

Unfinished Business

Refining the Air Component Structure

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Senior Leader Forward

Today's environment requires the Air Component to operate at speed, delivering lethal capabilities to the Combatant Commands. To do this, reviewing our functions and how we are formed revealed opportunities to optimize our construct and better align ourselves with our Joint partners. Though change can be challenging, it drives us to improve how we operate and deliver for our nation.

—Gen Jeffrey L. Harrigian
Commander, US Air Forces in Europe-Air Forces
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Building upon initiatives taken by United States Air Forces Central Command (AFCENT) in 2016, USAFE-AFAFRICA has continued the evolution of the Air Component structure, merging the traditional Air Force Forces (AFFOR) staff with the 603rd Air Operations Center (AOC), to create an organization that seamlessly provides airpower to United States European Command (EUCOM) and United States Africa Command (AFRICOM) across all

phases of joint operations. The realignment's foundation is the Strategy-Planning-Execution-Assessment process developed in the USAFE-AFAFRICA five-year Air Component Support Plan (ACSP) "playbook." Armed with the ACSP, the optimized USAFE-AFAFRICA Air Component is well-postured to provide air, space, and cyber power to the joint and coalition team across both areas of responsibility (AOR).

The Problem

To support the long war, the primary focus of USAFE-AFAFRICA's AFFOR staff became the preparation of assigned forces for deployments supporting the global violent extremist organizations fight. Meanwhile, the 603rd AOC, aligned under the 3rd Air Force, was almost wholly focused on preparations for full-scale armed conflict in the EUCOM AOR.¹ The resurgence of Russia and the release of the 2018 *National Defense Strategy (NDS)* exposed a significant gap in this construct. Specifically, there was little focus on operations, activities, and investments in the air domain required to assure our allies and deter potential adversaries across the EUCOM AOR. The command needed an overhaul to ensure that all assigned resources (AFFOR and the 603rd AOC) had the necessary and proper focus on "Phase 0" and "Phase I" activities to support competition short of conflict with the appropriate speed and stance. Step one was the placement of the 603rd AOC directly under Air, Space, and Information Operations (A3), removing the deliberate separation between the AFFOR staff and the AOC while also aligning the organization with the Napoleonic Unified Command structure. Step two was the optimization of the combined organization, merging redundant and duplicative functions. The result is a single voice from the wing-level forces through the Air Component to the combatant command with the ability to strategize, plan, execute, and assess across the entire spectrum of conflict with speed.

Strategy to Execution to Assessment

The 2018 *NDS* identified the ability to conduct multidomain operations at the speed of relevance as a key to success in great-power competition.² From the Air Component perspective, the ability to conduct multidomain operations at the speed of relevance requires an organizational structure that facilitates a clear line-of-effort (LOE) from the joint force air component commander's (JFACC) strategic intent to the execution of day-to-day operations. Historically, the USAFE-AFAFRICA Plans, Programs, and Analyses Directorate (A589) focused on deliberate operational planning and strategy development for Phase II theater contingency plans. Simultaneously, the Operations, Strategic Deterrence, and Nuclear Integration Directorate (A3/10) focused on current operations and

monitoring the preparation of assigned units for the entire spectrum of conflict while maintaining a secondary focus on operational planning and the execution of conventional deterrence in the USEUCOM AOR.³ Meanwhile, an additional entity—the 603rd AOC—executed a doctrinally-driven, overlapping current operations role. As such, A589 plans and A3/10 and 603rd AOC operations were not synchronized to ensure effective execution, which resulted in the decoupling of the strategy-to-task model, redundant and duplicative execution, and difficulty in assessing actual effects.

To ensure a clear strategy to task line-of-guidance exists, USAFE-AFAFRICA created an ACSP, implementing a methodical planning and assessment framework into the battle rhythm. This framework allows USAFE-AFAFRICA to assess activities against the combatant commanders’ desired end states, ensuring operational objectives are aligned with the combatant command’s strategic LOEs.

The ACSP describes how the Air Component will synchronize operations, activities, and investments across the entire spectrum of conflict, which, in turn, ensures holistically planned, executed, and analyzed assurance and deterrence activities. It is informed by both EUCOM and AFRICOM theater campaign objectives and combatant command plans. Most importantly, through its measures of effectiveness, the ACSP provides a tangible road map to gauge achievement of operational objectives.

Tying it all Together

This Air Component Support Plan is USAFE-AFAFRICA’s “playbook” for the next 5 years. It is our guide to synchronizing operations, activities, and investments vital to the success of USEUCOM and USAFRICOM theater campaigns.

General Harrigian
U-A Air Component Support Plan 2019

The ACSP seamlessly integrates strategic and operational assessment and drives the Air Component’s Strategy-Planning-Execution-Assessment battle rhythm as depicted in figure 1.

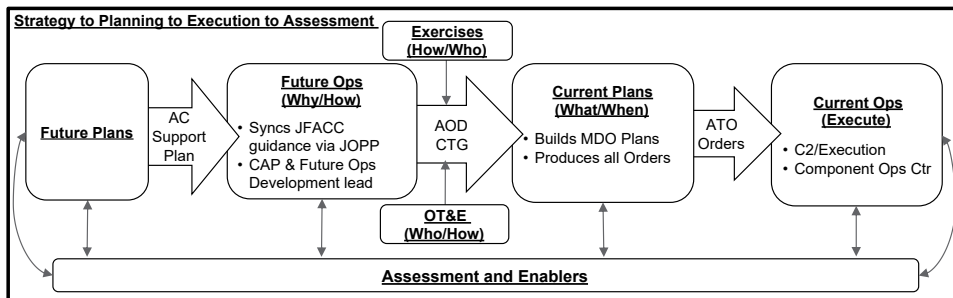


Figure 1. Organizational Strategy-Planning-Execution-Assessment

Within the A3/10, the Future Operations (A35) Division provides “the why” and “the how” to the rest of the Air Component. Additionally, Future Operations integrates with the Organize, Train, and Equip (OT&E) and Exercises Divisions to determine “who” is being directed. Future Operations also provides direction to the Current Plans (A36) Division via a myriad of products, such as the Air Operations Directive, which initiates the air tasking cycle and the creation of Command Training Guidance (CTG).⁴ Next, Current Plans builds the plans and orders assigned forces to execute by providing “the what” and “the when.” Finally, the Current Operations (A33) division commands and controls assigned forces and executes. Integrated throughout the entire process are force enablers, such as an Air Mobility (A34) and a Nonkinetic/Special Activities Operations (A39) division.

Finally, Future Operations codifies operational-level assessments, which, in turn, aids in producing updated air operations directives and CTG. Next, the Assessment Directorate (A9) leads the strategic assessment process for USAFE-AFAFRICA by measuring the command’s effectiveness at achieving its operational objectives. These assessments are used to identify capability gaps and recommend adjustments to resourcing command priorities, weight-of-effort, or plans, including future ACSPs.⁵

Refined Framework

Past doctrinal distinctions between Air Force forces (AFFOR) and the AOC placed the Air Component at a disadvantage, or worst-case exclusion, when addressing COCOM and cross-component operational issues. Additionally, the distinct differences and separation of the AFFOR and AOC staffs previously articulated in Air Force doctrine and instructions have created confusion and dysfunction for operational elements both inside and outside the Air Component.

Lt Gen CQ Brown Jr. and Lt Col Rick Fournier
“No Longer the Outlier: Updating the Air Component Structure”
Air & Space Power Journal 30, no. 1

“No Longer the Outlier”

The USAFE-AFAFRICA A3/10 Directorate’s optimized organizational structure was derived from AFCENT’s framework and was heavily influenced by General Brown and Lieutenant Colonel Fournier’s article, “No Longer the Outlier: Updating the Air Component Structure.” USAFE-AFAFRICA removed the deliberate separation between the AFFOR staff and the AOC, aligning the organization with the Napoleonic Unified Command structure. The result is a single voice from the Air Component to the combatant command with the ability to strategize, plan, execute, and assess across the entire spectrum of conflict.

USAFE-AFAFRICA designed its Air Component structure based on the strategy, planning, execution, and assessment process described in the ACSP, as opposed to the traditional AOC/air tasking order (ATO) timeline paradigm. The revised structure flattens the organization by directly connecting the staff to the tactical point of execution, removing functional stovepipes, increasing transparency, and accelerating the speed of decision making. (see figure 2)

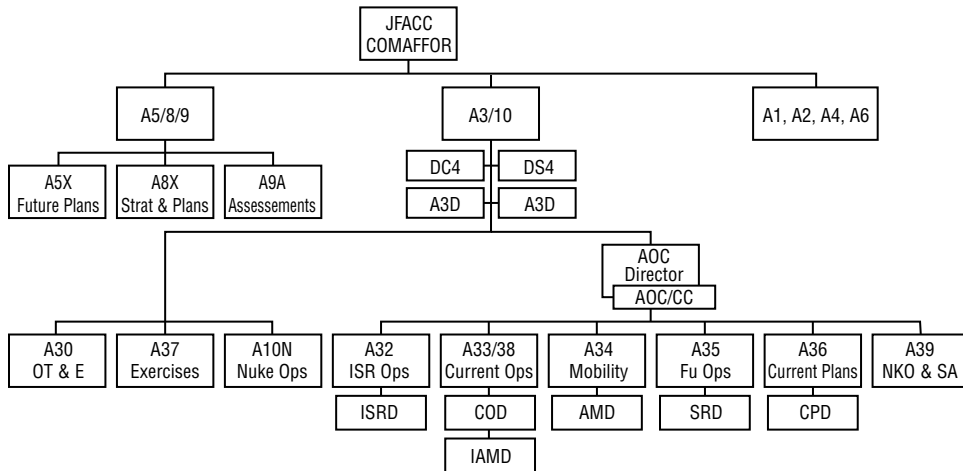


Figure 2. Evolved air component structure

Notes: The joint force air component commander (JFACC) has the discretion to assign any flag officer as the AOC director. During Phase 0/I operations, the A3/10 is the AOC director but has delegated the day-to-day operations down to the AOC commander.

The director of mobility forces is dual-hatted as the A34, DC4, and DS4 work directly for the JFACC and maintain a support relationship with the AOC.

Key: COMAFFOR: commander, Air Force Forces; A1: manpower, personnel and services; A2: intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance; A4: logistics; A5/8/9: plans programs and analyses; A6: communication; DC4: director of cyber forces; DS4: director of space forces; A3D: operations deputy; Fu Ops: future operations division; NKO and SA: nonkinetic operations and special activities; ISRD: intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance Division; COD: Combat Operations Division; IAMD: Integrated Air and Missile Defense; AMD: Air Mobility Division; SRD: Strategy Division; and CPD: Combat Plans Division.

- The A5X (Future Plans) develops the commander, USAFE-AFAFRICA (COMUSAFE-AFAFRICA) contingency and steady state plans by leading the Air Component through the joint planning process. In coordination with other directorates, the A5X develops the Air Component’s operational approach and commander’s intent, then relays it to the rest of the Air Component via the ACSP.

- The AOC commander is responsible for all traditional A3 COMAFFOR divisions and the traditional AOC roles, granting them the authority and responsibility to manage all phases of the A3 Strategy-Planning-Execution-Assessment process.

- The A35 (Future Operations) operationalizes ACSP guidance by providing linkages to the embedded objectives via an operational annex. This annex informs the Air Component by integrating/prioritizing multidomain operations and ex-

ercises. Using the ACSP annexes, the A35, in conjunction with the A30 (OT&E) and A37 (Exercises), produces the AOD and CTG.

- The USAFE-AFAFRICA A35 differs from the AFCENT model, as it includes the AOC's SRD. In AFCENT, the A35 is centered on the AOC's CPD. USAFE-AFAFRICA diverged from AFCENT's methodology because of the long timeline and inherent strategic nature of assurance and deterrence activities. This new concept falls outside the doctrinal 96-hour time horizon for the SRD, forcing a closer collaboration between the A35 and A5.⁶ To facilitate this change, the traditional AFFOR Operations and Plans division and Global Force Management branch were integrated into the A35.

- The A36 builds detailed multidomain operations plans, informed by the guidance produced by the A35.⁷ The A36 converts plans into tasks and assigns them via the ATO, planning documents, and orders.

- The A36 includes the AOC's CPD and is guided by the A35 products. In this optimized construct, the A36 must look beyond the doctrinal 72-hour ATO cycle.⁸ To assist with this task, the A36 incorporated the AFFOR staff Current Operations branch.

- The A33/38 (Current Operations/IAMD) oversees execution of all EUCOM and AFRICOM air component operations and provides a single point of entry for higher headquarters and fielded units. The A33/38 is also the focal point for execution of IAMD and advises COMUSAFE-AFAFRICA in his/her role as the area air defense commander.

- The A-32 and A-34's roles as the Air Mobility Division and Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance Division have not changed.

- Nonkinetic/Special Activities Operations provides operational-level command and control of space, electronic warfare, cyber, and information warfare operations. The A39 is matrixed across the Air Component. This ensures multidomain effects are integrated throughout the Strat-Task battle rhythm while maintaining a single chain of command.

- Strategic deterrence and nuclear integration (A10N) remains the focal point for nuclear operations, providing policy, guidance, and oversight for nuclear operations and command and control.

Conclusion

USAFE-AFAFRICA's optimized Air Component structure improves the command's ability to support joint and coalition partners in the AFRICOM and EUCOM AORs across the spectrum of competition to conflict, but the evolution is not complete. Further analysis on the proper integration of intelligence, logistics, and nonkinetic operations, both within the A3/10 directorate and across the

larger Air Component staff, must be accomplished. Additionally, we continue to review the role of the numbered Air Force in this optimized structure. Regardless of future evolution, the current realignment is producing positive results, providing four-star Air Component leadership with timely decision quality information, ensuring lethal airpower in the EUCOM and AFRICOM AORs. ✪

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Notes

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5. *U-A Air Component Support Plan 2019*, ii.
6. AFI 13-1AOC, vol. 3, *Operational Procedures*, 22, para. 3.1.
7. AFI 13-1AOC, vol. 3, *Operational Procedures*, 26.
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