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OF THE AIR FORCE**

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Operations Support

OPERATOR ENGAGEMENT TALKS

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This instruction implements Air Force Policy Directive 16-1 *Security Cooperation* and governs the Headquarters Air Force (HAF) and major command responsibilities for the HAF level international operational engagement program with senior leaders of partner nation air forces. This AFI may be supplemented at any level, but all supplements must be routed to AF/A3O for coordination prior to certification and approval. This instruction applies to all United States Air Force (USAF) (Regular Air Force, Air Force Reserve, and Air National Guard) military and civilian personnel, and those with a contractual obligation to abide by the terms of AF issuances. The authorities to waive requirements external to the Air Force in this publication are identified with T-0 following the compliance statement. See AFI 33-360, *Publications and Forms Management*, for a description of the authorities associated with the Tier numbers. Submit requests for waivers through the chain of command to the appropriate Tier waiver approval authority, or alternately, to the requestors commander for non-tiered compliance items. Submit request for waivers through the chain of command to AF/A3O. Refer recommended changes and questions about this publication to the Office of Primary Responsibility using the AF Form 847, *Recommendation for Change of Publication*; route AF Forms 847 from the field through appropriate functional's chain of command. Ensure all records created as a result of processes prescribed in this publication are maintained in accordance with Air Force Manual 33-363, *Management of Records*, and disposed of in accordance with the Air Force Records Disposition Schedule located in the Air Force Records Information Management System.

Chapter 1

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

1.1. Overview. The Operator Engagement Talks program is a Headquarters Air Force (HAF) operational engagement program with senior leaders of partner nation air forces. 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 (AF/A3) on behalf of the Chief of Staff of the Air Force (CSAF). The principal for the bilateral Operator Engagement Talks is the AF/A3 or appointee. Operator Engagement Talks 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, Operator Engagement Talks must support the strategic guidance, goals, and criteria set forth by the Department of Defense (DoD), HAF, and Combatant Commanders. All foreign national visits will be 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.

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 by Operator Engagement Talks participants is essential to effective international operational level engagements.

- 1.2.1. Guidance for Employment of the Force. Deputy Undersecretary of Defense for Policy (OSD/USD(P))
- 1.2.2. Global Campaign Plans (Combatant Commands)
- 1.2.3. Combatant Command Theater Campaign Plan. (Combatant Commands)
- 1.2.4. Component Campaign Support Plan. (Component Commands)
- 1.2.5. United States Air Force Security Cooperation Flight Plan. Under Secretary of the Air Force, International Affairs (SAF/IA)

1.3. Purpose and Objectives.

1.3.1. The purpose of the Operator Engagement Talks 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 Operator Engagement Talks 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 U.S. strategic access and retain global freedom of action.

1.3.2.6. Enhance partner nation operational capabilities.

1.3.2.7. Operator Engagement Talks 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), offer to a prospective party any draft of a proposed international agreement, nor initial or sign an international agreement, before obtaining the concurrence of the authorities cited in para 3., AFI 51-701, *Negotiating, Concluding, Reporting, and Maintaining International Agreements*. (T-0).

1.4. Criteria. Operator Engagement Talks partner nations and processes need to meet the following criteria:

1.4.1. Partner nations:

1.4.1.1. Have a headquarters air force-level or equivalent staff.

1.4.1.2. Willing and capable of reciprocating (sharing) the responsibilities of planning and hosting Operator Engagement Talks.

1.4.2. Operator Engagement Talks process:

1.4.2.1. Fosters commonality, compatibility, and interoperability between USAF and the partner nation air force within legal, fiscal, and political boundaries.

1.4.2.2. Should not duplicate or contradict other engagement forums already in existence.

1.4.2.3. Maintains consistency with the Combatant Command Theater Campaign Plan, Component Campaign Support Plan, and Air Force Security Cooperation Flight Plan.

Chapter 2

RESPONSIBILITIES

2.1. HQ USAF, Chief of Staff:

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

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

2.2. HQ USAF, Deputy Chief of Staff, Operations (AF/A3) :

2.2.1. Plans and executes Operator Engagement Talks, through AF/A3, in accordance with CSAF direction and in coordination with respective major commands and/or component numbered air force/numbered air force.

2.2.2. Manages Operator Engagement Talks nominations and submits a final recommendation to the CSAF for approval. Manages periodic evaluation of Operator Engagement Talks and the country selection process and recommends changes to the CSAF ([Attachment 2](#)).

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

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

2.2.5. Solicits discussion topics and objectives for Operator Engagement Talks with partner nation air force.

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

2.2.7. Represents and supports USAF operational matters during international engagement forums as requested by major commands, numbered air forces, and component numbered air forces with regional responsibilities.

2.2.8. Obtains approval from and provides an accounting of Official Representation Funds to SAF/AA used for Operator Engagement Talks in accordance with DoDI 7250.13, HAF MD 1-6, AFI 65-603, and HOI 65-3.

2.2.9. Coordinates with CSAF Political Advisor (POLAD), U.S. 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 to Operator Engagement Talks delegations and other USAF personnel engaged in planning and executing the Operator Engagement Talks.

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

2.2.9.3. Facilitate country clearance requests.

2.3. Headquarters Air Force Offices :

2.3.1. Support Operator Engagement Talks periodic evaluation and country selection process with subject matter expertise.

2.3.2. Support execution of the Operator Engagement Talks with regional and functional expertise and recommendations for meeting objectives and discussion topics.

2.3.3. 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.

2.3.4. Provide subject matter expertise to assist and resolve action items that result from the Operator Engagement Talks.

2.3.5. Provide delegation guidance to USAF personnel involved in planning and executing the Operator Engagement Talks.

2.4. Air Force Major Command Commanders, Numbered Air Force Commanders, and Component Numbered Air Force Commanders:

2.4.1. Support Operator Engagement Talks periodic evaluation with country nominations and supporting justification ([Attachment 3](#)). **Note:** Only applies to component numbered air forces with regional responsibilities.

2.4.2. Support the execution of the Operator Engagement Talks with regional and functional expertise, recommend objectives, discussion topics, subject matter experts, and nominate representatives for Operator Engagement Talks participation.

2.4.2.1. When requested, host Operator Engagement Talks delegations at major command owned bases.

2.4.2.2. When requested, provide logistical, protocol, communication, and other support to Operator Engagement Talks delegations.

2.4.3. Provide subject matter expertise to assist and resolve action items following an Operator Engagement Talks.

2.4.4. Provide AF/A3 with information about major command (MAJCOM) participation in international forums/events that could enhance future Operator Engagement Talks planning and execution and with summaries of international forums/events/action items in preparation for future Operator Engagement Talks.

Chapter 3

PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

3.1. Structure.

3.1.1. An Operator Engagement Talk is typically held every 18-24 months with a partner nation; however, frequency of Operator Engagement Talks is flexible. Factors that may dictate a different frequency include the maturity of the relationship, HAF resources, partner nation capabilities, partner nation input, relationship between partner nation and major command/component numbered air force/numbered air force, type and frequency of other engagement venues, and partner nation capacity. Conducting major command/component numbered air force/numbered air force level engagements between Operator Engagement Talks is a consideration for Operator Engagement Talks intervals exceeding 24 months.

3.1.2. Location and responsibility for hosting the Operator Engagement Talks alternates every other session between USAF and the partner nation.

3.1.3. The first Operator Engagement Talks with a newly selected country will be hosted in the United States by the AF/A3 or designee.

3.1.4. Where feasible, hold Operator Engagement Talks in conjunction with other USAF forums as a separate working group to obtain synergy and reduce costs. Air Senior National Representative Talks, between USAF and Royal Australian Air Force is an example, as it encompasses several different functions (A3, A5, A9) within the same forum.

3.1.5. The typical Operator Engagement Talk is a 1-2 day event that includes briefings, discussions, hosted dinners, and receptions (subject to availability of funds).

3.1.6. The typical USAF delegation composition includes: Co-chair-A3 or designated general officer; senior level major command/component numbered air force/numbered air force representative with authority to speak on behalf of their command; AF/A3OE representatives to provide execution oversight, capture minutes and track action items;; subject matter experts/briefers as appropriate; SAF/IA regional or country desk officer; air attaché, other embassy representatives, and other specialists or stakeholders, as deemed necessary to support Operator Engagement Talks objectives. The partner nation delegation will be of similar composition. USAF personnel will be limited to those who are vital to a successful Operational Engagement Talk to limit expenses and prevent overwhelming the partner nation.

3.2. Management, Planning, and Execution. The office of Operator Engagement Talks (AF/A3OE) performs day-to-day management and administration of Operator Engagement Talks on behalf of the AF/A3. AF/A3OE will:

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

3.2.2. Evaluate recommendations for adding partner nations as new participants in Operator Engagement Talks based on criteria listed in [Attachment 2](#).

3.2.3. 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 Operator Engagement Talks.

- 3.2.4. Task HAF organizations and MAJCOMs with action items and track their resolution.
- 3.2.5. 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 Operator Engagement Talks.
- 3.2.6. Solicit inputs from the DoD, USAF, and other applicable agencies for topics to be discussed with the partner nation and request their subject matter experts attend and support the Operator Engagement Talks. Request discussion topics, abstracts, and briefings from subject matter experts selected to brief topics and ensure they have been approved for foreign disclosure.
- 3.2.7. Finalize an agenda and itinerary for the Operator Engagement Talks with the partner nation.
- 3.2.8. Organize and attend Operator Engagement Talks. The AF/A3 operational budget will be used to fund travel for the AF/A3 members. Other USAF attendees are normally unit-funded.
- 3.2.9. Funding for extending official courtesies to the partner nation, to include hosted meals and a reception, is governed by DoDI 7250.13, HAF MD 1-6, AFI 65-603, and HOI 65-3. Funding requests will be staffed through SAF/AAR for approval.
- 3.2.10. In coordination with the partner nation, develop minutes of the Operator Engagement Talks for the co-chairs' signature and distribute approved minutes to meeting attendees and other stakeholders (i.e. MAJCOMs, NAFs).
- 3.2.11. Capture and record all mutually agreed upon Operator Engagement Talks action items for tasking and distribution to stakeholders (i.e. MAJCOMs, NAFs).
- 3.2.12. Coordinate with the partner nation's air attaché or designated point of contact responsible for the status of partner nation's action item(s) until all action items are complete.

MARK C. NOWLAND, Lt Gen, USAF
Deputy Chief of Staff, Operations

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

DoDI 7250.13, *Use of Appropriated Funds for Official Representation Purposes*, 30 June 2009
Incorporating Change 1, Effective 27 September 2017

DoD 5105.38-M, *Security Assistance Management Manual*, Updated as of 23 June 2018
(published by DSCA at <http://www.dsca.mil>)

DoD 7000.14-R, Volume 15, “*Security Cooperation Policy*”, June 2017

AFPD 16-1, *Security Cooperation*, 12 November 2015

HAF MD 1-6, *The Administrative Assistant to the Secretary of the Air Force*, 22 December 2014

AFI 16-201, *Air Force Foreign Disclosure and Technology Transfer Program*, 2 June 2015

AFI 33-360, *Publications and Forms Management*, 1 December 2015

AFI 51-701, *Negotiating, Concluding, Reporting, and Maintaining International Agreements*,
27 January 2016

AFI 65-603, *Official Representation Funds*, 8 August 2014

AFMAN 33-363, *Management of Records*, 1 March 2008, *Incorporating Change 2*,
AFGM2018-01, 30 May 2018

AFMAN 16-101, *International Affairs and Security Assistance Management*, 15 February 2011

HOI 16-1, *Secretary of the Air Force (SECAF)/Chief of Staff of the Air Force (CSAF)
Counterpart Visit Program (CPV) and Air Chiefs’ Symposium (ACS) Programs*, 25 April 2017

HOI 65-3, *Headquarters Air Force Official Representation Funds*, 12 October 2017

Guidance for Employment of the Force

Combatant Command Theater Campaign Plan

Component Campaign Support Plan

United States Air Force Security Cooperation Flight Plan

Adopted Forms

AF Form 847, *Recommendation for Change of Publication*

Abbreviations and Acronyms

AFI— Air Force Instruction

AFMAN— Air Force Manual

AFPD—Air Force Policy Directive

CONPLAN—Concept of Operation Plan

CSAF—Chief of Staff of the Air Force

DoD—Department of Defense

DoDI—Department of Defense Instruction

DRU—Direct Reporting Unit

FOA—Field Operating Agency

HAF—Headquarters Air Force, includes the Secretariat and the Air Staff

HOI—Headquarters Operating Instruction

MAJCOM—Major Command

MD—Mission Directive

OPLAN—Operations Plan

OSD/USD(P)—Undersecretary of Defense for Policy

POLAD—Political Advisor

SAF—Secretariat Offices within the HAF

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

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

TOR—Terms of Reference

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 U.S. shares common interests

Subject Matter Expert—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, it can also be known as a charter

Attachment 2

OPERATOR ENGAGEMENT TALKS' COUNTRY EVALUATION AND SELECTION

A2.1. AF/A3 will conduct periodic evaluations of the Operator Engagement Talks 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 U.S., 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 will solicit country nominations and supporting justification from major commands, numbered air forces, and component numbered air forces 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/Theater Campaign Plans/United States Air Force Security Cooperation Flight Plan; extent of major command, numbered air force, component numbered air force relationship; frequency, type, and quantity of existing engagement forums; USAF Country Plan objectives and priorities; strategic access and influence on U.S. global posture; and desire by nominee to become an Operator Engagement Talks partner nation.

A2.3. AF/A3 will evaluate major commands' , numbered air forces', and component numbered air forces' nominations for additions or removals based on strategic directives, USAF operational and policy equities, Operator Engagement Talks program criteria, and available resources. AF/A3 will submit a final recommendation to the CSAF for approval. AF/A3 may convene a board of O-6 representation from, at a minimum, the following directorates: AF/A3, SAF/IA, AF/A5/8, and AF/CC POLAD. Other HAF representatives to the board will be included as required. AF/A3OE will coordinate this discussion with SAF/HAF agencies, major commands, numbered air forces, and component numbered air forces.

A2.4. AF/A3 will prepare a formal CSAF letter to the newly selected partner nations and/or nations removed from the Operator Engagement Talks program. AF/A3 will also notify MAJCOMs of the countries selected to participate in the Operator Engagement Talks program.

Attachment 3

EXAMPLE NOMINATION LETTER

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

Figure A3.1. Example Nomination Letter.

TO: AF/A3

FROM: COMPONENT- MAJOR COMMAND or COMPONENT- NUMBERED AIR FORCE 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 Major Command/Numbered Air Force; strong, well-organized command structure; well-developed mil-to-mil relationships with both the U.S. and other regional militaries
- Currently has XX open Foreign Military Sales cases with U.S. government; SXXM program value
- High interest in Unmanned Aircraft Systems 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

A4.1. Use example Terms of Reference at Figure A4.1.

Figure A4.1. Example Terms of Reference.

COUNTRY NAME AIR FORCE/UNITED STATES AIR FORCE OPERATOR ENGAGEMENT TALKS TERMS OF REFERENCE	
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. The XAF 's senior representative is the (<i>duty title</i>). Delegations will be led by a general officer from the XAF Operations Department and the USAF Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations or his 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	
Operator Engagement Talks will be planned approximately every XX 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 nation hosting the talks will organize the Operator Engagement Talks. Since the meeting minutes will be written in English, the XAF may seek U.S. support when XAF is the host.	
Modifications to these Terms of Reference are to be approved by the XAF (<i>duty title</i>) and USAF Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations.	
USAF AF/A3, Lt Gen, USAF DCS, Operations Date:	XAF Name Duty Title Date: