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A DIFFERENT AIR FORCE TIGER

I commend Lt Col Brian “Bingo” McLean, USAF, retired, on his article “Who’s in Charge? Commander, Air Force Forces or Air Force Commander?” (November–December 2013). Bingo does an excellent job of explaining the role of Air Force commanders and of the commander, Air Force forces (COMAFFOR).

I especially liked his analogy that all tigers are cats but that not all cats are tigers. We understand from the analogy that the COMAFFOR is the tiger, uniquely authorized to function as the senior and single Air Force voice to the joint force commander. Brian’s doctrinal explanation of COMAFFOR is spot on. However, in today’s complex environment, there is usually another senior Air Force commander directly responsible to a joint force commander—the commander, Air Force special operations forces (COMAFSOF).

According to Air Force Doctrine “Annex 3-05, Special Operations,” the COMAFSOF is normally under the operational control of the commander of the joint special operations component (a subunified command) to the joint task force. The COMAFSOF is frequently dual hat- ted as the joint special operations air component commander (JSOACC). The COMAFSOF/JSOACC is not normally assigned or subordinate to the COMAFFOR / joint force air component commander (JFACC).

The administrative control (ADCON) line runs from AFSOF through the senior Air Force Special Operations Command (AFSOC) officer in-theater, normally the COMAFSOF, to the COMAFSOC. When specified, ADCON may be shared with the Air Force service component commander or COMAFFOR.

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AFSOF are an integral part of a subunified joint force; they prescribe to similar dictates of Air Force doctrinal principles and tenets. Many of the principles Bingo outlined for the COMAFFOR and his forces are equally true for AFSOF. Deployed AFSOF are normally presented under a single AFSOC Airman who reports to a joint force commander. In essence, there may be more than one Air Force tiger in-theater. The COMAFSOF is the single voice of AFSOF aviation but is known better as a Chindit than a tiger.

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