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**NAVAL WAR COLLEGE  
Newport, R.I.**

**The Joint Air Component Coordination Element: Middleman, or an Effective  
Airpower Broker?**

by

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**Major, United States Air Force**

**A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Joint Military Operations.**

**The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.**

**Signature: //Signed/jcc/04 May 12//**

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## **Paper Abstract**

While the Joint Air Component Coordination Element (JACCE) was initially an ad hoc organization designed to bridge the coordination gap between the Joint Force Land Component Commander's (JFLCC) fielded subordinates and the geographically separated supporting Joint Force Air Component Commander (JFACC), it is now a formally entrenched part of both Joint and United States Air Force (USAF) doctrine. However, the collective experience gained employing the JACCE during both Operations IRAQI FREEDOM (OIF) and ENDURING FREEDOM (OEF) provides mixed results regarding its actual effectiveness at delivering the desired level of air support to ground combat operations. The purpose of this paper is not to dispute the legitimate value of operational level liaison elements, but to examine the limitations and inconsistencies of the JACCE concept as currently described in doctrine, and to discuss how this concept should be improved and implemented to ensure the most effective air support for ground forces in combat. Therefore, given the use of a theater JFACC in the US Central Command (USCENTCOM) area of responsibility (AOR) in accordance with Joint and USAF doctrine, the current JACCE concept is inadequate, and future Joint operations will be better served employing a dedicated Commander, Air Force Forces (COMAFFOR) to deliver effective and decisive airpower at the Joint Task Force (JTF) and sub-JTF levels.

## INTRODUCTION

The United States Air Force (USAF) has established a tradition, and to a significant degree, an unambiguous assurance to the nation that no matter where our Joint Force fights, it will do so from under an umbrella of undisputed aerial supremacy. Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates highlighted this expectation during his remarks to the USAF Academy in March 2011, noting that there “...hasn’t been a U.S. Air Force airplane lost in air combat in nearly 40 years, or an American soldier attacked by enemy aircraft since Korea.”<sup>1</sup> Given the sheer number and variety of major conflicts that the United States (US) has participated in since the Korean War, this is an extremely impressive feat. However, no matter how decisive the advantage Joint air forces present to the modern Joint Force Commander (JFC) on the tactical level of war, proper planning, Command and Control (C2) and inter-service cooperation are essential to enable the Joint Force to successfully achieve operational objectives. This seemingly obvious lesson was learned again—or at least observed—during Operation ANACONDA in Afghanistan, where “many of the problems JTF Mountain encountered could have been either prevented or alleviated by better coordination between the air and ground components...”<sup>2</sup> While Operation ANACONDA is widely considered an overall success, execution difficulties clearly exposed a schism between the US Army (USA) and the USAF with regards to the process for allocating and integrating air support for major ground operations.

Arguably, the introduction of the Joint Air Component Coordination Element (JACCE) by the USAF as an operational level liaison organization is directly attributable to

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, “Remarks by Secretary Gates at the United States Air Force Academy,” 4 March 2011. Accessed 2 May 2012. <http://www.defense.gov/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=4779>.

<sup>2</sup> David J. Lyle “Operation ANACONDA: Lessons Learned, or Lessons Observed?” Research paper, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, KS, 2009. Accessed 5 March 2012. <http://www.dtic.mil/cgi-bin/GetTRDoc?AD=ADA502029>, 14.

the aftermath of Operation ANACONDA.<sup>3</sup> While the JACCE was initially an ad hoc organization designed to bridge the coordination gap between the Joint Force Land Component Commander's (JFLCC) fielded subordinates and the geographically separated supporting Joint Force Air Component Commander (JFACC), it is now a formally entrenched part of both Joint and USAF doctrine. As the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan have demonstrated, the demand for persistent air coverage in increasingly complex and ambiguous ground combat scenarios has only grown, which has simultaneously increased the need for a robust liaison organization like the JACCE to facilitate comprehensive planning and effective C2.

The collective experience gained employing the JACCE during both Operation IRAQI FREEDOM (OIF) and Operation ENDURING FREEDOM (OEF) provides mixed results regarding its actual effectiveness at delivering the desired level of air support to ground combat operations. By all accounts, a specifically tailored liaison element should be an ideal means to improve interoperability and enhance coordination between the ground and air combat forces. Unfortunately, it appears that the JACCE concept was drawn into the doctrine update cycle before being thoroughly vetted against not only the most significant and up-to-date lessons learned, but more importantly, against the fundamental doctrinal principles of C2. The purpose of this paper is not to dispute the legitimate value of operational level liaison elements, but to examine the limitations and inconsistencies of the JACCE concept as currently described in doctrine, and to discuss how this concept should be improved and implemented to ensure the most effective air support for ground forces in combat. Therefore, given the use of a theater JFACC in the US Central Command (USCENTCOM) area of responsibility (AOR) in accordance with Joint and USAF doctrine,

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<sup>3</sup> David J. Lyle "Operation ANACONDA: Lessons Learned, or Lessons Observed?" 15.

the current JACCE concept is inadequate, and future Joint operations will be better served employing a dedicated Commander, Air Forces (COMAFFOR) to deliver effective and decisive airpower at the Joint Task Force (JTF) and sub-JTF levels.

### **DOCTRINE REVIEW**

A brief examination of the doctrinal options available to the Geographic Combatant Commander (GCC) or JFC for designating a JFACC will provide the contextual backdrop to further discuss the doctrinal incorporation of the JACCE. Joint and USAF doctrine are nearly identical in their description of the two primary options—designation of a JFACC for the JFC subordinate to the GCC, or designation of a theater JFACC when the GCC establishes multiple JTFs within the AOR.<sup>4</sup> The first option is perhaps the most easily recognizable one in terms of C2 structure, as it is very clearly aligned with the component-based C2 organization that all of the services have become accustomed to using since the Gulf War (see Figure 3, Appendix A). Dedicated air assets and independent C2 capability for those forces are placed under the operational control (OPCON) of the JFC to support the mission, which in turn provides very clear unity of command and an improved degree of predictability and access to the assigned air forces.<sup>5</sup>

The second option is slightly more complex, and is derived from the notion that “centralized C2 of air and space forces under a single Airman is a fundamental tenet of Air Force doctrine.”<sup>6</sup> It simultaneously recognizes that in certain circumstances, the high-demand, low-density nature of many air assets combined with their ability to operate at both the inter- and intra-theater levels requires a broader C2 perspective to ensure limited

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<sup>4</sup> U.S. Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. *Command and Control for Joint Air Operations*. Joint Publication (JP) 3-30. Washington, DC: CJCS, 12 January 2010, II-18.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> U.S. Air Force. *Command and Control*. Air Force Doctrine Document (AFDD) 6-0. Washington, DC: Department of the Air Force, 1 June 2007, Incorporating Change 1, 28 July 2011, 7.

resources are most efficiently allocated to the needs of multiple JTFs within an AOR. The resultant JFACC option is the designation of the theater JFACC, who remains subordinate to the GCC rather than a specific subordinate JFC, and is responsible for controlling air operations in order to support individual JTF commanders' objectives as well as meeting the GCC's overarching priorities within the AOR (see Figure 4, Appendix A).<sup>7</sup> This particular arrangement makes good theoretical sense for employment in expansive geographic AORs like USCENTCOM, which has several distinct Joint Operating Areas (JOA) within it. The JFACC exercises C2 from the Air Operations Center (AOC), which is a large fixed headquarters that is heavily reliant on high-tech communications systems to maintain situational awareness at the operational and tactical levels.

With this in mind, the theater JFACC option gives up the ability to coordinate with JFCs face-to-face easily, but leverages technology to exercise the required C2 of assigned forces. Additionally, this arrangement requires an establishing directive to clearly delineate how the JFACC will support the JTF commanders in accordance with their "general direction" for the supporting effort(s).<sup>8</sup> The JFACC is responsible for determining the forces, tactics, procedures and communications used to provide this support, and must coordinate with the JTF commanders directly to highlight employment limitations or concerns. If the JFACC is unable to fulfill the requirements of the JTF, or the JTF commander disputes the manner in which the JFACC provides the requested support, the GCC is responsible for providing a solution.<sup>9</sup> When considered from a theoretical perspective, as long as the relationships and responsibilities are well defined, the JTF commander should not necessarily

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<sup>7</sup> U.S. Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. *Command and Control for Joint Air Operations*, II-18.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, II-18 to II-19.

notice any difference between the support received from a theater JFACC versus a directly assigned subordinate JFACC. However, the key difference between these two JFACC designation options is that under the theater JFACC construct, the JFC is *not* given OPCON of the air forces required to execute the assigned mission.

Air Force Doctrine Document 2 (AFDD-2) provides further justification for theater level control of air support based on limited assets and the need for maximum efficiency and effectiveness in similar fashion to the corresponding Joint doctrine. It specifies that “the theater level JFACC may then deploy ACCE teams to the subordinate JTF headquarters and other component headquarters as needed to ensure they receive the appropriate level of air support. The ACCE will provide on-hand air and space expertise to the subordinate JTF commanders and the direct link back to the ‘theater COMAFFOR/JFACC’ and the AOC.”<sup>10</sup> While the integration of the JACCE is common to both JFACC constructs, it seems that the concept dovetails more naturally with the theater JFACC C2 construct considering the realistic potential that the JFACC and the supported JTF commanders may not ever be collocated, thus requiring a higher degree of active coordination.

Conceptually, the JACCE is described as an optional liaison element that the JFACC can employ with other commander’s headquarters at any level, in order to “better integrate joint air operations with their operations.”<sup>11</sup> The JACCE is not necessarily an Air Force specific liaison element, and is instead tied to the Service designated to provide the JFACC. The combination of Joint and USAF doctrine once again are nearly identical in describing the role and structure of the JACCE: “The JACCE facilitates the integration of joint air power

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<sup>10</sup> U.S. Air Force. *Operations and Organization*. Air Force Doctrine Document (AFDD) 2. Washington, DC: Department of the Air Force, 3 April 2007, 77.

<sup>11</sup> U.S. Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. *Command and Control for Joint Air Operations*, II-15.

by exchanging current intelligence, operational data, support requirements, and by coordinating the integration of JFACC requirements for ACMs, fire support coordination measures, PR, and CAS. JACCE expertise should include plans, operations, ISR, space, airspace management, air mobility, and administrative and communications support.”<sup>12</sup> Perhaps the most important aspect of the JACCE that is repeated throughout doctrine is that while it is a direct representative of the JFACC, it is *not* a C2 node and it has absolutely no authority to direct or employ forces. Furthermore, as described by doctrine it is not intended to “replace, replicate, or circumvent normal request mechanisms already in place in the component/JTF staffs, nor supplant normal planning performed by the AOC and AFFOR staff.”<sup>13</sup>

### **DOCTRINAL DISCORD**

From a broad perspective, the JACCE is simply filling a necessary liaison role for the other component or JTF commanders, much in the same way that a battlefield coordination detachment (BCD) performs liaison duties for the JFACC on behalf of the JFLCC.<sup>14</sup> As previously discussed, the theoretical difference in support for a JTF commander’s operations between a designated JFACC, and a GCC designated theater JFACC *should* be negligible and transparent to the JTF commander. When considered from the perspective of the JTF commander however, it is difficult to accept that a liaison element with no command authority or assigned forces can possibly be effective during planning and execution of combat operations when the other components are represented by actual commanders with assigned forces and command authority. While doctrinally the JACCE is clearly not *intended* to be a substitute for a JFACC, it essentially becomes a JFACC substitute in

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> U.S. Air Force. *Operations and Organization*. Air Force Doctrine Document (AFDD) 2, 71.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, 70.

practice under these circumstances—and in doing so clashes with some of the more fundamental principles of C2. If Joint doctrine is intended to be the common language and conceptual baseline that enables the Services to integrate and operate together seamlessly in combat, then the doctrine must be consistent.

The first element of doctrinal discord that stands out when examining the JACCE concept is the issue of command. The obvious heart of command for US forces is the commander, who is traditionally and doctrinally given the authority, responsibility, and resources to accomplish any assigned mission. When the theater JFACC is designated, the JFACC does indeed maintain an appropriate level of authority, responsibility, and resources to execute the assigned mission. Conversely, the supported JTF commander's ability to do the same is degraded when the air support resources required are controlled at the theater level. This is hardly an insignificant semantics issue, since ultimately the JTF commander is responsible for effectively achieving operational objectives, and denying the resources required to accomplish the mission should be the rare exception, not the doctrinal rule. Additionally, Joint Publication 3-0 (JP) highlights that “commander-centric organizations out-perform staff-centric, process oriented organizations.”<sup>15</sup> Since the JACCE carries no actual command authority, it simply does not make good sense to employ an otherwise useful liaison element as the practical equivalent to other Joint component commanders, knowing full well that it must seek outside approval for any of the advice or promises it makes to the JTF commander. Furthermore, JP 3-0 states that: “the first principle in joint force organization is that JFCs organize forces to accomplish the mission based on their intent and CONOPS. Unity of command, centralized planning and direction, and decentralized

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<sup>15</sup> U.S. Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. *Joint Operations*. Joint Publication (JP) 3-0. Washington, DC: CJCS, 11 August 2011, xii.

execution are key considerations.”<sup>16</sup> It is certainly difficult to contend that unity of command is maintained when the air forces—that are most often a key combat enabler—do not fall under the OPCON of the JTF commander.

Doctrine also speaks extensively to the importance of centralized control and decentralized execution, which are not only key tenets of C2, but “provide commanders the ability to exploit the speed, flexibility, and versatility of global air and space power.”<sup>17</sup> Centralized control supports unity of command, and while there are valid reasons to reduce forward footprint by operating “over the horizon” and using reachback to the well-established C2 structures (like the AOC) to enhance operational effectiveness, the JACCE does not provide the fundamental centralized command capability to the warfighting JTF commander.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, doctrine addresses the human element of effective command, with specific reference to the importance of building close working relationships. When personal mutual trust and respect are built between commanders, flexibility, agility, and the freedom to take the initiative are ultimately enhanced.<sup>19</sup> Moreover, AFDD-2 reinforces how critical these personal relationships are, indicating that colocation of the JFACC with the JFC is highly desirable,<sup>20</sup> and that their frequent personal interaction is key to prevent operations from being planned and executed “in the perceived absence of the JTF’s senior Airman.”<sup>21</sup> At a minimum, the way that the JACCE concept was incorporated into existing doctrine appears to create some noteworthy friction points with the more fundamental aspects of doctrinal C2, and perhaps challenges the practical validity of the theater JFACC construct.

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<sup>16</sup> U.S. Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. *Joint Operations*. Joint Publication (JP) 3-0, xvi.

<sup>17</sup> U.S. Air Force. *Command and Control*. Air Force Doctrine Document (AFDD) 6-0, 12.

<sup>18</sup> AFDD-2, p55.

<sup>19</sup> U.S. Air Force. *Command and Control*. Air Force Doctrine Document (AFDD) 6-0, 9.

<sup>20</sup> U.S. Air Force. *Operations and Organization*. Air Force Doctrine Document (AFDD) 2, 55.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid*, 74.

The bottom line, however, is that the friction generated between doctrinal principles regarding the JACCE did indeed carry over from the theoretical realm to the applied realm.

### **ROLE OF THE JACCE IN OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM**

Despite lacking coordination and planning efforts between the JFLCC and JFACC in preparation for Operation ANACONDA in March 2002, US forces defeated an unexpectedly strong Taliban and Al Qaeda force thanks to outstanding tactical prowess on the battlefield.

As combat continued over the next several years, coordination between the Army and Air Force improved tremendously,<sup>22</sup> including the allocation of a JACCE by the theater JFACC to provide direct support to the JTF commander running operations in Afghanistan.

Lieutenant General (Lt Gen) Hostage noted that initially, the JACCE “solved the proximity problem by placing a senior Airman at the joint force commander’s (JFC) headquarters to facilitate integration and offer an Airman’s perspective from planning through execution.”<sup>23</sup>

The fact that Lt Gen Hostage considered proximity as a problem regarding the command relationship between the JFACC and the JTF is quite telling, and is an example of how the friction created by doctrinal dissonance carried over into real-world operations. Lt Gen Hostage added: “my observation, since 2003, has found the ACCE construct wanting.”<sup>24</sup>

As the JFACC, Lt Gen Hostage looked for ways to provide improved support to the battlefield commanders, and realized that while the JACCE was adequate at delivering basic airpower expertise and advice, their lack of staff and absence of authority to help ground commanders achieve immediate solutions to specific problems in real-time limited their

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<sup>22</sup> Rebecca Grant. “Airpower in Afghanistan.” *Mitchell Institute*, February 2009. Accessed 28 April 2012. <http://www.afa.org/mitchell/reports/0209airpowerinafghan.pdf>, 21.

<sup>23</sup> Mike Hostage. “A Seat at the Table: Beyond the Air Component Coordination Element,” *Air & Space Power Journal* XXIV, no. 4 (Winter 2010): 19.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

utility and potential.<sup>25</sup> “The ground commander ‘was looking for solutions; he wanted someone to make decisions,’ Hostage said, and under the ACCE construct, this was very difficult.”<sup>26</sup> What emerged from this situation was the “empowered” ACCE, where the JFACC delegated command authority to the ACCE to make decisions on his behalf in support of the ground force commanders. General Petraeus praised this change, noting that with the appropriate authority the ACCE was able to help increase CAS responsiveness from “great to exceptional” using a relatively small forward footprint and very effective reachback to the AOC.<sup>27</sup>

The changes did not stop at the “empowered” ACCE—as the liaison element became more effective, it became more deeply integrated in the ground commander’s decision-making process and was allocated additional staff personnel. In October 2010, Lt Gen Hostage formally designated specific subordinate commanders with full statutory command authority to conduct air operations in Iraq and Afghanistan with the establishment of the 9<sup>th</sup> Air and Space Expeditionary Task Force (AETF).<sup>28</sup> While some may argue that doctrine is always the starting point, and deviations naturally occur depending on specific combat requirements, there were clearly issues with the JACCE concept when applied to the theater JFACC model that the JFACC himself did not find acceptable. When it came to providing decisive, effective airpower for ground forces in Afghanistan, Lt Gen Hostage was willing to give up some of the theoretical efficiencies gained by controlling airpower at the theater level<sup>29</sup> to ensure the fundamental needs of the supported ground commander were met first

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<sup>25</sup> Marc V. Schanz, “Committing Everything to the Battlefield.” *Air Force Magazine*, July 2011. Accessed 28 April 2012. <http://www.airforce-magazine.com/MagazineArchive/Pages/2011/July%202011/0711battlefield.aspx>, p42.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid, 41.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid, 42.

<sup>29</sup> Mike Hostage. “A Seat at the Table: Beyond the Air Component Coordination Element,” 19-20.

and foremost. Clearly the JACCE was inadequate at effectively bridging the gap between the theater JFACC and the JTF commander in Afghanistan, and the transition to the 9<sup>th</sup> AETF marked a shift back towards traditional and fundamentally sound doctrinal C2 structures and command relationships.

### **ROLE OF THE JACCE IN OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM**

The implementation of the JACCE during OEF may be considered unsuccessful because the JFACC ultimately decided to revise the C2 structure to his liking, but does that negate the adequacy of the JACCE in its doctrinally specified role? Major combat operations in Iraq used the very same theater JFACC construct, and saw the first use of the JACCE within the component headquarters of the JFACC's functional counterparts<sup>30</sup> with considerable success. Major General Dan Leaf was appointed as the JACCE director, and his handpicked staff of ten was aligned with the CFLCC staff battle rhythm and rank structure to break down Service specific institutional and cultural barriers.<sup>31</sup> As expected, there were some growing pains as the staffs worked to overcome a lack of formal guidance regarding the flow of information between the component commanders and the BCD—the JACCE's counterpart in the AOC.<sup>32</sup> However, once the JACCE was able to get up to speed with the CFLCC's plan, they were able to effectively provide a “quantitative portrayal of [the] CFACC contribution to the fight.”<sup>33</sup> Lieutenant General David McKiernan thought that the CFLCC-ACCE “worked very well” and provided an exceptional contribution to the success of his ground forces even while he maintained a direct relationship with CFACC Lieutenant

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<sup>30</sup> Byron H. Risner. “Is the Air Component Coordination Element (ACCE) Embedded in the Coalition Forces Land Component Command (CFLCC) HQ a Model for Future Conflict?” In *A Nation at War in an Era of Strategic Change*, edited by Williamson Murray. Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, September 2004. 303.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid, 306-307.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid, 307-308, 310.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid, 316.

General Moseley.<sup>34</sup>

The primary advantages of the CFLCC-ACCE as described by the Director, Major General Leaf, were twofold. Firstly, its presence within the CFLCC headquarters enabled it to leverage its airpower expertise to assist planning for ground operations, set realistic expectations, and diffuse issues long before they ever became significant enough to detract from effective joint operations. This face-to-face contact also enabled the JACCE to quickly translate the ground commander's intent to their counterpart air planners in the AOC, eliminating the confusion or ignorance that often accompanies faceless briefing slides or emails.<sup>35</sup> Secondly, because the ACCE remained under the CFACC's chain of command and was not absorbed as part of the formal CFLCC staff, the ACCE was able to actively defend and advocate for the CFACC's capabilities and methods with some degree of external objectivity, but with the contextual understanding of how the CFLCC staff operations worked.<sup>36</sup> US forces achieved a stunning initial victory in Iraq during the drive to Baghdad, supported by overwhelming airpower, but the true measure of success of the JACCE in practice is arguably the opinion of the component commanders. If the CFLCC-ACCE was value added to the CFLCC's efforts, and the CFACC praised the effectiveness of the JACCE during the subsequent Phase IV operations in Iraq, the doctrinal JACCE concept as implemented cannot be as far off the mark as the results from OEF suggest.

### **COMPARISON AND ANALYSIS OF OEF & OIF**

Air support for OIF and OEF was delivered through the theater JFACC model, and in each case a JACCE was employed in accordance with Joint doctrine to provide adequate and effective support to the respective JTF and component commanders. The doctrinal

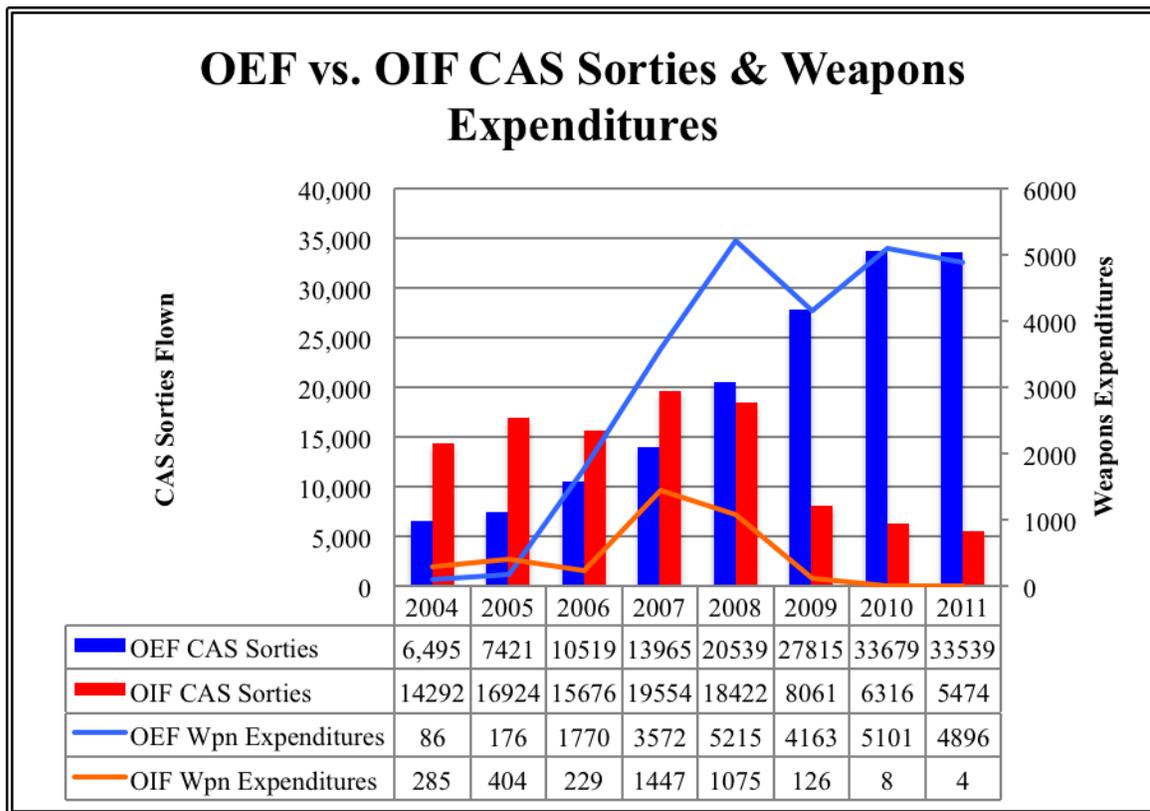
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<sup>34</sup> Ibid, 317.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid, 318.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

inconsistencies and associated real-world friction discussed earlier in this paper seem to be clearly supported by the transition from the JACCE to the AETF driven by coordination issues in Afghanistan. Conversely, the JACCE was comparatively successful in support of major combat operations in Iraq. So given the apparent split results in the actual employment of the JACCE, is there really an issue with the JACCE itself, or is the true issue related to how and when the JACCE is implemented during actual combat operations?



**Figure 1: OEF vs. OIF CAS Sorties and Weapons Expenditures.<sup>37</sup>**

A brief examination of the airpower statistics associated with OEF and OIF immediately shows some significant differences in the overall demand on air support

<sup>37</sup> USAFCENT Public Affairs, “News Release Number 02-01-12,” 2 January 2012. Accessed 29 April 2012. <http://www.afcent.af.mil/shared/media/document/AFD-120102-001.pdf>, and USAFCENT Public Affairs, “2004-2008 Combined Forces Air Component Commander Airpower Statistics,” 31 Dec 2008. Accessed 29 April 2012. <http://www.afa.org/edop/2009/2004-08CFACCstats123108.pdf>.

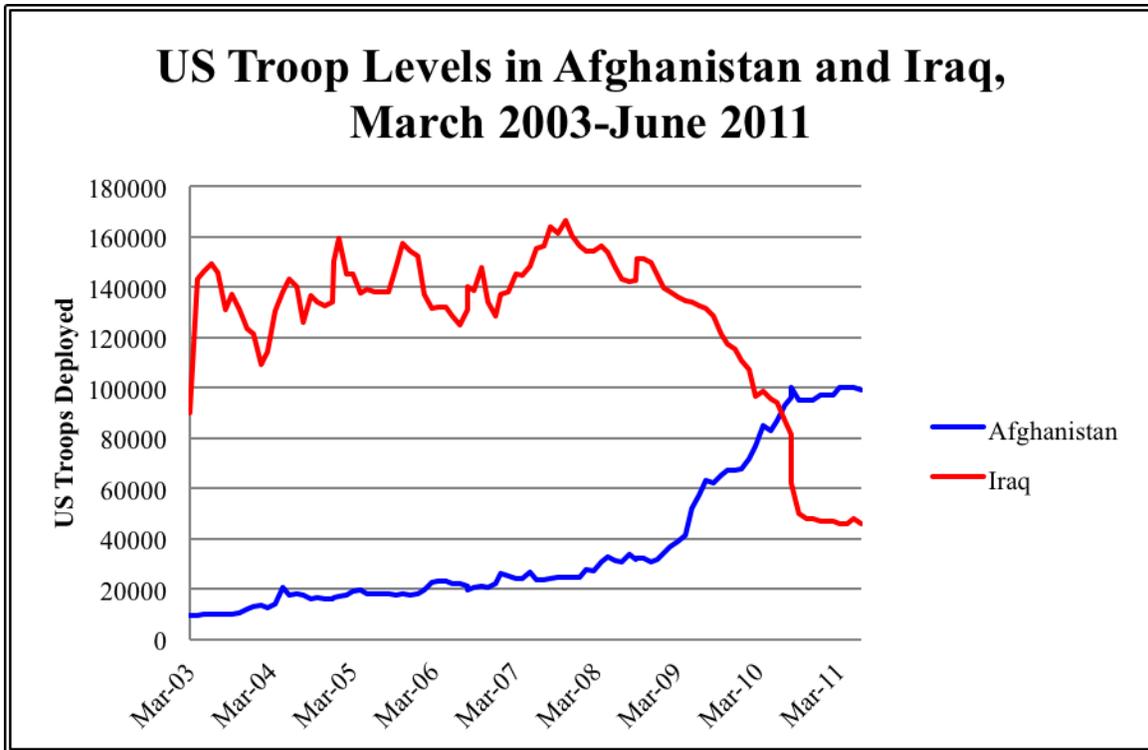
resources in theater. In the period between 19 March 2003 and 18 April 2003,<sup>38</sup> 19,898 targets were struck by 20,733 Coalition fighter and bomber sorties.<sup>39</sup> However, as the conflict transitioned into a counterinsurgency (COIN) fight, the air support numbers changed dramatically (see Figure 1). Close Air Support (CAS) sorties remained fairly steady (at least 14,000 sorties per month) through 2008, but the weapons expenditures dropped by greater than 90% compared to the “Shock and Awe” phase of the war. In stark comparison, the conflict in Afghanistan seemed to become dormant after the initial invasion and the major battles of late 2001 through 2002. However, CAS sorties gradually increased to a point in 2010-2011 where approximately 50% more sorties were being flown in Afghanistan than in Iraq during the height of the troop surge there (see Figure 2). Weapons expenditures in OEF ramped up starting in 2005, and remained high compared to those in OIF all the way through 2011.

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<sup>38</sup> Assessment and Analysis Division. USCENTAF. *Operation IRAQI FREEDOM—By The Numbers*. Staff study, 30 April 2003. Accessed 29 April 2012.

[http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/report/2003/uscentaf\\_oif\\_report\\_30apr2003.pdf](http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/report/2003/uscentaf_oif_report_30apr2003.pdf), 2.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid*, 5.



**Figure 2: US Troop Levels in Afghanistan and Iraq, March 2003 – June 2011.**<sup>40</sup>

Both conflicts transitioned from heavily offensive Phase III operations, to Phase IV Stability and COIN fights relatively quickly, both conflicts employed the same C2 and JFACC model, and both nations have similar sized populations influencing COIN operations (31,129,225 in Iraq<sup>41</sup> versus 30,419,928 in Afghanistan<sup>42</sup>). Substantially more troops deployed to Iraq (100,000 or greater from early 2003 through late 2009) than Afghanistan (less than 40,000 from 2003 through early 2009), and while the populations are similarly sized, 66% of the Iraqi population is considered urban<sup>43</sup> versus 23% of Afghanistan’s people.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>40</sup> American Forces in Afghanistan and Iraq Chart/Data accessed 1 May 2012.

<sup>41</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, “World Factbook Iraq.” Accessed 29 April 2012.

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/iz.html>

<sup>42</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, “World Factbook Afghanistan.” Accessed 29 April 2012.

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/af.html>

<sup>43</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, “World Factbook Iraq.”

<sup>44</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, “World Factbook Afghanistan.”

So what do these statistics actually reveal about the context of the conflicts and the associated air support requirements? Given the vastly greater number of troops deployed to Iraq, and the higher degree of urban population, one may conclude based on the related sortie and weapons expenditure numbers that ground forces were able to provide a greater degree of security in Iraq, and thus required less CAS. The highly urban terrain also affects the ability of CAS to employ weapons without causing collateral damage. Given the smaller number of troops deployed to Afghanistan and the expansive rural, rough terrain in which they must establish security, the high number of CAS sorties and weapons expenditures reflects not only a more volatile security environment, but a more permissive environment for kinetic strikes and thus a potentially greater reliance on CAS to accomplish operational objectives. With these factors in mind, it is reasonable to conclude that steady-state COIN operations in Iraq were far less reliant on CAS and kinetic strikes than in Afghanistan. Thus a lesser degree of direct coordination with the JFACC was required to be effective, while operations in Afghanistan demanded a higher degree of close coordination and planning to ensure effective air support.

## **CONCLUSION**

While the introduction of the JACCE was born from the long-term struggle to improve air support for ground elements operating in Iraq and Afghanistan, it has since been formally codified by both Joint and Service doctrine. However, the speed of doctrinal adaptation has outpaced the evaluation of its effectiveness in practice, and there are clearly doctrinal conflicts between fundamental C2 principles and the current JACCE concept. While a cursory overview of the specific circumstances in Iraq and Afghanistan that led to the respective positive and negative assessments of the overall effectiveness of the JACCE

may appear inconclusive, the true value of the review is arguably found in reframing the problem to compare the operational level differences in OIF and OEF that drove different applications of the JACCE as a liaison organization. From this perspective, one can eliminate the seemingly habitual desire to seek the extremes where the JACCE should either be scrapped entirely, or cemented permanently into doctrine. The reasonable answer lies somewhere in between, where the need for airpower expert liaison elements to advise ground forces meets the fundamental need to establish clear C2 relationships that provide the appropriate forces and command authority to the JFC and his subordinate commanders during decentralized operations. The basic comparison and analysis of statistics suggests that the effectiveness of the JACCE is specifically related to the effects and capabilities required by the ground force commander. Therefore, given the use of a theater JFACC in the USCENTCOM AOR, the current JACCE concept is inadequate, and future Joint operations will indeed be better served employing a dedicated COMAFFOR to deliver effective and decisive airpower at the Joint Task Force (JTF) and sub-JTF levels.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Considering the varied operational circumstances in which the JACCE was employed, two primary recommendations apply the respective lessons learned during OIF and OEF. These recommendations seek to acknowledge the inherent utility of the JACCE as a liaison element, but in a manner that fully embraces its potential to become a multi-purpose C2 element. Additionally, the recommendations consider the fundamental C2 requirement differences between a large scale linear combat operations like OIF, and a smaller scale non-linear combat operations like OEF.

Firstly, Joint and USAF doctrine must be revised to provide fundamentally sound and

consistent C2 structure options that leverage airpower expertise, and maintain optimum flexibility. Hukill and Mortensen describe the solution to this issue clearly: “the theater COMAFFOR/JFACC model worked well in the major combat phases of Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom...However, as air operations evolved into other missions across the range of military operations, seams developed that hindered the integration of airpower into the component and supported commands...due to the lack of Airmen with command authority at the JTF level, a less than full range of Air Force planning expertise below the theater COMAFFOR/JFACC level, and the absence of Air Force representation on JTF staffs.”<sup>45</sup> Once the option to designate a commander at any level appropriate to the level of air support required is added to doctrine, it will provide the GCC, JFC and the JFACC more flexibility to provide proper C2 in support of the full array of operational challenges that may appear in the future.

Secondly, the JACCE should be retained and restructured as a dual function organization to perform component commander level liaison duties, and to act as the core staff element when an AETF commander is designated below the JFACC level to support a “local” JTF commander. The structure of the JACCE would ideally be modular in nature, meaning that the baseline manning is aligned with the current operational organization of the AOC, with personnel being drawn from each of the five primary AOC divisions (Strategic Plans, Combat Plans, Combat Operations, Air Mobility and ISR; see Figure 5, Appendix A). Personnel should also be assigned and identified to perform JACCE duties from the smaller and more specialized secondary AOC divisions in order to allow maximum flexibility and capability when requested. Multiple JACCE elements should be assigned to AOCs

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<sup>45</sup> Jeffrey Hukill and Daniel R. Mortensen. “Developing Flexible Command and Control of Airpower,” *Air & Space Power Journal* XXV, no. 1 (Spring 2011): 56.

worldwide, and ideally the AOC will be responsible for deploying an intact JACCE using personnel already assigned to a specific JACCE team. If the JACCE is not deployed, the AOC will retain the personnel and integrate them within the standard organizational structure to build expertise and familiarity with AOC C2 systems until called to move forward to form an AETF core staff or perform liaison duties. Finally, the baseline JACCE manning should always be capable of supporting 24-hour operations.

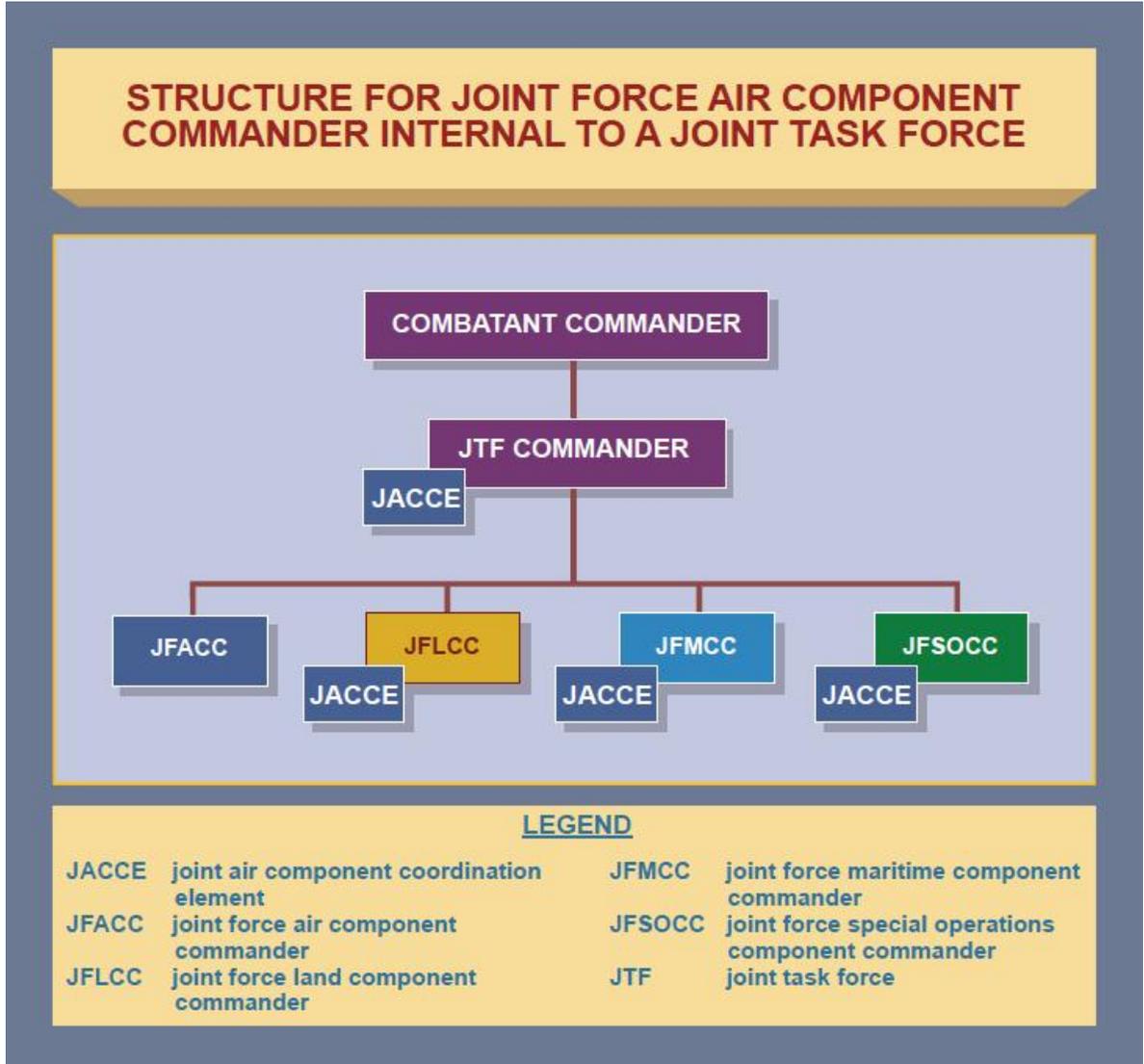
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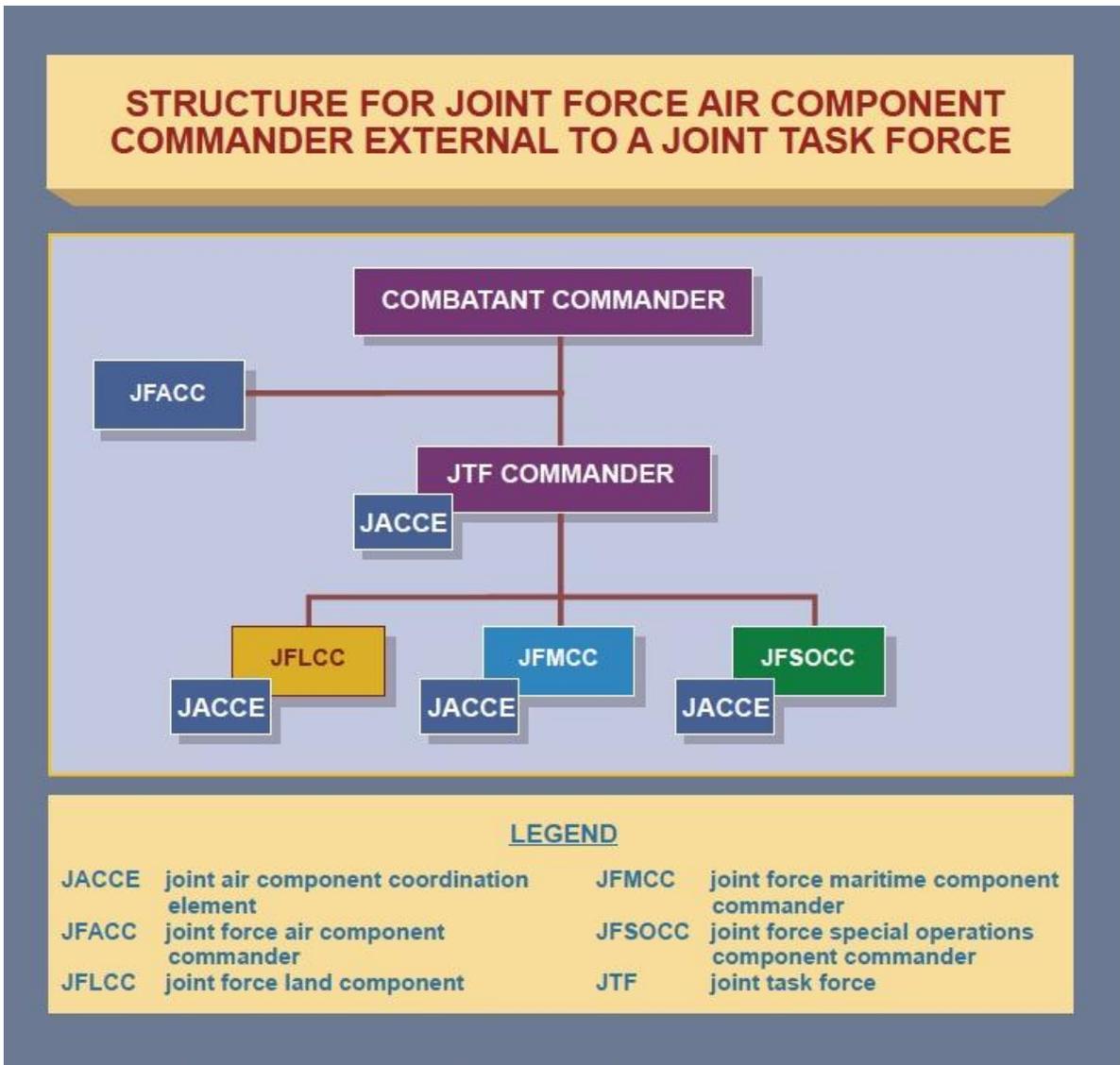
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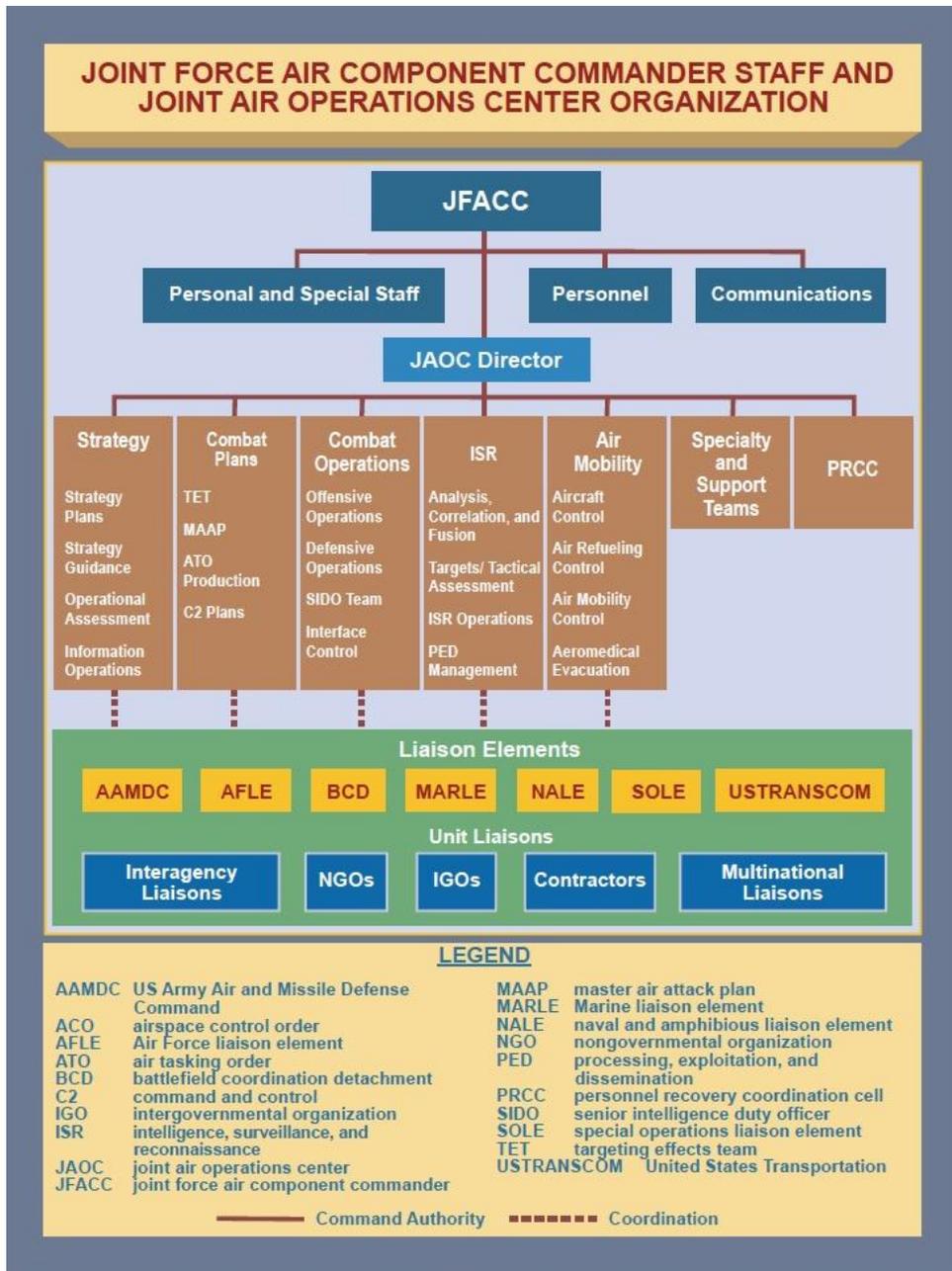
**APPENDIX A: ADDITIONAL FIGURES**



**Figure 3. Structure for Joint Force Air Component Commander Internal to a Joint Task Force.** (Source: JP 3-30, Appendix H, page H-3).



**Figure 4. Structure for Joint Force Air Component Commander External to a Joint Task Force.** (Source: JP 3-30, Appendix H, page H-4).



**Figure 5. Joint Force Air Component Commander Staff and Joint Air Operations Center Organization.** (Source: JP 3-30, Appendix F, page F-2).