

## **AFSOF COMBAT SUPPORT REQUIREMENTS**

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Combat support consists of those functions necessary to support and sustain operations at a base. The majority of these functions are not organic to Air Force special operations forces (AFSOF) and are provided by the Commander, Air Force special operations forces (COMAFSOF) or other Service component commander tasked with providing such support. The COMAFFOR, through an air expeditionary wing or air expeditionary group commander, is normally responsible for providing the combat support and Service-common logistics support required by deployed AFSOF. At forward operating locations where the preponderance of forces are AFSOF, the AFSOF commander is responsible for ensuring combat support and Service common logistics support are provided at that location.

The AFSOF commander should coordinate Air Force Service support requirements directly through the COMAFFOR's A-staff. Other support requirements may be provided by a Service component commander other than COMAFFOR, per the geographic combatant commander's direction. Unique support requirements for [Special operations forces](#) (SOF) should be coordinated via SOF channels. AFSOF become operational early in the initial phase of any operation; therefore, sufficient combat support capability should be planned and deployed on a rapid enough timeline to achieve sustained operational capability, with minimal risk, commensurate with the geographic combatant commander's operational objectives.

### **Logistics**

AFSOF should provide sustainment requirements to the Air Force component logisticians during both contingency and crisis action planning. Coordination of AFSOF logistics support with the Air Force component logisticians and early identification of requirements is essential for a sustained and responsive support cycle. Provision of Service common logistics support and SOF unique logistics support should be seamless to deployed AFSOF using a single Air Force supply chain and the joint theater distribution system.



AFSOF should be able to execute time sensitive, discrete deployments. A reduced deployed logistics footprint can enhance both the timely response and the security of an operation. The

system used to mobilize and deploy AFSOF should be able to function in an environment where [operations security](#) (OPSEC) precludes normal pre-deployment coordination. However, planners should balance the need for OPSEC against the need for adequate logistics support and the size of the logistics footprint to ensure timely deployment and, ultimately, mission success. Lack of adequate logistics support can put the mission as much at risk as the failure to maintain appropriate OPSEC.

Because AFSOF generally operate small numbers of highly specialized aircraft, they should be adequately supported by readiness spares packages (RSP). The RSP should be maintained at sufficient levels to ensure a quick response and sustained operating capability for short duration contingencies.

### **Civil Engineer**

The lack of lightweight and easily employable bare base facility support coupled with extremely short notice, rapidly evolving, and fluid missions requires AFSOF to arrive and conduct operations well ahead of base operating support establishment. To bridge the gap, AFSOF provides a family of small specialized force modules. These capabilities employ the latest technology, tailored to minimums, and in most cases personnel are multi-skilled, substantially reducing manpower footprints. Capabilities include explosive ordnance disposal, gunship support, force protection teams, expeditionary engineer teams, counter-[weapons of mass destruction](#) /[chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear](#) teams, collective protection with personnel teams, and a family of light, easily employable beddown assets known as air rapid response kits.

Rapid arrival and establishment of an airhead at staging locations necessitate an increased demand on SOF, its enablers, and supporting agencies. The nature of the SOF mission heightens the probability of encountering hazards and accepting risk. AFSOC's enablers provide the commander with great capability in minimized packaging to assist in avoiding and mitigating those risks.

### **Weather Operations**

AFSOF [weather](#) forces provide a broad-spectrum of support from deployed and garrison conventional weather forces, global strategic and operational reachback forecasting to the capabilities of special operations weather teams (SOWT). SOWT provide environmental data collection operations and indigenous personnel weather liaison/training in the deep battle space as well as tailored environmental forecast products for unique worldwide missions of both conventional and SOF. The [joint force special operations component commander](#) (JFSOCC), in coordination with JFSOCC staff weather officer, determines weather resources required to support [joint force commander](#) (JFC) objectives. AFSOF units have enhanced performance when accompanied by organic SOWT. Team composition is scenario-dependent and generally consists of forward observing, planning and mission execution forecasting, and staff weather services. SOWT members operate independently in permissive and semi-permissive environments or as an attachment to SOF teams in hostile areas. SOWT are the only force in

the DOD organized, trained, and equipped to perform special reconnaissance operations in support of environmental requirements for the JFC.

While other forces have the ability to provide basic weather reporting, SOWT provide robust environmental intelligence collection expertise. SOWT can perform these tasks while employed tactically on or near the target, along flight routes, or from forward staging areas. In coordination with the [joint force special operations component](#) (JFSOC) staff weather officer, AFSOF weather forces develop an environmental sensing strategy that supports the theater sensing strategy. Deployed SO weather forces are normally attached with specification of [operational control](#) (OPCON) to a JFSOCC. [Administrative control](#) support is normally provided by the COMAFSOF. SOWT contain specially trained personnel who deploy to collect and disseminate environmental intelligence products in hostile/denied areas. SOWT record and transmit timely, accurate, and operationally focused forward-area weather observations for supporting SOF and conventional missions. The environmental intelligence collected by SOWT is rapidly relayed to higher-echelon weather agencies and integrated into global and theater computer forecast models for inclusion in strategic and operational decision-making processes.

### Legal

The employment of Air Force and joint SOF may incorporate significant [legal](#) considerations beyond those of [conventional forces](#), including law of armed conflict, use of force, fiscal law, environmental law, international agreements (not only those to which the US is party, but also those to which the US is not but the host nation for the AFSOF activity is a party), and other legal considerations including US and/or host nation domestic laws and policies. The key to avoiding legal obstacles to mission accomplishment is early identification and resolution of potential legal issues before they become "show stoppers." Active involvement by SOF-knowledgeable judge advocates, providing legal advice to commanders, planners, and operators, should be sought and used from the earliest stages of planning throughout mission execution. Commanders should ensure that qualified legal support is integrated into mission planning, rules of engagement development and publication, aircrew and operator training, and actual mission execution.

### **Medical**

AFSOF [medical](#) support requirements depend on the number of supported personnel, their locations, the military situation, and access to existing medical facilities. AFSOF personnel often operate from areas where the lack of preventive medicine measures during mission planning and early phases of execution could result in mission degradation. In addition to rendering routine or emergency medical care to deployed personnel, AFSOF medical personnel should ensure applicable elementary field sanitation and hygiene, disease prevention and control, and environmental risk factor assessment and control. The AFSOF aerospace physiology team supports high altitude airdrop missions and human performance threat assessments.

AFSOF medical personnel provide detailed analysis for planning and intelligence functions. They should be aware of potential health hazards, endemic diseases, and other related data associated with the destination country. Plans and procedures also ensure medical personnel

comply with the commander's directed deployment surveillance criteria.

Recovery of hostages or survivors normally presents unique medical considerations for those who have been subjected to traumatic events. Hostages or survivors may be confused, apprehensive, physically incapacitated, or act in a manner that can impede their rescue. SOF personnel conducting personnel recovery missions should also be prepared to use indigenous medical facilities to support hostage recovery operations. AFSOF medics and operational psychologists supervise exercises; provide medical stabilization/treatment following repatriation; and assist reintegration of captured and isolated personnel.

AFSOF medics assist the SOF approach to building resilience. The resilience training continuum ranges from performance enhancement through restoration; AFSOC has embedded medical assets within certain operational units for that purpose. Embedding resources fosters relationships, understanding, and trust between Airmen and providers. AFSOF medics and operational psychologists also participate in assessment and selection of operators, consultation on demanding and realistic training, ongoing monitoring of personnel, and treatment when needed.

AFSOF medical personnel establish the SOF casualty care continuum. They are responsible for planning and conducting medical care from the point of injury back to forward resuscitative surgical care. AFSOF medical and pararescue personnel are charged with providing initial stabilization in personnel recovery and mass casualty incidents.

AFSOF provide organic evacuation to points where conventional [airlift](#) and [aeromedical evacuation](#) (AE) are located. Selected AFSOF operational medical personnel train on SOF fixed and rotary wing aircraft to provide casualty evacuation from the point of injury back to a conventional interface point. AFSOF medical planning should address ground-air and maritime-air evacuation interface, organic resources to provide pre-evacuation stabilization, transload tactics, and hand-off procedures with conventional medical and AE forces.

Since AFSOC medical assets are limited, commanders should carefully consider available resources when assigning AFSOC medical personnel casualty evacuation roles and other contingency tasking forward of the AFSOC force beddown location. Sound risk management processes should be considered when determining the best resource to provide this capability. Appropriate planning and tailoring of force size during the predeployment planning phases greatly assist in ensuring availability of the required medical resources to meet operational requirements. AFSOC medical assets are designed for rapid deployment and to deploy for short durations.

AFSOC has developed medical modules that can be deployed incrementally or totally to support operational requirements. Medical personnel receive extensive medical training and AFSOC medical equipment and supply packages are designed to be highly mobile, relatively lightweight, and sufficient to provide a total spectrum of medical care in austere environments. AFSOC medical modules can serve as the stand-alone medical capability or the initial building blocks to

which additional medical assets may be added. These additional assets may be acquired from AFSOC, other Services, SOF medical elements, or from conventional military medical assets. In combination with other AFSOC units and other medical units, AFSOC has the capability to provide a robust medical presence. AFSOC can provide medical personnel in support of IW and medical stability operations in forward operating environments supporting other SOF assets.

### **Non-SOF Support Activity Requirements**

AFSOC is logistically supported in garrison by limited organic general purpose forces. This organic logistics capability focuses on continental US resource management and support as well as providing limited support to forward deployed AFSOF. Organic logistics capability does not include [base operating support](#) (BOS), deployment and distribution (intertheater/intratheater air mobility assets) and SOF-specific contracting support.

AFSOC has the capability to sustain operations no more than 15 days; missions that require sustainment extending further than this capability require additional support. AFSOC forces transiting or remaining at a permanent or expeditionary site require BOS. The [geographic combatant commander](#) (GCC) and its Service component commanders, in coordination with the [Theater Special Operations Command](#) commander, are responsible for ensuring that effective and responsive support systems are developed and provided for assigned/attached AFSOC organizations. The GCC appoints the joint base operating support provider for the requesting AFSOC organization.

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