations and present forces in a consistent manner to the JFC.

For Air Force forces, there are four general models for command relationships. Considerations for these relationships should include the ability of gaining commands to receive the forces and to command and control them appropriately, the characteristics and support requirements of the forces involved, and the operating locations of the forces.

- ✦ Forces deployed and executing operations within the theater to which they are assigned or attached.
- ✦ Forces executing missions inside the theater of operations but based outside the theater (i.e., across [areas of responsibility](#) [AORs]).
- ✦ Functional forces with global missions.
- ✦ Transient forces.

These four models illustrate **the most probable combinations** in assigning responsibility for OPCON and [administrative control](#) (ADCON); **however, many nuances are possible**, and commanders must exercise sound professional judgment when setting up command relationships. (Note: In the following examples, “supported CCDR/JFC” specifically means the in-theater commander who is tasked with executing the operation for which the forces under discussion may be assigned or attached.)

MODEL 1: IN-THEATER FORCES

In general, when Air Force forces deploy into a theater to conduct operations, OPCON of those forces should normally go forward to the CCDR to whom the President or SecDef has assigned responsibility for accomplishing the mission. To the maximum extent possible, specified elements of ADCON should also go forward to the regional [commander, Air Force forces](#) (COMAFFOR) to whom the forces are attached. Since not all elements of ADCON authorities and responsibilities are transferred to the forward based gaining commander, ADCON can and does run concurrently between the gaining COMAFFOR and the parent organizations of the deployed forces. Which elements of ADCON are specified to the forward COMAFFOR and which are retained by the parent organization should be clearly specified in the G-series orders that establish the expeditionary organization and in the DEPORDs that attach forces to that organization. The regional COMAFFOR already exercises OPCON and ADCON over Air Force forces assigned to that geographic CCDR.

Note that Air Force forces permanently based in the continental US (CONUS), although resident within the US Northern Command (USNORTHCOM) AOR, are not normally assigned to USNORTHCOM. If required, such forces need to be formally attached through SecDef orders before USNORTHCOM’s Air Force component, First Air Force (Air Forces Northern), can exercise any control of them.

MODEL 2: OUT-OF-THEATER FORCES

There are two general cases in which Air Force forces may execute missions inside a theater of operations while based outside the theater. These cases involve CONUS-based forces, and forward-based forces operating outside the CONUS (OCONUS) and outside the AOR. In either case, the appropriate command authority should be relinquished by the supporting CCDR and gained by the commander responsible for executing the mission, while ADCON is dependent upon where the forces are based.

CONUS-Based Forces

CONUS-based forces that launch from their CONUS home station, conduct operations in another theater, and recover in CONUS should normally transfer OPCON to the supported CCDR/JFC upon sortie generation. ADCON should remain with the original component command. An example would be a bomber launching from CONUS, striking a target overseas under the command of a regional force, and returning to CONUS. In this example, OPCON should be gained by the supported CCDR/JFC who is executing the mission; this is the preferred arrangement. However, if the tasked CCDR/JFC is only granted TACON of these forces, OPCON in this case remains with the CCDR to whom the forces are assigned and ADCON remains with that CCDR's COMAFFOR.

CONUS-based forces that do not deploy, but provide support to forward-based operations, normally remain under the OPCON and ADCON authority of their owning command chain and establish support relationships with their forward customers. In the case of unmanned aircraft systems (UAS) whose controllers and control systems remain in the CONUS, their remotely piloted aircraft and launch element, if based forward, are normally under the OPCON and ADCON of the regional COMAFFOR in which they are bedded down. The regional commander then typically exercises OPCON of the CONUS UAS control element while those crews are performing missions in support of that region. (Note: See related discussion on [reachback and distributed operations](#).)

OCONUS Forces outside the AOR

For OCONUS units stationed outside the theater of operations tasked to conduct sustained operations in that theater, OPCON should normally be relinquished by the supporting CCDR and gained by the geographic CCDR/JFC executing the mission, while ADCON is best held by the COMAFFOR of the geographic region in which they bed down. An example of this situation would be bombers stationed at Diego Garcia in the US Pacific Command AOR, but conducting operations under the command of US Central Command (USCENTCOM). The Commander, USCENTCOM would exercise OPCON of the bombers most likely through the COMAFFOR, the Commander, US Air Forces Central. The Commander, Pacific Air Forces (PACAF), would exercise ADCON through the established PACAF organizational structure but would have no operational responsibility or authority over the forces attached to Commander, USCENTCOM.

MODEL 3: FUNCTIONAL FORCES

Functional forces (such as [air mobility](#) and [space forces](#)) satisfy mission requirements across multiple AORs and are thus best centrally controlled. For such forces, the functional CCDR normally retains OPCON of assigned forces and executes as a [supporting commander](#) to the supported geographic CCDR. However, mission requirements may sometimes mandate a higher degree of control than is possible with a support arrangement. If the geographic CCDR has the organic ability to properly

control the forces, then the SecDef may direct that global functional forces be temporarily attached with specification of OPCON or TACON to the geographic CCDR for the duration of the mission. Considerations for location of forces and mission to be accomplished will drive selection of a Model 1 or Model 2 type command relationship.

In those cases where functional forces bed down in a geographic CCDR's AOR, the Air Force host base commander (or senior Air Force officer present on the installation, if the Air Force is a tenant) normally exercises a minimum degree of ADCON, usually only for [force protection](#), Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ), dining and lodging, and some limited force reporting. (See the discussion on [ADCON responsibilities of host installation commanders](#) in this annex). The extent and nature of the elements of ADCON to be exercised by the geographic commander should be specified in DEPORDs and/or command-to-command agreements.

MODEL 4: TRANSIENT FORCES

Geographic or local commanders do not normally exercise OPCON of transient forces (i.e., forces merely transiting an AOR or joint operations area, and not part of an [air expeditionary task force](#), and not participating in CCDR-sponsored joint exercises). However, such forces are subject to local force protection, general orders, dining and lodging, and administrative reporting requirements. Per [Joint Publication 1](#), "Transient forces within the assigned AOR of a CCDR are subject to that CCDR's orders in some instances (e.g., for coordination of emergency defense, force protection, or allocation of local facilities)." Transient forces are not part of the area commander's command, and the area commander is not in their normal chain of command.

FORCES IN EXERCISES

Forces participating in joint exercises constitute a separate case with respect to those discussed earlier. Such forces under the orders of a CCDR- or other SecDef-directed training should normally be under the OPCON of the sponsoring CCDR. Forces participating in such joint training should normally be attached to the CCDR with specification of OPCON via SecDef approved DEPORDs.

Unless otherwise specified by the SecDef, and with the exception of the USNORTHCOM AOR, a geographic CCDR has TACON for exercise purposes whenever forces not assigned to that CCDR undertake exercises in that CCDR's AOR. TACON begins when the forces enter the AOR and is terminated upon completion of the exercise, after departing the AOR. In this context, TACON provides directive authority over exercising forces for purposes relating to that exercise only; it does not authorize operational employment of those forces. This blanket specification of TACON for exercise purposes does not apply to US Transportation Command (USTRANSCOM) assets within any AOR or to forces deployed for exercises in the USNORTHCOM AOR. OPCON and TACON for USTRANSCOM forces or forces exercising in the USNORTHCOM AOR remain as established by the SecDef.
