



ANNEX 3-30 COMMAND AND CONTROL

AETF ORGANIZATION

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Air expeditionary task forces (AETFs) can be sized and tailored to meet the specific requirements of the mission. The basic building block of an AETF is the squadron; however, a squadron normally does not have sufficient resources to operate independently. The smallest AETF is normally an air expeditionary group; larger AETFs may be composed of several expeditionary wings. Within an AETF, the AETF commander organizes forces as necessary into wings, groups, squadrons, flights, detachments, or elements to provide reasonable internal spans of control, command elements at appropriate levels, and to retain unit identity.

NUMBERED EXPEDITIONARY AIR FORCE

Numbered expeditionary Air Force (NEAF) is the generic title for an AETF made up of multiple expeditionary wings and is the largest sized AETF. NEAFs normally carry an appropriate numerical designation based on numbered Air Forces (NAFs) historically associated with the region or command. Subordinate expeditionary units may retain their own numerical designations. Use of the NEAF designation is also intended to provide appropriate unit awards and honors credit for the units and staffs within the NEAF. The NEAF commander is normally a commander, Air Force forces (COMAFFOR).

AIR EXPEDITIONARY TASK FORCE-X

“Air Expeditionary Task Force-X” (AETF-X) is the generic title used when a provisional Air Force command echelon is needed between a NEAF and an air expeditionary wing (AEW). AETF-X is used when a NEAF-level AETF establishes a subordinate provisional command echelon consisting of two or more AEWs. An example of this usage is when the Commander, US Air Forces Central (USAFCENT) established two subordinate AETFs, AETF-Iraq (AETF-I) and AETF-Afghanistan (AETF-A), to provide command over multiple AEWs in their respective joint operations areas.

Depending on why this echelon is established, and its relationship within Service and joint force organizations, the AETF-X commander may or may not be a COMAFFOR. See “Air Force Component Presentation Considerations” for further discussion.

AIR EXPEDITIONARY WING

AEW is the generic title for a deployed wing or a wing slice within an AETF. An AEW normally is composed of the wing command element and subordinate groups and squadrons. AEWs normally carry the numerical designation of the wing providing the

command element. Subordinate expeditionary groups and support squadrons carry the numerical designation of the parent AEW. Subordinate mission squadrons and direct combat support units retain their numeric designation in an expeditionary status. Use of the AEW designation is also intended to provide appropriate unit awards and honors credit for the parent unit. An AEW may be composed of units from different wings, but where possible, the AEW is formed from units of a single wing. AEW commanders report to the COMAFFOR.

AIR EXPEDITIONARY GROUP

Air expeditionary group (AEG) is the generic title for a deployed group assigned to an AEW or a deployed independent group assigned to an AETF. Unlike traditional “home station” groups, which are functionally organized (i.e., operations group, maintenance group, etc.), expeditionary groups deployed independent of a wing structure should contain elements of all the functions to conduct semi-autonomous operations. An AEG is composed of a slice of the wing command element and some squadrons. Since Air Force groups are organized without significant staff support, a wing slice is needed to provide the command and control for echelons smaller than the normal wing. An AEG assigned to an AEW carries the numeric designation of the AEW. An independent AEG normally carries the numerical designation of the unit providing the command element and/or the largest portion of the expeditionary organization. Deployed squadrons (assigned or attached) retain their numerical designation and acquire the “expeditionary” designation. Use of the AEG designation is also intended to provide appropriate unit awards and honors credit for the parent unit. An AEG may be composed of units from different wings, but where possible, the AEG is formed from units of a single wing. If deployed as an independent group as part of a larger AETF with other AEGs and/or AEWs, the AEG commander normally reports to the COMAFFOR. If deployed as a group subordinate to an expeditionary wing, the AEG commander reports to the AEW commander. The AEG is normally the smallest independently deployable AETF.

AIR EXPEDITIONARY SQUADRON

Air expeditionary squadron (AES) is the generic title for a deployed squadron within an AETF. Squadrons are configured to deploy and employ in support of taskings. However, an individual squadron is not designed to conduct independent operations; it normally requires support from other units to obtain the synergy needed for sustainable, effective operations. As such, an individual squadron or squadron element should not be presented by itself without provision for appropriate support and command elements. If a single operational squadron or squadron element is all that is needed to provide the desired operational effect (for example, an element of C-130s performing humanitarian operations), it should deploy with provision for commensurate support and C2 elements. The structure of this AETF would appear similar to an AEG. In some operations, not all support and C2 elements need to deploy forward with the operational squadron. Some may be positioned “over the horizon,” constituting capabilities provided through reachback. A single squadron or squadron element may deploy without full support

elements if it is planned to augment a deployed AEW or AEG, and would thus obtain necessary support from the larger units.

EXPEDITIONARY ELEMENTS BELOW SQUADRON LEVEL

In addition to expeditionary wings, groups, and squadrons, the Air Force may deploy elements below the squadron level for specific, limited functions. These include individuals and specialty teams such as [explosive ordnance disposal](#) (EOD) teams, military working dog teams, security forces, liaison teams, etc. They may deploy as part of an AETF or independently of other Air Force units, in remote locations, and may operate directly with other Services. For [administrative control](#) (ADCON) purposes, these elements should normally be attached to the commander of a recognizable Air Force entity in the region, either a deployed AETF, the Air Force Service [component](#) to the engaged combatant commander, or an Air Force entity specifically established for this purpose. Examples of such deployed elements might be an Air Force military information support planner augmenting a [joint military information support task force](#), an EOD team augmenting a predominately surface force, or an Air Force element supplementing Army convoy operations. Air Force personnel assigned to a joint staff may also fall in this category.

In many circumstances, elements below squadron level and even individual persons may deploy to provide a specific capability. In such cases, formal establishment and designation of an AETF may not be warranted. However, the Air Force contingent should still be organized as a single entity (perhaps named simply an “Air Force element”) and led by the senior [Airman](#) in the contingent.

For such small deployments, even though an AETF may not be formed, the senior Airman should still be identified to provide a clear chain of command. The senior



Historically, when Airmen talked about augmentation, discussion was generally limited to augmenting the AOC or a joint staff. Recent experience has provided new examples of augmentation between Services, either to round out manpower or provide specific skills at a low echelon. Examples include Airmen supplementing Army convoy operations in Iraq and Army Guardsmen backfilling deployed Air Force security forces at Air Force installations in the continental US.

When Airmen are tasked to augment another Service, the AETF model should be applied as a template to help focus discussion of organization and command arrangements. The operational (OPCON/TACON) and administrative (ADCON) chains of command should be carefully specified, and an Air Force element, with an Airman in charge, should be identified to fulfill ADCON responsibilities.

Airman may be designated as, for example, detachment commander, team chief, or officer or noncommissioned officer in charge. This formally identifies the senior Air Force member as leader of the deployed element.

Recent experience has revealed that tracking small, remotely located Air Force elements, especially in the distributed environment encountered in [irregular warfare](#), has posed challenges for the Air Force component headquarters. These challenges may range from lack of administrative support to improper employment of small units and individual Airmen in tasks for which they have not been trained. The AFFOR staff should take special efforts to maintain effective oversight of such elements in order to fulfill proper ADCON oversight.

PROVISIONAL UNITS

In some instances, expeditionary forces may not form around active numbered units. This may occur, for example, when there are insufficient active numbered units in the [air expeditionary force](#) rotation to satisfy a very large operation or a single major force provider cannot be identified. In such cases, provisional units may be created using predesignated inactive units. A unit under a single provisional unit designation should also be considered to provide continuity of operations for extended [contingency operations](#) in which units are frequently rotated in and out (e.g., Operations NORTHERN and SOUTHERN WATCH, and IRAQI FREEDOM). Upon completion of the operation for which the unit was formed, the unit designation and history are inactivated. Provisional wings, groups, and squadrons are normally generically designated simply as AEWs, AEGs, and AESs.

DESIGNATION OF EXPEDITIONARY UNITS

An AETF is named based on the unit providing the senior-echelon command function, its size, and the operation name.

- ✦ For a NAF-sized AETF, use the numerical designation of the engaged NAF, followed by “EAF,” then the name of the operation. For example, a NAF-sized AETF (two or more wings) established under 12 AF (AFSOUTH) for Operation SAMPLE NAME would be designated as “12 EAF—SAMPLE NAME.” A NEAF would normally be commanded by the component NAF commander.
- ✦ For AETF-X sized AETFs, use the term “AETF” followed by the operation name or regional identifier. For example, for an AETF-X established in Iraq, the title would be either AETF-Iraq or AETF-Operation NEW DAWN.
- ✦ For wing- or group-sized AETFs, use the number of the senior echelon, followed by “AEW” or “AEG,” then the name of the operation. Following the above example, a wing-sized AETF would be designated “XX AEW—SAMPLE NAME,” and a group-sized AETF would be “XX AEG—SAMPLE NAME.”

Wings, groups, and squadrons are designated “expeditionary” from the time they are attached until no longer attached to an AETF. Within the task force, numbered units

simply add “expeditionary” to the normal designation of the unit. For example, the 123d Fighter Wing becomes the 123d Expeditionary Fighter Wing; the 456th Mission Support Group becomes the 456th Expeditionary Mission Support Group, and the 789th Air Refueling Squadron becomes the 789th Expeditionary Air Refueling Squadron. For planning purposes, wings, groups, and squadrons may be generically designated simply as AEWs, AEGs, and AESs.

Units operating from their normally assigned, in-place location, such as permanently assigned units in Korea under US Pacific Command, or North America-based Air National Guard units participating in homeland air defense within Operation NOBLE EAGLE, need not adopt expeditionary nomenclature since they are not truly expeditionary. The overall operation, however, should still be modeled as an AETF to delineate clear chains of operational and administrative authority. Other deployed wings, groups, and squadrons that are not assigned or attached to the AETF, but provide significant support (such as [airlift](#) and [air refueling](#) units in the intertheater air bridge or space and [special operations](#) units in [direct support](#)), may be designated “expeditionary” at the discretion of their owning MAJCOM or Service component commander. Normally, these “expeditionary” forces provide their support through their functional chains of command.
