

**BY ORDER OF THE SECRETARY  
OF THE AIR FORCE**

**AIR FORCE INSTRUCTION 16-117**

**1 APRIL 2013**

**Operations Support**

**OPERATOR ENGAGEMENT TALKS (OET)**



**COMPLIANCE WITH THIS PUBLICATION IS MANDATORY**

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OPR: AF/A5XX

Certified by: AF/A5X  
(Brig Gen Timothy M. Ray)

Supersedes: AFI16-117 19 Feb 2010

Pages: 16

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This instruction implements Air Force Policy Directive (AFPD) 16-1 *International Affairs* and governs the Headquarters Air Force (HAF) and Major Command (MAJCOM) responsibilities for the HAF level international operational engagement program with senior leaders of partner nation air forces. It applies to all United States Air Force (USAF) personnel, including Air Force Reserve Command (AFRC) and Air National Guard (ANG) personnel, who deal with international matters while serving in a Title 10 duty status. The funding for this program is governed by Air Force Instruction (AFI) 65-603, *Official Representation Funds*. All foreign national visits are conducted according to AFI 16-201, *Air Force Foreign Disclosure and Technology Transfer Program*, Air Force Manual (AFMAN) 16-101, *International Affairs and Security Assistance Management*, and other appropriate directives. This instruction does not pertain to the SECAF/CSAF Foreign Counterpart Visit Program as outlined in Headquarters Operating Instruction (HOI) 16-1, *Secretary of the Air Force (SECAF)/Chief of Staff of the Air Force (CSAF) Foreign Counterpart Visit Program*. Send comments and suggested improvements on AF Form 847, *Recommendation for Change of Publication*, through channels, to AF/A5X, 1480 Pentagon, Washington DC 20330-1480.

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***SUMMARY OF CHANGES***

This document has been substantially revised and must be completely reviewed. Major changes include revision of section 1.4 “Criteria”; section 3.1 “Program Management”; revision of Attachment 2; and verbiage clarification throughout the document.

## Chapter 1

### PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

**1.1. Overview.** The Headquarters Air Force operational engagement program with senior leaders of partner nation air forces is commonly known as Operator Engagement Talks (OET). This program is an instrument by which the USAF builds, sustains, and expands international relationships that are critical enablers for our air, space and cyberspace forces. The talks are administered by the Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations, Plans and Requirements (AF/A3/5) on behalf of the Chief of Staff of the Air Force (CSAF). The principal for the bilateral OET is the AF/A3/5 or his/her appointee. The OET provide direct interface between HAF and the headquarters air force staff of partner nations with discussion in key operational areas of mutual interest. To maximize the overall effectiveness of this program as an engagement tool, OET must support the strategic guidance, goals and criteria set forth by the Department of Defense (DoD), HAF, and Combatant Commanders.

**1.2. Strategic Guidance.** The DoD, HAF, and Combatant Commanders have outlined goals and objectives for building lasting relationships with our global partners. Knowledge of the following is essential to effective international operational level engagements.

- 1.2.1. Guidance for Employment of the Force (GEF).
- 1.2.2. The Combatant Command Theater Campaign Plan (CCTCP).
- 1.2.3. The United States Air Force Global Partnership Strategy (AFGPS).
- 1.2.4. Air Force Campaign Support Plan (AFCSP) and its supplement, the Security Engagement Cooperation Guidance (SECG).
- 1.2.5. Component Campaign Support Plan (CCSP).
- 1.2.6. Air Force Country Plan (AFCP).
- 1.2.7. The Building Partnership Core Function Master Plan (BP CFMP).

### **1.3. Purpose and Objectives.**

1.3.1. The purpose of the OET is to develop, maintain, and enhance mutually beneficial operational relationships with partner nations to improve interoperability in air, space, and cyberspace.

1.3.2. The objectives of the OET are to:

- 1.3.2.1. Develop, maintain, and enhance USAF senior leader relationships with peer and non-peer air forces.
- 1.3.2.2. Share air, space, and cyberspace lessons learned to improve interoperability and integration.
- 1.3.2.3. Strengthen and expand alliances and partnerships.
- 1.3.2.4. Explore opportunities for increased partnership engagements, activities, and programs.
- 1.3.2.5. Secure US strategic access and retain global freedom of action.

1.3.2.6. Enhance partner nation operational capabilities.

1.3.2.7. OET will not be used as a forum for negotiating international agreements. Participants will not make any unilateral commitment to any foreign government or international organization (either orally or in writing), tender to a prospective party thereto any draft of a proposed international agreement, nor initial or sign an international agreement, before obtaining the concurrence of the authorities cited in AFI 51-701, *Negotiating, Concluding, Reporting, and Maintaining International Agreements*.

**1.4. Criteria.** The OET process and partner nations must meet the following criteria:

1.4.1. Partner nation must have a headquarters air force-level or equivalent staff.

1.4.2. Partner nation's air force must be willing and capable of reciprocating the responsibilities of planning and hosting an OET.

1.4.3. OET must foster mutual commonality, compatibility, and interoperability between USAF and the partner nation air force within legal, fiscal, and political boundaries.

1.4.4. Objectives of the OET must not duplicate or contradict other engagement forums already in existence.

1.4.5. OET must be consistent with the AFCP, CCSP, AFCSP, and AFGPS.

1.4.6. Evaluation and selection criteria for partner nation participation in OET are outlined in Attachment 2.

## Chapter 2

### RESPONSIBILITIES

#### 2.1. HQ USAF, Chief of Staff (CSAF):

2.1.1. Establishes the overall direction for the program and approves the list of selected partner nations and the engagement strategy for the OET.

2.1.2. Designates AF/A3/5 as the official representative to serve on behalf of CSAF in order to use Official Representation Funds (ORF) in accordance with Department of Defense Instruction (DoDI) 7250.13, *Use of Appropriated Funds for Official Representation Purposes*; HAF Mission Directive (MD) 1-6, *The Administrative Assistant to the Secretary of the Air Force*; AFI 65-603, *Official Representation Funds*; and HOI 65-3, *HQ USAF Guidance For Official Representation Funds*.

#### 2.2. HQ USAF, Deputy Chief of Staff, Operations, Plans and Requirements (AF/A3/5):

2.2.1. Plans and executes OET, through AF/A5X, in accordance with CSAF direction, and in coordination with respective MAJCOMs and/or Component Numbered Air Force (C-NAF)/Numbered Air Force (NAF).

2.2.2. Manages OET nominations and submits a final recommendation to the CSAF for approval. Manages periodic evaluation of OET and the country selection process and recommends changes to the CSAF (Attachment 2).

2.2.3. Co-chairs the OET with the partner nation counterpart or designates another HAF general officer to co-chair the OET on AF/A3/5's behalf.

2.2.4. Establishes meeting objectives IAW DoD, HAF, and Combatant Commanders' goals and objectives for building lasting relationships with partner nations.

2.2.5. Solicits discussion topics and objectives for OET with partner nation air force.

2.2.6. Oversees the resolution of action items following an OET with a partner nation air force.

2.2.7. Represents and supports USAF operational matters, as requested by Component MAJCOMs: usually Pacific Air Forces (PACAF); United States Air Forces in Europe (USAFE), including AFAFRICA; and C-NAFs/NAFs with regional responsibilities: Air Forces Central (AFCENT), Air Forces Southern (AFSOUTH), and Air Forces Northern (AFNORTH), in other USAF international operations engagement fora.

2.2.8. Obtains approval and provides an accounting of ORF used for OET in accordance with DoDI 7250.13, HAF MD 1-6, AFI 65-603, and HOI 65-3.

2.2.9. Coordinates with AF/CC Political Advisor (POLAD), US Embassies, Department of State, Joint Staff, Defense Attaché Offices, and Security Cooperation Offices to:

2.2.9.1. Receive logistical, protocol, and ancillary in-country administrative support services for OET delegations and other USAF personnel engaged in planning and executing the OET.

2.2.9.2. Receive country specific information to aid in meeting objectives and discussion topics.

2.2.9.3. Facilitate with country clearance requests.

**2.3. Air Force MAJCOM Commanders and C-NAF/NAF Commanders to include PACAF, USAFE (includes AFAFRICA), AFCENT, AFSOUTH, AFNORTH, Air Combat Command (ACC), Air Force Space Command (AFSPC), Air Mobility Command (AMC), Air Education and Training Command (AETC), Air Force Materiel Command (AFMC), Air Force Reserve Command (AFRC), Air National Guard (ANG), Air Force Global Strike Command (AFGSC), and Air Force Special Operations Command (AFSOC):**

2.3.1. Support OET periodic evaluation with country nominations and supporting justification (Attachment 3). **Note:** Only applies to the Component MAJCOMs, NAFs, and C-NAFs with regional responsibilities: PACAF, USAFE (includes AFAFRICA), AFCENT, AFSOUTH, and AFNORTH.

2.3.2. Support the execution of the OET with regional and functional expertise; recommend objectives, discussion topics and Subject Matter Experts (SMEs); and nominate representatives for OET participation.

2.3.2.1. When requested, host OET delegations at MAJCOM-owned bases.

2.3.2.2. When requested, provide logistical, protocol, communication, and other support to OET delegations.

2.3.3. Provide subject matter expertise to assist and resolve action items following an OET.

2.3.4. Ensure AF/A3/5 representatives are aware of international forums/events that could enhance future OET planning and execution.

2.3.5. Ensure AF/A3/5 representatives are provided with summaries of respective MAJCOM/C-NAF/NAF international forums/events/action items in preparation for future OET.

2.3.6. AETC should consider incorporating OET into the 20 year strategic outlook for Building Partnership.

**2.4. Secretariat and Air Staff Offices:**

2.4.1. Support OET periodic evaluation and country selection process with subject matter expertise.

2.4.2. Support execution of the OET with regional and functional expertise and recommendations for meeting objectives and discussion topics.

2.4.3. Coordinate with the applicable SAF/IA regional division to ensure topics, abstracts and briefings are in compliance and consistent with overall United States Government, geographic combatant command, country team, and USAF engagement policies and objectives. Ensure all USAF discussion topics, abstracts, and briefings are reviewed and approved by SAF/IA for foreign disclosure.

2.4.4. Provide subject matter expertise to assist and resolve action items which result from the OET.

2.4.5. Provide delegation guidance to USAF personnel involved in planning and executing the OET.

## Chapter 3

### PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

#### 3.1. Structure.

3.1.1. An OET is typically held every 18 months with a partner nation; however, frequency of OET is flexible. Factors that may dictate a different frequency include the maturity of the relationship, partner nation capabilities, partner nation input, relationship between partner nation and C-NAF/NAF/MAJCOM, type and frequency of other engagement venues, and partner nation capacity. Conducting C-NAF/NAF or MAJCOM level engagements between OETs is a consideration for OET intervals exceeding 18 months. Video Teleconferencing (VTC) capability may be used between OET, if desired.

3.1.2. Location and responsibility for hosting the OET alternates every other meeting between USAF and the partner nation.

3.1.3. The first OET with a newly selected country will be hosted in the US by the AF/A3/5 or his/her designee.

3.1.4. Where feasible, hold OET in conjunction with other USAF forums as a separate working group to obtain synergy and reduce costs. Air Senior National Representative (ASNR) between USAF and Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) is an example.

3.1.5. The typical OET is a 2-3 day event which may include briefings, discussions, hosted dinners, and receptions (subject to availability of funds).

3.1.6. The typical USAF delegation composition includes the following: Co-chair-A3/5 or his/her designated general officer; Senior level C-NAF/NAF and/or MAJCOM representation able to speak for their command; A5XX senior leader to represent A5X and provide execution oversight; A5XX action officer-responsible for USAF portion of organizing the OET; SME/briefers-as appropriate; SAF/IA regional or country desk officer.

3.1.7. Additional potential USAF attendees include the Air Attaché, other embassy representation, and other specialists or stakeholders, as deemed necessary. The partner nation delegation will be of similar composition. When building the USAF team, due consideration must be given to limiting the number of personnel, so as to not overwhelm the partner nation, and to limit unnecessary expenses.

**3.2. Management, Planning, and Execution.** Regional Plans and Issues Division (AF/A5XX) performs day-to-day management and administration of OET on behalf of the AF/A3/5. AF/A5XX will:

3.2.1. Provide the AF/A3/5 with program status, updates, and recommended program changes.

3.2.2. Draft and coordinate a Terms of Reference (TOR), if agreed to between USAF and partner nation's air force, **Attachment 4**, to set mutually beneficial objectives for the OET.

3.2.3. Coordinate with HAF and task appropriate commands with action items and track their resolution.

- 3.2.4. Coordinate with the partner nation Air Attaché or other partner nation designated point of contact to set a mutually agreeable date and location for the OET.
- 3.2.5. Solicit inputs from the DoD, USAF, and other applicable agencies for topics to be discussed with the partner nation and request their SMEs attend and support the OET. Request discussion topics, abstracts, and briefings from SMEs selected to brief topics and ensure they have been approved for foreign disclosure.
- 3.2.6. Finalize an agenda and itinerary for the OET with the partner nation.
- 3.2.7. Organize and execute OET. The AF/A3/5 operational budget will be used to fund travel for the AF/A3/5 members. Other USAF attendees are normally unit funded.
- 3.2.8. Funding for extending official courtesies to the partner nation to include hosted meals and reception is governed by DoDI 7250.13, HAF MD 1-6, AFI 65-603, and HOI 65-3. Funding requests will be staffed through HAF/RM, SAF/GCA, and AF/CV for approval by SAF/AA.
- 3.2.9. In coordination with the partner nation, develop minutes of the OET for the co-chairs' signature and distribute approved minutes to meeting attendees and other stakeholders.
- 3.2.10. Capture and record all mutually agreed upon OET action items for tasking.
- 3.2.11. Develop an after action report and assign action items to appropriate USAF organization.
- 3.2.12. Coordinate with partner nation's Air Attaché or designated point of contact responsible for the status of partner nation's action item until all action items are complete.

BURTON M. FIELD, Lt Gen, USAF  
DCS, Operations, Plans & Requirements

## Attachment 1

### GLOSSARY OF REFERENCES AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

#### *References*

DoDI 7250.13, *Use of Appropriated Funds for Official Representation Purposes*, 30 Jun 09

DoD 5105.38-M, *Security Assistance Management Manual*, 30 Apr 12 (published by DSCA at <http://www.dsca.mil>)

DoD 7000.14-R, Volume 15, *Security Assistance Policy and Procedures*, Jun 12

AFPD 16-1, *International Affairs*, 2 Nov 09

HAF MD 1-6, *The Administrative Assistant to the Secretary of the Air Force*, 22 Dec 08

AFI 65-603, *Official Representation Funds*, 24 Aug 11

AFI 16-201, *Air Force Foreign Disclosure and Technology Transfer Program*, 1 Dec 04

AFI 51-701, *Negotiating, Concluding, Reporting, and Maintaining International Agreements*, 16 Aug 11

AFMAN 33-363, *Management of Records*, 1 Mar 08

AFMAN 16-101, *International Affairs and Security Assistance Management*, 15 Feb 11

HOI 16-1, *Secretary of the Air Force (SECAF)/Chief of Staff of the Air Force (CSAF) Foreign Counterpart Visit Program*, 2 Mar 11

HOI 65-3, *HQ USAF Guidance For Official Representation Funds*, Mar 08

Air Force Campaign Support Plan, Jun 12

Combatant Command Theater Campaign Plans, (theater dependent)

Component Campaign Support Plans, (theater dependent)

USAF Country Plans, (country dependent)

Guidance for Employment of the Force, 2012

United States Air Force Global Partnership Strategy, 2011

#### *Adopted Forms*

AF Form 847, *Recommendation for Change of Publication*

#### *Abbreviations and Acronyms*

**AFAFRICA**—Air Forces Africa

**AFCENT**—United States Air Forces Central

**AFCSP**—Air Force Campaign Support Plan

**AFDPO**—Air Force Departmental Publishing Office

**AFGSC**—Air Force Global Strike Command

**AFI**—Air Force Instruction

**AFMAN**—Air Force Manual

**AFNORTH**—Air Forces Northern

**AFPD**—Air Force Policy Directive

**AFRC**—Air Force Reserve Command

**AFRIMS**—Air Force Records Information Management System

**AFSOUTH**—Air Forces Southern

**ANG**—Air National Guard

**BP**—Building Partnerships

**CFMP**—Core Function Master Plan

**CONPLAN**—Concept of Operation Plan

**C-NAF**—Component Numbered Air Force

**CSAF**—Chief of Staff of the Air Force

**DoD**—Department of Defense

**DoDI**—Department of Defense Instruction

**GEF**—Guidance for Employment of the Force

**GPS**—Global Partnership Strategy

**HAF**—Headquarters Air Force

**HOI**—Headquarters Operating Instruction

**MAJCOM**—Major Command

**MD**—Mission Directive

**NAF**—Numbered Air Force

**OET**—Operator Engagement Talks

**OPLAN**—Operations Plan

**ORF**—Official Representation Funds

**PACAF**—Pacific Air Forces

**POLAD**—Political Advisor

**RDS**—Records Disposition Schedule

**SAF/AA**—Administrative Assistant to the Secretary of the Air Force

**SAF/IA**—Deputy Under-Secretary of the Air Force, International Affairs

**SME**—Subject Matter Expert

**TOR**—Terms of Reference

**USAFE**—United States Air Forces in Europe

**USAF**—United States Air Force

*Terms*

**Abstract**— Brief summary of a topic used to help the reader ascertain the topic's key points.

**Action Item**— A documented task, activity, or action that requires completion.

**Partner Nation**— Those countries with which the US shares common interests.

**Subject Matter Experts**— A person who is an expert in a particular area.

**Terms of Reference**—Describes the purpose and structure of a project, committee, meeting or negotiation. When used with regard to a project, they can also be known as a project charter.

**Attachment 2****ENGAGEMENT TALK'S COUNTRY EVALUATION AND SELECTION**

**A2.1.** AF/A3/5 will conduct periodic evaluations of the Operator Engagement Talks (OET) and the associated countries to comply with changes in strategic direction and to re-focus operational objectives as the global security environment changes. Program re-evaluation will occur when there are significant changes in US, DoD and/or USAF strategic directives, DoD and/or USAF international engagement strategies, five years have elapsed since the last program evaluation, or when directed. The periodic evaluation will consider the addition of new countries to the program as well as the removal of established partners.

**A2.2.** During the course of the evaluation, the AF/A3/5 will solicit country nominations and supporting justification from Component-MAJCOMs (PACAF and USAFE (includes AFAFRICA)), NAFs, and C-NAFs (AFCENT, AFNORTH, AFSOUTH) with regional responsibility to determine the top candidates for final country selection. Some, but not all, considerations for nominating countries are: Operational capability and capacity; technological sophistication; interoperable communications; relevance to existing OPLANS/CONPLANS/TCPs/GPS/DES; extent of NAF/C-NAF/Component-MAJCOM relationship; frequency, type, and quantity of existing engagement forums; AFCP objectives and priorities; strategic access and influence on US global posture; and desire by nominee to become an OET partner nation

**A2.3.** AF/A3/5 will evaluate MAJCOM/NAF/C-NAF nominations for additions or removals based on strategic directives, USAF operational and policy equities, OET Program criteria, and available resources. AF/A3/5 will submit a final recommendation to the CSAF for approval. AF/A5X may convene a board of O-6 representation from, at a minimum, the following directorates: AF/A3/5, SAF/IA, AF/A8XS and AF/CC POLAD. Other HAF representatives to the board will be included as required.

**A2.4.** AF/A3/5 will prepare a formal CSAF letter to the newly selected partner nations and/or nations removed from the OET program. AF/A5XX will action this discussion with MAJCOMs/NAFs/C-NAFs.

## Attachment 3

## EXAMPLE NOMINATION LETTER

## A3.1. Use example Nomination Letter at Figure A3 1.

## Figure A3.1. Example Nomination Letter

**TO:** AF/A3/5

**FROM:** COMPONENT-MAJCOM or COMPONENT-NAF as described in A2.2.

Purpose: To nominate the ABC Air Force (ABAF) for Operator Engagement Talks, due to ABC's status as a major influence on world political and military issues.

Example Justification:

Largest and most influential military forces in MAJCOM/NAF; strong, well-organized command structure; well-developed mil-to-mil relationships with both the US and other regional militaries

Currently has XX open FMS cases with U.S. government; \$XXM program value

High interest in Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) research and development or other system

New National Defense Strategy envisions ambitious reorganization and modernization programs

Recognized as regional leader on military issues and UN Peace-Keeping Operations

Currently participating in XX different operations world-wide

ABCD military and civilian forces are capable of responding to man-made and natural disasters

XX planned or already-executed bilateral engagements for FYXX; training, exercises, and operations

Other

Suggested Topics for Operator Engagement Talks: Coalition Operations, Air Refueling, Reconnaissance and Surveillance, Search and Rescue, Aeromedical Evacuation, Space Launch, Cyberspace Operations, Unmanned Aircraft Systems, etc.

## Attachment 4

## EXAMPLE TERMS OF REFERENCE (TOR)

## A4.1. Use example TOR at Figure A4.1

## Figure A4.1. Example TOR

**COUNTRY NAME AIR FORCE/UNITED STATES AIR FORCE  
OPERATOR ENGAGEMENT TALKS (OET) TERMS OF REFERENCE (TOR)**

**Objective**

The **Country Name** Air Force (**XAF**)/United States Air Force (USAF) Operator Engagement Talks are designed to provide a forum for the **XAF** and USAF to discuss air, space, and cyberspace topics including current and future operations, doctrine, training, operational concepts (such as tactics, techniques, and procedures), interoperability, exercises, lessons learned, current and future capabilities (concepts/systems), plans and organizational constructs that are consistent with national disclosure policies.

**Representation**

The USAF's senior representative is the Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations, Plans, and Requirements. The **XAF**'s senior representative is the (*duty title*). Delegations will be led by a general officer from the **XAF** Operations' Department and the USAF Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations, Plans, and Requirements or his/her general officer designee.

Each air force may include additional staff officers as required to support the agenda. This may include representatives from major commands, Air Staff, international relations, the embassy, and subject matter experts.

**Framework**

A total of four Operator Engagement Talks are to be conducted; one approximately every 18 months with the location alternating between **Country Name** and the United States. The Talks are to be co-chaired by the senior operations' representatives of **XAF** and USAF, or their designated representatives.

The meetings are to be organized by the nation hosting the talks. Since the meeting minutes are to be written in English, the **XAF** may seek US support when **XAF** is the host.

Modifications to these Terms of Reference are to be approved by the **XAF** (*duty title*) and USAF Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations, Plans, and Requirements.

\_\_\_\_\_  
**USAF**  
 AF/A3/5, Lt Gen, USAF  
 DCS/Operations, Plans, & Requirements

\_\_\_\_\_  
**XAF**  
**Name**  
**Duty Title**

**Date:**

**Date:**

