

What is Plan 70? The Historical Origins of Plan 70



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Plan 70 was a pivotal 1970s initiative by the Air Force Logistics Command designed to transition from a fragmented, commodity-based support system to a customer-focused model. By establishing Maintenance and Supply Assistance Groups as decentralized "one-stop-shops" co-located with major operational commands, the program streamlined communication and provided a single focal point for logistics needs. While Plan 70 successfully built the communication pathways necessary to identify operational requirements and trigger depot surges during crises, it functioned primarily as a liaison service and lacked the formal authority to direct resources or set priorities. These limitations eventually led to the PACER COMMAND initiative and the 1983 creation of the Logistics Operations Center, a centralized command and control entity with global responsibility for weapon system readiness. Collectively, these evolutions represent a significant shift in Air Force logistics from a "mercantile" peacetime mindset toward an integrated, combat-oriented strategy focused on the needs of the warfighter.

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Often heard within Air Force Materiel Command is, “*what is Plan 70?*” A journey back in the Command’s past, looking at Air Force Logistics Command (AFLC) and Air Force Materiel Command (AFMC) collective past, a search uncovered Plan 70s past linking it to an AFLC initiative from the 1970s aimed at improving logistics support by creating a more direct link between the Air Logistics Centers (ALCs) and the operational units they supported.

There were some key aspects of Plan 70. First, before Plan 70, logistical support was often fragmented. A using command – Tactical Air Command (TAC), Strategic Air Command (SAC), Military Airlift Command (MAC) – would have to coordinate with multiple different points of contact within AFLC to get the parts and support they needed for their various weapon systems. With Plan 70, at its core, was the establishment of Maintenance and Supply Assistance Groups (MSAGs). These groups were essentially detachments from the ALCs that were co-located within the headquarters of three of the major commands – TAC, SAC, MAC. The MSAGs served as a “one-stop-shop” or a single focal point for the using command instead of having to contact multiple offices at different ALCs, the command could go directly to their assigned MSAG for all their logistics needs. The MSAG would then coordinate with the appropriate ALC and other AFLC entities to fulfill the request. By placing the logistics experts directly within the operational user, Plan 70 aimed to improve communication, foster a better understanding of the warfighter’s needs, and provide more responsive support. This was a significant evolution in AFLC’s organization structure and represented a move away from a purely commodity-based support system and towards a customer-focused model, acting as a precursor to later, more comprehensive system like the creation of the Logistics Operations Center (LOC) in 1983.

In the early 1980s, AFLC was operating under a structure that had been in place for decades that was largely organized around commodities and individual items, which was seen as inefficient and not well-suited for the demands of modern, complex weapon systems and potential wartime scenarios. The PACER COMMAND initiative in the early 1980s was a significant reorganization within AFLC that was the driving force behind the creation of the Logistics Operation Center. PACER COMMAND sought to address a few key issues within AFLC. First, the fragmented logistics where support for a single weapon system was spread across multiple locations, making it difficult to get a holistic view of the system’s readiness. Secondly, AFLC was seen as having a “mercantile” or peacetime focus on managing inventory and supply chains, rather than a “combat logistics” focus on ensuring that weapon systems were ready for war. Finally, there was no single organization with the authority and visibility to prioritize logistics based on the needs of the entire Air Force and its operational plans. The cornerstone of PACER COMMAND was the establishment of the Logistics Operation Center as it was seen as the centralized command and control center of AFLC Headquarters with the mission to oversee and manage logistics support for all manor weapon systems, designed to be the *operational* arm of AFLC.

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What was the differences between the MSAGs and Logistics Operations Center (LOC)?

Feature	Plan 70 (MSAGs)	Logistics Operations Center (LOC)
Organizational Structure	Detachments/Liaison Groups. The MSAGs were relatively small detachments from the Air Logistics Centers (ALCs). They were not a command entity.	A Major Subordinate Command. The LOC was a large, independent center with its own commander, making it a formal part of the AFLC command structure.
Scope of Responsibility	Customer-Specific. Each MSAG was focused on the needs of a single operational command (e.g., TAC, SAC). Its scope was limited to that customer.	AFLC-Wide. The LOC had a global, force-wide responsibility for managing logistics across <i>all</i> weapon systems and supporting <i>all</i> operational commands.
Authority	Coordination and Liaison. MSAGs acted as intermediaries. They could coordinate requests and advocate for their customer, but they did not have the authority to direct resources or set priorities for the ALCs.	Command and Control. The LOC was designed to have direct authority to set priorities, allocate resources, and direct the ALCs to solve logistics problems. This authority, however, was a major source of the "turf wars" it faced.
Physical Location	Decentralized. MSAGs were co-located with their customer commands at various bases (e.g., Langley AFB for TAC, Offutt AFB for SAC).	Centralized. The LOC was a single, large organization located at AFLC Headquarters at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio.
Primary Function	Improve Communication. The main goal was to be a responsive, single point of contact to simplify interactions between the depots and a specific operational command.	Integrate and Manage Logistics. The goal was to be a central brain for AFLC's operational logistics, assessing readiness, resolving shortfalls, and directing the entire logistics enterprise from a weapon-system perspective.

The most significant difference between the two rested in authority and scale. Plan 70 was a customer service initiative that placed MSAGs within the operational units to make it easier for them to get help, whereas the LOC was a full-fledged command and control organization intended to fundamentally shift the AFLC's focus from managing commodities to managing

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weapon system readiness on a global scale. The LOCs authority was greater and mission broader than the MSAGs ever was.

What Did Plan 70 Solve?

Plan 70's primary innovation was solving communication and coordination problems. Its focus was creating the MSAGs to act as a single point of contact for operation commands and streamlining the flow of communication where the operational commander no longer had to navigate the AFLC bureaucracy. Plan 70 was created to be a dedicated customer service hotline, ensuring that the customer's request was heard clearly and routed to the right place; however, it did not change how fast the factory could produce once it received the order.

The depot surge was another solution depending upon the industrial capacity problem. The focus there was the ability of the ALC to rapidly increase its output of repaired aircraft, engines, or components to meet wartime or emergency demands. Depot surge is the factory's ability to turn up production and the plan on how to run faster and longer when a crisis hits. But where is the link between Plan 70, or LOC, and depot surge?

The need is identified by the operational command, either via the Plan 70 MSAGs or LOC later, and the signal is then sent to the dedicate logistical channel (MSAGs/LOC). The request is validated by the command and then gives the order to the relevant depot to execute its pre-planned depot surge strategy.

In summary, Plan 70 built the communication pathways, while depot surge was the industrial capability that uses those pathways to respond to a crisis. Plan 70 ensured the "phone call" from the battlefield would be answered, and depot surge is the action plan that is executed once that call comes in.



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