AIR FORCE COMPONENT PRESENTATION CONSIDERATIONS

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There are many possible options for presenting forces in support of a joint force commander (JFC). To provide an initial baseline for organizational decisions, there are three general models for presenting Air Force components in support of a JFC: [1]

- **Theater-level component.** This model establishes an Air Force component at the combatant commander (CCDR) level, attached with specification of operational control (OPCON) and commanded by a theater commander, Air Force forces (COMAFFOR) who may also be designated as a joint force air component commander (JFACC).

- **Sub-theater-level component.** This model establishes an Air Force component at the subordinate unified command or joint task force (JTF) level, attached with specification of OPCON, with a COMAFFOR (prepared to act as a JFACC) at a level below the CCDR. This component may be in the form of an air expeditionary task force (AETF).

- **Sub-theater-level AETF in support of a JTF.** This model establishes a dedicated Air Force force, in the form of an AETF, in direct support of a subordinate JTF, with OPCON retained by the theater COMAFFOR.

The placement of an Air Force component within the CCDR's command structure, as well as the formal command relationships necessary to enable it to interface with other joint forces, requires careful deliberation based on the situation and capabilities available. At times, Air Force forces and capabilities may be best positioned at the theater (i.e., CCDR) level and at other times at the JTF level.

LEVELS OF FORCE PRESENTATION

Joint and Service doctrine explicitly describe three levels for organizing joint forces within a geographic CCDR's area of responsibility (AOR): the CCDR level (i.e., the CCDR acts as the JFC), the subordinate unified command (subunified command) level, as in Korea; and at the subordinate JTF level. The three force presentation models discussed above are not meant to limit the CCDR's authority to organize forces to best accomplish assigned missions but instead to enable the Air Force to effectively support the CCDR and any subordinate organizations. Careful consultation between the

[1] There may be additional considerations during homeland operations that impact command arrangements and command relationships. See Annex 3-27, *Homeland Operations*.

respective JFCs and the Air Force component commanders is required. The following discussion summarizes some of the considerations that may affect the CCDR's organizational construct and force attachment decisions. Each force presentation model will require an appropriately tailored C2 capability.

THEATER-LEVEL COMPONENT

This unified command-level model establishes a Service component and COMAFFOR at the CCDR level, with the COMAFFOR poised to act as a theater JFACC if so designated. This is known as the "theater-level COMAFFOR" model. This model optimizes allocation of scarce airpower assets against competing demands across the AOR. As the JFC, the CCDR establishes priorities for employment of all assigned and attached forces, and resolves competing demands among the subordinate commands. In this model, the forces form up under the CCDR's Air Force component command.

The CCDR's decision to use this model will likely incorporate many factors, including the demands of the strategic environment, the required integration of capabilities at the theater level, the character and availability of air, space, and cyberspace forces, and the ability to command and control those forces. When the CCDR decides the most effective way to accomplish the mission is by retaining forces at the theater level, the theater-level COMAFFOR will operate in support of the subordinate JTF commander(s) according to the CCDR's theater-wide priorities.

"Deputy Commander—Air" in the Afghanistan JOA

Due to the complexity of operations in the USCENTCOM AOR, the AFCENT commander created two subordinate AETFs (9th AETF-Iraq and 9th AETF Afghanistan) to better focus airpower support in those two joint operations areas. In Afghanistan, a NATO organization, the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) also required a clearly identified command relationship with Air Force forces.

To support US force presentation to ISAF, the commander of 9th AETF-Afghanistan was also designated as the "Deputy Commander-Air" to the commander, US Forces-Afghanistan (USFOR-A), the US component to ISAF. This arrangement provided ISAF with an Air Force commander who could exercise command authorities over Air Force forces in support of ISAF.

While a non-standard organization structure, the Deputy Commander-Air leverages basic doctrinal concepts to achieve unity of command within a complex command structure.

To support planning and operations with subordinate JTFs and other components, the theater-level COMAFFOR may then deploy joint air component coordination elements (JACCEs) to ensure the JTFs receive appropriate support. The JACCE provides on-

hand air component expertise and the direct link back to the theater COMAFFOR and the air operations center (AOC).

The key advantage of this model is that it allows the COMAFFOR to optimize CCDR priorities across the AOR. The key disadvantage is that the JACCE(s) may be inadequate if subordinate JTFs require detailed support and physical leadership presence.

SUB-THEATER-LEVEL COMPONENT

This model establishes a subordinate AETF and COMAFFOR within a subordinate JTF, responsible for an operational area below the theater (i.e., CCDR) level. This model may be preferable when the span or scope of operations is less than theater-wide, or when operations are sufficiently fluid to require planning and execution at more tactical levels.

Under this model, the CCDR-level COMAFFOR, as directed by the CCDR, relinquishes OPCON of the forces attached to the subordinate AETF, and the designated commander of the JTF accepts OPCON for the duration of the attachment. In accordance with joint and Air Force doctrine, the JTF commander then normally delegates OPCON of attached Air Force forces to the JTF COMAFFOR (i.e., the AETF commander). Administrative control (ADCON) is retained within the Service chain from the CCDR-level COMAFFOR downward to the JTF-level COMAFFOR. The JTF-level COMAFFOR is poised to also act as the JFACC within the JTF, if so designated by the JTF commander.

The key advantage of this model is that it provides fully integrated airpower to a subordinate JTF, while the theater COMAFFOR maintains control of high-demand, low density capabilities. The key disadvantage is that Air Force forces attached to the JTF are not normally available to address demands outside their JTF.

Mix of Theater- and Sub-Theater-Level Components

Some theater requirements may drive a mix of the two previous models. This may be desirable when there are competing requirements for low density/high demand Service capabilities (e.g., intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance; remotely piloted aircraft; and air refueling) across the AOR, yet there is also sufficient demand for dedicated airpower at subordinate levels to drive attachment of Air Force forces to a subordinate JTF.

In these circumstances, the theater COMAFFOR, as directed by the CCDR, relinquishes OPCON over those Air Force forces that are attached to the JTF as an AETF, but retains OPCON over all other Air Force forces assigned or attached to the CCDR. As a reminder, the theater COMAFFOR retains ADCON over all Air Force forces assigned or attached to the CCDR, either through the JTF level COMAFFORs for

AETFs attached to the JTFs or through established commanders for those Air Force forces that are retained at the CCDR level.

The key advantage of this model is that it provides fully integrated airpower to a subordinate JTF, while the theater COMAFFOR maintains control of high-demand, low density capabilities. The key disadvantage is this model creates coordination challenges between the theater- and JTF-level COMAFFORs and their staffs. There may also be a scarcity of AOC and A-staff resources.

SUB-THEATER-LEVEL AETF IN SUPPORT OF A JTF

When the CCDR establishes one or more sub-theater JTFs, but elects to retain all (or most) Air Force forces at the theater level, the size and complexity of the mission may lead the theater COMAFFOR to determine the best way to support the JTF(s) is by establishing subordinate AETF(s) and designating them in direct support of the sub-theater JTF commander(s).

When employing this construct, the theater COMAFFOR retains OPCON and delegates appropriate aspects of OPCON or tactical control (TACON) to the AETF commander, while maintaining theater-wide perspective and responsibility for recommending apportionment of airpower capabilities across the theater of operations to the CCDR. The AETF commander (who is not a separate COMAFFOR, because the AETF is not attached to the JTF) remains subordinate to the theater COMAFFOR.

The key advantage of this model is that it provides an Airman empowered with command authorities to the JTF commander, vice a liaison role, while allowing the theater COMAFFOR to retain OPCON of forces across the AOR to address the CCDR's priorities. The key disadvantage to this model is that there is usually no dedicated AOC to fully integrate airpower with JTF operations; reachback to the theater AOC and A-staff are still required.

FORCE ATTACHMENT CONSIDERATIONS

The CCDR decides whether effective accomplishment of the operational mission at the JTF level outweigh competing missions at the CCDR's AOR level and can best be accomplished by attaching Air Force forces with specification of OPCON to a JTF commander. Deliberations should examine the interplay of priority, tempo, intensity, duration, and scope of operations. For example:

- ✪ Do the operational tempo, intensity, duration, and scope warrant near full-time use of an attached AETF?
- ✪ Do the operational tempo, intensity, duration, and scope justify a dedicated AETF that, once attached to the JTF, may not be available to support operations elsewhere?

- Does the priority of the JTF mission, relative to other theater missions, justify a dedicated AETF that, once attached to the JTF, may not be available to support operations elsewhere?

- If the choice is to attach an AETF to a JTF, does the Air Force have the ability to provide the required command and control of Air Force forces?

- Does the provision of forces to a subordinate JTF, either by attachment or direct support, effectively demonstrate and enable the Air Force component's commitment to the joint force effort?

If the decision is to attach forces, the follow-on question is whether the forces should be attached with specification of either OPCON or TACON.

- **Specification of OPCON:** OPCON is the more complete—and preferred— choice of control because it includes organizing and employing commands and forces, assigning tasks, designating objectives, and giving authoritative direction necessary to accomplish the mission, to include repositioning of forces.

- **Specification of TACON:** TACON is the more limited choice of control, as it is limited only to the detailed direction and control of movements or maneuvers. TACON may provide sufficient authority for controlling and directing the application of force or tactical use of combat support assets within the assigned mission or task. Attaching forces with specification of only TACON may make for a more confused chain of command since OPCON and TACON would be split between two different commanders. However, that must be balanced against other needs, for example, the ability to quickly swing the forces elsewhere, based on the CCDR's directions.

These situations require careful and continuing dialogue between the respective joint and Service component commanders and their common superior commander. Finally, the decisions, including the delineation of operational and administrative authorities to be held among the involved commanders, should be captured in written orders such as operation orders, execute orders, or fragmentary orders; Air Force decisions may also be captured in G-series orders, such as those appointing the COMAFFOR.

ACHIEVING UNITY OF EFFORT

To achieve unity of effort across an AOR, the CCDR should provide the requisite guidance for the interaction between theater-level and subordinate components. This should include clarity of supported and supporting command relationships between the JTFs and theater COMAFFOR, together with clear priorities of effort and support, and apportionment. The theater COMAFFOR should then allocate effort across the AOR using CCDR guidance and priorities.

The CCDR sets the conditions for success by clearly stating and emphasizing the supported command status of subordinate JTFs and the supporting command role of a

theater-level COMAFFOR and by providing sufficient guidance for the theater COMAFFOR's subsequent allocation decision. The CCDR is the ultimate arbiter for prioritization and apportionment decisions among subordinate JTF commanders.