

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

**AIR FORCE POLICY DIRECTIVE 51-6**

**13 NOVEMBER 2015**



**Law**

**COMMAND AND ADMINISTRATIVE  
PROCEEDINGS**

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This directive implements title 10, United States Code (USC), section 8074 (10 USC § 8074) and Air Force Mission Directive (AFMD) 1, *Headquarters Air Force (HAF)*. It applies to service members and organizations in the Regular Air Force, Air Force Reserve, and Air National Guard. It applies to Civil Air Patrol (CAP) United States Air Force (USAF); but, does not apply to the CAP, the volunteer civilian auxiliary of the United States Air Force. Refer recommended changes and questions about this directive to the Office of Primary Responsibility (OPR) using the AF Form 847, *Recommendation for Change of Publication*; route AF Forms 847 from the field through intermediate legal offices. Ensure that all records created as a result of processes prescribed in this publication are maintained in accordance with (IAW) Air Force Manual (AFMAN) 33-363, *Management of Records*, and disposed of IAW the Air Force Records Disposition Schedule (RDS), located in the Air Force Records Information Management System (AFRIMS).

**SUMMARY OF CHANGES**

This document has been substantially revised and must be completely reviewed. Major changes include changing the title; specifying command appointment authorities and clearly delineating the chain of command (para 3.0); deleting measures of compliance; and adding a Glossary of References and Supporting Information as a new Attachment 1.

**1. Policy.**

1.1. This directive establishes Air Force policy and assigns responsibilities for command consistent with Department of Defense Directive (DoDD) 5100.01, *Functions of the Department of Defense and Its Major Components*; Joint Publication (JP) 1, *Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States*; and AFMD 1. This directive establishes policy and assigns responsibilities for ensuring due process during administrative proceedings before a board of officers.

1.2. This directive also establishes policy and assigns responsibilities for accepting gifts to the Air Force. As an organization comprised of personnel committed to defending the US Constitution, the Department of the Air Force (hereinafter referred to as the Air Force) bears the responsibility of maintaining public trust and confidence through its adherence to the rule of law. Air Force compliance with civil legal authority ensures due process and promotes efficiency.

## **2. Roles and Responsibilities.**

2.1. As the head of the Air Force subject to the direction of the Secretary of Defense (SecDef) and to the provisions of 10 USC **Chapter 6**, the Secretary of the Air Force (SecAF) is responsible for and has the authority necessary to conduct all affairs of the Air Force.

2.2. SecAF may accept gifts of personal property and real property, pursuant to 10 USC § 2601 and other applicable statutes, and must ensure the proper accounting, safeguarding, and use of such gifts. Although the receipt of such gifts may be acknowledged in a thankful manner, no arrangements will be made granting special favors to the donor and care must be taken to avoid providing a response that contains an endorsement of the donor. SecAF may delegate this authority to Air Force officials, subject to any limitations prescribed by law or other competent authority.

2.3. The Judge Advocate General (AF/JA), in coordination with the Air Force General Counsel (SAF/GC) as appropriate, is responsible for interpreting and issuing implementing instructions for this directive.

## **3. Command.**

3.1. Command is central to all military action and unity of command is fundamental to the optimal employment of all forces under a single responsible commander.

3.2. The President and SecDef exercise authority, direction, and control of the Air Force through two distinct branches of the chain of command.

3.2.1. The operational branch runs from the President, through SecDef, to the commanders of combatant commands for missions and forces assigned or attached to their commands. This branch is described in 10 USC § 164 and JP 1.

3.2.2. For purposes other than operational direction of forces assigned to the combatant commands, the chain of command runs from the President to SecDef to SecAF (as outlined in 10 USC § 8013, 10 USC § 8074, and AFMD 1), and thereafter, as prescribed by SecAF in this directive and its implementing instructions. SecAF has shared administrative command and control with the combatant commander over Air Force forces assigned or attached to combatant commands.

3.3. The chain of command within the Air Force typically runs from SecAF to MAJCOM/CCs and from MAJCOM/CCs to their subordinate commanders. SecAF should

normally exercise this command authority over Airmen through the Chief of Staff of the Air Force (CSAF). Thus, all communications to SecAF pertaining to command matters will normally be coordinated through CSAF.

3.3.1. While holding office, CSAF outranks all other Air Force officers but is not a commander. CSAF may exercise supervisory authority over all members of the Air Force as prescribed by SecAF. However, if the Chairman and/or Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff is an Air Force officer, CSAF does not exercise any authority over them.

3.3.2. SecAF has direct command authority over CSAF, all Air Force major command (MAJCOM) commanders; the Commander of the Air Force District of Washington (AFDW/CC) and all Air Force lieutenant generals and generals who are not assigned to a MAJCOM or a combatant commander.

3.3.2.1. All taskings from the Secretariat to the Air Staff normally should be coordinated through CSAF.

3.4. The CSAF, Vice Chief of Staff, Assistant Vice Chief of Staff, Deputy Chiefs of Staff, Assistant Chiefs of Staff, other heads (military or civilian) of Air Staff “two-letter” offices or other staff agencies, and civilian leaders and military officers within the Office of the Secretary of the Air Force, the Office of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Office of the Secretary of Defense are not commanders. However, as senior leaders, senior staff, and supervisors, these directors and officers are authorized to perform functions identified in Air Force policy as requiring action by the respective unit commander (e.g., squadron-level commander or civilian equivalent), as long as those actions are not reserved specifically to a “commander” by law (e.g., the Uniform Code of Military Justice [UCMJ]) or controlling superior legal authority (e.g., DoD guidance).

3.5. SecAF delegates to the following personnel the authority to appoint an officer to command in the Air Force as described below:

3.5.1. CSAF and the Vice Chief of Staff of the Air Force may appoint officers to all command positions in the Air Force;

3.5.2. Deputy Chiefs of Staff of the Air Force and other Air Staff Office Chiefs for field operating agencies (FOA) under their supervision;

3.5.3. The military deputies to the Under Secretary of the Air Force and the Assistant Secretaries of the Air Force may appoint commanders of FOAs under their supervision;

3.5.4. The Inspector General (SAF/IG) for organizations under SAF/IG’s supervision;

3.5.5. The Surgeon General (AF/SG) for medical organizations under AF/SG’s supervision;

3.5.6. The Judge Advocate General (AF/JA) for the Air Force Legal Operations Agency;

3.5.7. AFDW/CC for all organizations under AFDW’s command and all organizations authorized to have a commander, that are not otherwise addressed in paragraphs 3.5.2 to 3.5.6.;

3.5.8. The Senior Air Force Officer (SAFO), or Air Force officer appointed to command the Air Force component if not the SAFO, in a unified command, joint task force,

combined task force, coalition force, or activity or agency outside the Air Force may appoint the Air Force commander of a subordinate Air Force component command or section commander for the section(s) falling within the SAFO's or commander's area of responsibility; and

3.5.9. The Commander of Air Force Forces (COMAFFOR), to appoint commanders of Air Force organizations operating under his or her command authority.

3.6. The delegated appointment authorities listed in paragraph 3.5 may be redelegated to subordinate commanders and staff officers.

3.7. Commanders may appoint commanders of subordinate units under their command.

3.8. Assumption of command. When not otherwise prohibited by superior competent authority via an existing appointment to command order or otherwise and when a commander ceases to be "present for duty" or is permanently unavailable, relieved from duty, missing, dead, or otherwise unable to carry out the incidents and responsibilities of command, then command of a unit, including an Air Force Element, shall pass to the SAFO assigned to an organization who is present for duty and eligible to command. In this circumstance, the SAFO shall be said to have assumed command. The authority to assume command is inherent in the SAFO's status as the senior Air Force officer in both grade and rank. An exception to this rule rests in detachments and sections: an officer cannot assume command of a detachment or a section; commanders of detachments and sections must be appointed.

3.9. IAW 10 USC § 8074, only commissioned Air Force officers may exercise command of an Air Force organization; civilians and enlisted members may not exercise command. An officer may not command another officer of higher grade

3.10. Air Force District of Washington. SecAF delegates authority to the AFDW/CC to exercise general, special, and summary court-martial convening authority; actions under Article 15, UCMJ; administrative actions; and other actions requiring command authority over the Air Force members identified in the following subparagraphs, as needed.

3.10.1. Air Force members assigned, attached, or on temporary duty with:

3.10.1.1. Headquarters Air Force (the Secretariat and the Air Staff), per 10 USC chapters 803 and 805;

3.10.1.2. Headquarters Army (the Secretariat and the Army Staff), per 10 USC chapters 303 and 305;

3.10.1.3. Headquarters Navy (the Secretariat, Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, the Bureaus, and the Office of the Judge Advocate General), per 10 USC [chapter 503](#), 505, and 513;

3.10.1.4. Headquarters Marine Corps, per 10 USC chapter 506;

3.10.1.5. The Office of the Joint Chiefs of Staff;

3.10.1.6. The Office of the Secretary of Defense; and

3.10.1.7. Organizations that are not subordinate to a MAJCOM and that are not located on a military installation with an Air Force commander authorized to exercise

general or special court-martial convening authority. Such organizations may include, but are not limited to Air Force FOAs; Air Force direct reporting units (DRU); and Air Force Elements of DoD activities, DoD field agencies, and other departments and agencies of the United States Government.

3.10.2. Inmates, parolees, and members on appellate leave assigned to the Air Force Security Forces Center, Corrections Division, are attached to the AFDW and its appropriate subordinate commands for the exercise of general, special and summary court-martial convening authority.

3.10.3. Air Force members assigned to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and stationed in Europe are attached to United State Air Forces Europe (USAFE) for general, special and summary court-martial convening authority; actions under Article 15, UCMJ; administrative actions, and other actions requiring command authority.

3.10.4. The authorities delegated to AFDW/CC, may be further delegated.

3.10.5. As used in paragraph 3.10., the term “Air Force members” includes:

3.10.5.1. Members of the Regular Component of the Air Force; and

3.10.5.2. Members of the Air Reserve Component (Air Force Reserve and Air National Guard) when subject to the UCMJ in accordance with 10 USC § 802.

3.10.5.3. EXCEPTION: Command authority affecting officers who are senior in grade to AFDW/CC, is reserved to SecAF.

**4. Administrative Proceedings.** The Air Force will ensure that respondents entitled to administrative proceedings before a board of officers are afforded a full, fair, and impartial hearing.

Deborah Lee James  
Secretary of the Air Force

**Attachment 1****GLOSSARY OF REFERENCES AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION*****References***

10 USC § 164

10 USC chapters 303 and 305

10 USC **chapter 503**, 505, 506, and 513

10 USC § 802

10 USC chapters 803 and 805

10 USC § 2601

10 USC § 8013

10 USC § 8074

AFMD 1, *Headquarters Air Force (HAF)*, 8 April 2011

AFI 33-360, *Publications and Forms Management*, 25 September 2013

AFMAN 33-363, *Management of Records*, 1 May 2008, incorporating Change 1, 28 January 2015, certified current 9 April 2015

DoDD 5100.01, *Functions of the Department of Defense and Its Major Components*, 21 December 2010

JP 1, *Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States*, 25 March 2013

AFI 38-101, *Air Force Organization*, 16 March 2011, incorporating changes through AFGM2.2, 21 April 2015

***Adopted Forms***

AF Form 847, *Recommendation for Change of Publication*

***Abbreviations and Acronyms***

**AFDW**—Air Force District of Washington

**AFI**—Air Force Instruction

**AFMAN**—Air Force Manual

**AFMD**—Air Force Mission Directive

**AFPD**—Air Force Policy Directive

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

**CAP**—Civil Air Patrol

**COMAFFOR**—Commander, Air Force Forces

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

**DoDD**—Department of Defense Directive

**DRU**—Direct Reporting Unit  
**FOA**—Field Operating Agency  
**IAW**—In Accordance With  
**JP**—Joint Publication  
**MAJCOM**—Major Command  
**NAF**—Numbered Air Force  
**OPR**—Office of Primary Responsibility  
**RDS**—Records Disposition Schedule  
**SAFO**—Senior Air Force Officer  
**SecAF**—Secretary of the Air Force  
**SecDef**—Secretary of Defense  
**UCMJ**—Uniform Code of Military Justice  
**USC**—United States Code  
**USAF**—United States Air Force  
**USAFE**—United States Air Forces Europe

### *Terms*

**Air Force Element:**—The nomenclature used to account for manpower authorizations and to identify Air Force personnel on duty with organizations outside the Air Force, such as defense agencies, defense field activities, sister services, and Air National Guard units not in federal service. Although not a unit for organizational purposes, an Air Force Element may function as a unit if so designated by competent authority. (AFI 38-101, *Air Force Organization*)

**Commander:**—A commissioned officer who, by virtue of rank and assignment, exercises command authority over a military organization or prescribed territorial area, which under pertinent official directives is recognized as a “command.” This designation is used in all Air Force organizations authorized to be led by a commander except the US Air Force Academy, which is commanded by a superintendent, and school/academic organizations, which may be commanded by commandants.

**Unit:**—A military organization constituted by directives issued by HAF. A unit is either named or numbered. Air Force units include MAJCOMs, NAFs, wings, groups, squadrons, centers, DRUs, FOAs, and provisional units. See AFI 38-101. They also include deployable units formed from air expeditionary forces (AEFs), such as air expeditionary wings, groups or squadrons, attached to an Air and Space Expeditionary Task Force or an in-place NAF that has been directed by a MAJCOM to support a joint force commander. A duly constituted unit will have a civilian director or a commander who has assumed or been appointed to command. For purposes of this directive, the term “unit” will include those non-units identified in AFI 38-101 as being authorized to have a commander, such as sections, detachments, and Air Force Elements.