



# Air Force - Frequently Asked Questions

*Reoptimizing for Great Power Competition Overview*

11 Feb 2024

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**Q. Why do you say we are out of time?**

**A.** The threat is here now. We should have taken these steps years ago.

**Q. Why is the Department of the Air Force Reoptimizing for Great Power Competition?**

**A.** The Department of the Air Force is facing a significant, dangerous shift in the strategic security environment. The DAF has historically adapted to key inflection points to best compete in emerging security landscapes. As we confront this new strategic environment, we must do what we have always done in moments like this: change. We must reoptimize to pivot from supporting post-9/11 conflicts and demands to deterring, and if necessary, winning, conflicts in an era of Great Power Competition. We are out of time.

**Q. How is the Department planning to go about this effort?**

**A.** The Department of the Air Force senior leadership team led a broad review of all aspects of how the DAF performed its basic missions to organize, train and equip the units and capabilities we provide to the Combatant Commanders and the Joint Force. This effort was initiated with kick-off meetings of the Secretariat, Air Force, and Space Force staffs in September 2023. Key decisions have been made. The next step is detailed planning and execution.

**Q. Are you saying you aren't ready for conflict right now?**

**A.** We are ready today, but deterrence is not assured and we must be prepared for conflict. To strengthen our deterrence and ensure we are as prepared as possible to fight and win should deterrence fail, we need to continue to adapt to the threat and the competitive environment we are now experiencing.

**Q. Do you think this is more about reorganization?**

**A.** It's about more than organizational structure. If "form follows function," and we recognize the strategic environment demands the DAF perform its functions differently, then we can't cling to the old "form" and expect the same degree of success we enjoyed in prior strategic environments. Our organizations must adapt urgently to the new reality. It's also about how we train people, what kind of skill sets we want to have, and what that mix of skill sets is. We're looking at how we fight and how units are structured, particularly CONUS units that are going to be called upon to go forward and fight with short notice. Units already in theater have a combat mission and are structured to do that mission; they practice it—but one of the key things we're trying to do against peer competitors is Agile Combat Employment (ACE). Deploying units must be ready to implement ACE on arrival and under fire. It's also about how we assess and evaluate readiness and how we create readiness.

**Q. When will decisions from this reoptimization process be implemented?**

**A.** We plan to implement decisions as soon as possible. Implementation plans are being developed by the leaders for each decision. Each of the decisions will be implemented in parallel, on different timelines.

**Q. What resources will the DAF be requesting to implement these changes? Will there be funding requested within the FY25 President's Budget? What funding will be included in POM '26, '27, and/or '28?**

**A.** Teams are building roadmaps for how we will implement these changes right now. The Secretary of the Air Force has made clear we are out of time and must reoptimize now. Reoptimizing for Great Power Competition does not change our FY24 or FY25 budget requests. The DAF will work within funding

flexibilities Congress has provided to implement near-term actions, although reprogramming actions are possible. We anticipate any significant budgetary impacts to be seen in the FY26 budget.

**Q. This seems like a heavy lift and raises concerns the DAF will further sacrifice current readiness for future modernization. How much additional risk will the Air Force and/or Space Force need to assume in the near-term to achieve this reorganization? What are the associated offsets?**

**A.** The tension between improving today's readiness and investing enough to create meaningful advantages in future fights is a key consideration for this entire effort. We believe these changes are necessary. They will allow us to be more ready now and improve over time as we prioritize investments for both new capabilities and the current force.

**Q. How do these changes complement and integrate with other modernization initiatives, including DAF Operational Imperatives and future force design? What actions are you taking to prevent unnecessary duplication and overlap between these efforts, particularly when it comes to resourcing?**

**A.** The Reoptimizing for Great Power Competition effort should emphasize how we are urgently addressing both our current structure and continuous capability development. The Operational Imperatives focused on identifying and prioritizing modernization investments.

**Q. Will these decisions create changes to basing/missions?**

**A.** We will work to minimize basing changes, but some will be necessary. We don't intend to move any existing headquarters. We expect the existing Institutional and Service Component Commands and their current commanders to retain their current leadership footprint (3 or 4 star) and remain at their current locations. For the new commands, the Department of the Air Force is beginning the process to determine the best locations for their permanent locations. Avoiding disruption will be a consideration.

**Q. Will individuals be redistributed among bases? Will commanders and/or chain of commands change?**

**A.** Initially, we expect most individuals will not be relocated, rather, the majority of personnel changes will include in-place realignment or matrixing individuals to different organizations or commands. As for timing and additional details, we are currently building implementation plans and will share more information as it becomes available.

**Q. What are the new offices you are creating within the Department of the Air Force and what will they be responsible for?**

**A.** The Department of the Air Force is creating three new offices within the DAF Secretariat to increase cohesion and integration to inform enterprise capability development, resource prioritization, and investments supporting strategic competition. The DAF will establish the below:

1. Integrated Capabilities Office– identifies and pursues integrated capability development supporting the DAF's most critical and operational needs (like the OIs).
2. Office of Competitive Activities – focuses on maintaining competitive advantages across the continuum of competition for the DAF and will work with OSD, the Joint Staff, Combatant Commands and other US government activities.
3. Program Assessment and Evaluation Office within SAF/FM– enables the DAF resourcing prioritization, effects enterprise risk management, and develops resourcing and trade space options for the Department.

**Q. How many Airmen and Guardians were directly involved in the reoptimization effort?**

**A.** Over 1,500 Airmen and Guardians, to include active duty, civilians, contractors, and joint planners from all Air Force MAJCOMs, Space Force FLDCOMs, and CCMD service components were involved in this

effort. This ensured the developed solutions reflect the needs and realities of every corner of the DAF. Each command had representatives embedded within working groups. They participated in tabletop exercises (TTXs), simulating real-world scenarios to test and refine the proposed changes.

## **Develop People**

### **Q. What will be located in the Airman Development Command?**

**A.** Within the Great Power Competition environment, it's essential to have Airmen who are ready for missions and capable of generating airpower for the nation. To enhance this readiness, Air Education and Training Command will undergo an expansion and be renamed Airman Development Command. This restructuring will involve consolidating the management and execution of Developmental Teams and realigning many Career Field Development responsibilities in coordination with the functional authorities at Headquarters Air Force. It will also entail restructuring the PhD Management Office and standardizing curriculum for all NCO Academies, including those outside the continental United States (OCONUS). Additionally, the commander of Airman Development Command will be designated as the integrator for all student information systems requirements.

### **Q. Why is centralizing Airman development important?**

**A.** Centralizing force development within a unified leadership structure will streamline the coordination and execution of our training and education initiatives. The goal is a cohesive workforce that is adept at competing effectively and poised to surge and sustain operations during conflict. This approach positions the Air Force to navigate the intricacies of the evolving geopolitical environment by fostering a resilient and highly skilled cadre of warfighters, all aligned with a common foundation and orientation toward the pacing challenge.

Centralizing Airman development will also align Airmen development under a single commander. Air Education and Training Command will be renamed Airman Development Command and will focus on ensuring a consistent and standardized approach to shaping the Airmen of tomorrow.

### **Q. What career fields will have a technical track and technical career opportunities? Warrant officers?**

**A.** The Air Force is pursuing technical track career path opportunities in technical fields including some maintenance specialties. Warrant officer positions will be opened in the Cyber and IT career fields. We are also looking at rewarding non-traditional paths that make the institution more competitive, such as PhDs in specific disciplines, linguists in Chinese, or strategists, for example.

### **Q. Why do we need technical tracks?**

**A.** We need technical tracks because we are in a race for technical superiority with a formidable pacing challenge. Establishing robust and effective pathways, such as technical tracks, for individuals in specialized critical areas is vital to maintaining the competitive edge we need. We have Airmen who excel in highly perishable and rapidly evolving technical fields that are in high civilian demand and who may not aspire to traditional leadership tracks. For those with a desire to serve, technical tracks will allow us to retain those valuable skill sets.

### **Q. What is a Mission Ready Airman?**

**A.** We start building Mission Ready Airmen at Basic Military Training and our commissioning programs, with education and training focused on the understanding of threats, the AF's role in defending against those threats and the significance of teams with a deep grasp of the mission. It emphasizes the need to transcend technical training for specific roles through an Airman's appreciation of their larger role in a contested

environment. Mission Ready Airmen are multi-skilled vital members of small teams tasked with solving complex problems under challenging conditions. They will be required to have more and different skills than in the past.

## **Generate Readiness**

### **Q. What are you changing in the MAJCOM structure?**

**A.** The U.S. Air Force is changing the top-level command structure to more clearly delineate roles, responsibilities, and authorities to ensure both current readiness and future competitiveness rather than the current situation in which some commands are responsible to attend to today's readiness AND contemplate/develop the future force. Institutional commands will serve as enterprise integrators for capability modernization, capability acquisition and sustainment, human capital and readiness. They will support our service's operational commands and Combatant Command-aligned Service Component Commands.

### **Q. What are the Institutional Commands?**

**A.** Institutional Commands will focus on the enterprise role for either Airmen development, readiness, modernization, or acquisition and sustainment.

- Integrated Capabilities Command will accelerate force modernization by aligning capability development efforts to a singular, prioritized demand signal for future airpower capabilities, aligned with the Force Design.
- Air Force Materiel Command will rapidly develop, procure, field, and sustain a pipeline of competitive capabilities to deliver decisive advantages to the force.
- Airman Development Command will train and develop Air Force personnel across the entirety of an Airman's career.
- Air Combat Command will integrate readiness for CONUS-based service-retained forces and prepare and present mission ready forces to the combatant commands.
- Air Force Reserve Command, along with the Air National Guard, will provide strategic depth and surge capacity by developing and managing an experienced, modernized, and accessible Reserve Force.

### **Q. How does this change affect Air Combat Command?**

**A.** In combination with the other initiatives—transferring future requirements to the new Integrated Capabilities Command and elevating Service Component Commands (AFCENT, AFCYBER, etc.) will enable ACC to provide a strong focus on the mission readiness of generated and presented Air Force forces. Aligning readiness responsibility under a single integrator and designating commands focused on supporting each combatant command will promote integration and enterprise outcomes, improving Air Force readiness and competitiveness compared to the multiple functional- and regionally aligned commands currently tasked with readiness. Additionally, removing the burden of modernization planning from Air Force warfighting elements promotes rapid execution with precision, and unity of effort across the force.

### **Q. What will Air Combat Command be responsible for?**

**A.** Air Combat Command will be responsible for service-retained readiness in concert with Joint Force-aligned elements to increase competitiveness for Great Power Competition. ACC will synchronize large scale exercises and ensure the Combat Wings can deploy as effective Units of Action, while the Base Commands can effectively defend and operate the bases in time of crisis/conflict when the wing is deployed. It will also retain its current roles, responsibilities, authorities, and alignment for Air Force Reserve Command and the Air National Guard.

**Q. When will we have multi-OPLAN exercises?**

**A.** Building on the success of Mobility Guardian '23, the Air Force plans to hold a joint, PACAF AOR-focused multi-combatant command exercise in 2025. The objective of exercises with speed and scale is to demonstrate the Department of the Air Force preparedness for complex, large-scale military operations, demonstrating the ability to operate in a contested, dynamic environment against high end threats on short notice.

**Q. Which command will be responsible for planning for these multi-OPLAN exercises?**

**A.** Air Combat Command will be tasked with planning multi-command exercises, in conjunction with relevant combatant commands. Institutional and Service Component Commands will have a role in the planning and execution.

**Q. Why is the Department of the Air Force going to implement no/limited notice inspections?**

**A.** The Department of the Air Force is going to change the inspection system as quickly as possible to incorporate the Combat Readiness Inspection to assess readiness of Air Force units. The intent is to drive the inspection system to focus on combat readiness and accurately assess readiness to succeed against a peer adversary. SAF/IG will provide direction to the MAJCOM IGs, but MAJCOM commanders will determine how to conduct the inspections. Inspections will identify areas we need to improve in a highly contested environment.

**Q. What is a Service Component?**

**A.** The 10 Service Component Commands, aligned to each combatant command, will serve as the operational elements of the U.S. Air Force, dedicated to maintaining readiness of Combatant Command-assigned force elements and preparing, presenting, and generating combat ready forces to the Joint Force. Service Component Commands execute either geographic or functional roles, responsibilities, and authorities.

**Q. When will this new structure take effect?**

**A.** The new structure will take effect as quickly as possible. The Air Force is developing a plan for transferring combatant command-assigned forces, roles, responsibilities, and authorities for their respective Service Component Commands.

**NOTE:** PACAF, USAFE-AFACRICA, AFSOC, AMC, and AFGSC will retain their current Combatant Command force alignment, and readiness-related roles, responsibilities, and authorities.

**Project Power**

**Q. What is a “Unit of Action”?**

**A.** The Air Force will ensure its wings are structured as coherent “Units of Action,” with all of the personnel and capabilities required to deploy and execute the complex combat missions in a contested environment. These wings will train and exercise together as a unit in all facets of the mission—from deployment to employment and sustainment—to ensure they can deliver combat effectiveness from Day One of a conflict. All combat wings will be designed with the same “building blocks” of Command and Control, Mission Generation, and Sustainment. This modularity will ensure that the Air Force can provide the flexibility of presenting multiple capabilities to combatant commands, while retaining a common, repeatable organizational framework.

Combat Wings will generate and maintain readiness to execute wartime functions and be designated as one of the following: Deployable Combat Wings, In-Place Combat Wings, and Combat Generation Wings. The designation describes the role of the wing, but wings will retain their current name (1 FW or 2 BW).

**Q. Why do we need to create operational Units of Action?**

A. The Air Force current wing structure is not designed around fully integrated deployable or operationally viable wings.

**Q. What is a base command? How is that different than the current mission support group?**

A. We will begin to separate wing command from base command to allow for the complexity of deployed combat missions and base command/support, recognizing that our bases are no longer uncontested environments. Base commanders will have to not only support the generation of the operational force while supporting our Airmen and families, but will also have to defend against kinetic and non-kinetic attacks. Base commands will be established at all main operating installations that host Combat Wings and/or Institutional Units to provide the necessary support to generate Combat Wing readiness, maintain the mission assurance of USAF bases, as well as create immediate severability from garrison-exclusive activities and combat activities.

In many cases, the bulk of the Base Command will be drawn from the Mission Support Groups, while ensuring the requisite Force Element personnel are aligned to the Combat Wing in order to have a whole, functioning Unit of Action. Base Command will be responsible for meeting established levels of support to generate and sustain the readiness of resident Combat Wing(s), and its size and scope will be tailored to the specific mission needs of the installation and supported Wings / Units. The relationship between the Base Commander and the Commander(s) of Combat Wing(s) and / or Institutional Unit(s) at an installation will vary among MAJCOMs, dependent upon location and mission-specific requirements to support combatant commanders.

**Q. Will Installation & Mission Support Center remain in AFMC?**

A. Yes. At this time, we plan to maintain IMSC in AFMC.

**Q. Where does this fit in with the Air Force Force Generation Model “AFFORGEN” and Air Task Forces?**

A. Air Task Forces are a step toward deployable wings. AFFORGEN will be tailored to specific unit and command needs, but the Unit of Action and AFFORGEN model are designed to work together.

**Develop Capabilities**

**Q. What will Integrated Capabilities Command be responsible for?**

A. The Integrated Capabilities Command will be an Institutional Command responsible for integrating capability development, operational concept definition, and prioritization, which will work hand-in-hand with a separate acquisitions and sustainment lead to provide competitive capabilities for our Airmen. It will consolidate many Lead Command and Lead Agent roles and responsibilities from current MAJCOMs; implement a comprehensive Force Design and resource plan that is prioritized, integrated and authoritative; and will consolidate current HAF resource planning responsibilities.

**Q. What will the Integrated Development Office within AFMC be responsible for?**

A. The Integrated Development Office will be responsible for technical aspects of developing a competitive pipeline of capability, executing enterprise-focused mission and systems engineering, integrated early systems engineering and systems acquisition, developing integrated architectures. This decision establishes a

technical- and execution-oriented office within AFMC to lead the early capability development planning function in close cooperation with Integrated Capabilities Command.

**Q. Why are you creating an Integrated Development Office within AFMC?**

**A.** We are creating an Integrated Development Office to ensure the Air Force has a competitive pipeline of prioritized modernization programs. This office will conduct system and mission engineering to support horizontal integration (i.e., integrating across weapon systems, AFPEOs, military services, and Foreign Military Sales partners). Under GPC, future fights are system-of-systems fights, not platform fights. AFMC and AFPEOs have been historically strong at vertical integration when it comes to capability development. This means AFMC and AFPEOs are good at integrating across the lifecycle within a given weapons system (i.e., we integrate well across S&T, development, test, production, sustainment, and product support). This office will work closely with Integrated Capabilities Command to ensure effective horizontal integration and technically sound modernization requirements and decisions.

**Q. Why are you creating a new Information Dominance Systems Center?**

**A.** The creation of a new Information Dominance Center will strengthen and elevate the Air Force's focus on the criticality of Command, Control, Communications, and Battle Management (C3BM); Cyber; Electronic Warfare; Information Systems; and Enterprise Digital Infrastructure across the Air Force. The commander will be responsible for maintaining competitiveness and driving cross-portfolio integration and integration of capability development across the information domain, which includes not only within the AFIDSC, but also across all the other Centers within AFMC and across the DAF. The Center will serve as the focal point for integrating DAF information domain capabilities with the joint force and allies and partners. The AFIDSC Commander will be dual hatted as both AFIDSC Commander and DAF Program Executive Officer (PEO) C3BM.

**Q. What changes are you making to your nuclear management structure?**

**A.** The Air Force is elevating and renaming the Air Force Nuclear Weapons Center to the Air Force Nuclear Systems Center (AFNSC), which will be led by a 3-star General Officer. The AFNSC Commander, in direct support of the AFGSC Commander, will authoritatively drive cross-portfolio integration of capability development across the nuclear materiel enterprise, which includes not only within the AFNSC, but across all other centers within AFMC, across the entire DAF and Department of Defense (DoD), and the Department of Energy (DoE). The AFNSC Commander will also be designated as the Air Force Program Executive Officer (AFPEO) for Nuclear Air Delivered Systems. This decision strengthens leadership and improves the focus for nuclear air-delivered systems. The AFPEO for Nuclear Air Delivered Systems will be responsible for the execution of legacy and future air-delivered nuclear programs, to include the LRSO, ALCM, and B61 Tail Kit.

The Air Force will also establish a 2-star General Officer as the AFPEO for Inter-Continental Ballistic Missiles (ICBMs). This decision strengthens the leadership and improves the focus placed on arguably the most critical and complex recapitalization effort within the DoD. AFPEO ICBM will be responsible for the execution of future and legacy ground-launched nuclear programs, to include the Sentinel and Minuteman III programs.

**Q. Why are you renaming the Life Cycle Management Center?**

**A.** The Air Force will transition the Life Cycle Management Center to the Air Dominance Systems Center and change the portfolio of programs to focus on the air and weapons systems needed to ensure the DAF has a robust competitive pipeline of air dominance and strike programs and technologies.

**Q. How will its mission change?**

**A.** The AFADSC will be responsible for defining program sustainment integration across the air and weapons enterprise and be designated as the AFPEO for Combat Readiness. This change will elevate and strengthen the Combat Readiness mission by consolidating related programs into a focused Combat Readiness AFPEO portfolio, which will drive critical cross-cutting capabilities and product support across platforms. AFPEO Combat Readiness will drive product support integration, and the requirements, prioritization, and funding for integration and product support.

**Q. Which weapons systems will be part of the combat readiness portfolio?**

**A.** We are working on implementation plans and expect more information in the coming months. With some exceptions, USAF air and missile systems will be included.

**POINT OF CONTACT.**

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