

What is AFPAK Hands?

The Afghanistan Pakistan Hand (APH) program was established by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in 2009 to create greater continuity, focus and persistent engagement in Afghanistan and Pakistan. The APH program develops a cadre of experts who speak the local language, are culturally attuned, and focused on regional issues for an extended duration. APH personnel rotate between positions in-theater and out-of-theater that directly influence the U.S. strategy in the region. Although managed by the Joint Staff, this program produces experts that serve in designated chains of command, protecting unity of command while ensuring unity of effort.

What is the AME?

The AFPAK Hands Management Element (AME) is a part of the Pakistan Afghanistan Coordination Cell (PACC) and is charged with managing the APH program. It is responsible for the assignment, training, deploying and re-deploying the APHs as they move through their tour. There is a training element that watches over the training that is required (language, Cultural, Counter Insurgency and the respective services combat skills) and makes sure those gates are met. There is also a personnel element that watches over all of the administrative tasks that are associated with the APHs (records, orders, paperwork tracking, etc.). Additionally, an AME in theater attached to USFOR-A is responsible for managing all Hands who are currently deployed.

How do I apply to the AFPAK Hands Program?

Contact your Branch Manager, Detailer, Monitor, or Assignment Officer

How long is the AFPAK Hands assignment?

Currently:

Afghanistan bound Hands:

Entering program as O-5 and below:

Approximately 44 month commitment to program

Includes a 12 month and a 10 month deployment

Approximately 17.5 months between deployments

Entering program as O-6s:

Approximately 30 month commitment to program

Single 12 month deployment followed by 12 month Out Of Theater (OOT) tour

Pakistan bound Hands (all ranks):

Approximately 41 month commitment to program

Includes two 12 month deployments

12 months between deployments.

When will I receive information about my billet?

Upon joining the program, you will receive an email from your service representative containing your billet title, job description and the Point of Contact (POC) of the Hand you will relieve in theater. You will also receive attached information on the Culture Seminar, Counter Insurgency (COIN) Seminar, and Defense Language Institute (DLI) training.

How will an AFPAK Hands assignment affect my career?

Each Service has instituted policy and procedures to ensure that Hands meet each of their respective career/professional milestones and that promotion boards recognize the time a Hand may spend outside the normal career path.

What Out of Theater (OOT) assignments are available?

Personnel from all services can be placed in Washington D.C. with Afghanistan Pakistan Task Force-Defense Intelligence Agency (APTF_DIA), United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Pakistan Afghanistan Coordination Cell (PACC), Office of Secretary of Defense (Policy) (OSD(P)), or Masters Degree programs, and all personnel except Marines can be placed in Tampa Florida with United States Central Command (CENTCOM) or Special Operations Command (SOCOM). Additionally, Air Force personnel may be stationed at Hurlburt Field in Florida, Army personnel at Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania, Marines at Quantico, Virginia, and Army Special Operations Forces at Fort. Bragg, North Carolina.

What educational opportunities are open to AFPAK Hands personnel?

For those Hands stationed in the Washington DC hub for their out of theater tour will have graduate education opportunities. Hands are eligible to attend their services' Intermediate Level Education (ILE) and Professional Military Education (PME) courses between their deployments. Army officers of rank O-4 can attend a 4 month Joint Professional Military Education phase 1 (JPME1) Core Course at Fort Belvoir followed by a Graduate Certificate Program at College of International Security Affairs/National Defense University (CISA/NDU) in order to get their JPME1 credit. Additionally, slots have been set aside at the National Defense Intelligence College (NDIC) and CISA for Hands of rank O-3 through O-5 to receive their Masters in strategic studies or strategic intelligence. Slots have also been set aside for Hands of rank O-5 and O-6 to attend the National War College (NWC) or Industrial College of the Armed Forces (ICAF).

Does an AFPAK Hands tour count towards Joint Experience Credit?

Yes, APH personnel are eligible for joint tour credit. Any Hand who completes 365 days in an APH billet in theater can receive 36 points toward joint credit. Those hands serving less than 12 months will earn fewer points towards the joint credit. Hands that complete

multiple in theater tours that total 12 months will accumulate the required 36 points of joint credit. This credit does not need to be review by JQS Experience Review Panel.

Are there any gender restrictions to participation in the program?

There are no restrictions on gender for the AFPAK Hands program; however there are some gender specific billets.

Who is eligible to join the AFPAK Hands program?

Hands are drawn from a mix of services, ratings and professions, with past Hands including specialists in engineering, medicine, intelligence, contracting, combat operations and numerous other areas. Those applying to the Hands program should be willing to dedicate their energies towards studying COIN doctrine, languages and culture, and desire to use these skills to interact with local people and leaders. Prior experience in the region, COIN background, or language skills are desired in applicants, but are not required.

The majority of billets is coded for officers of the rank O-3 to O-6, but there also slots for warrant officers, enlisted personnel of rank E-6 to E-8, and civilians of pay-grade GS12 to GS15.

How many AFPAK Hands are there?

There are currently three cohorts of approximately 250 hands. The cohorts rotate between in theater billets, out of theater billets and those hands in training.

Will there be Language training involved?

All AFPAK Hands will receive 4 months of language training through the Defense Language Institute. Training will be in Dari, Pashto, or Urdu. Additional language refresher training is provided throughout the tour. Of the students who have taken language training, 82% have achieved a language score of 1/1 or higher.

Can Hands receive Foreign Language Incentive Pay?

Each branch determines how Incentive Pay is awarded. For the Navy, Marine Corps and Air Force, anyone with a proficiency of 1/1 in Dari, Pashto, and Urdu is eligible. Army personnel need a score of 2/2 to receive Incentive Pay.

What other training will Hands receive?

In addition to language training, AFPAK Hands will receive cultural training, COIN training and service specific combat skills training.

Can my family be co-located with me?

During the OOT period AFPAK Hands will have the options of PCSing their families to CONUS home bases once identified.

Who do I belong to, the unit or the AFPAK Hands Program?

The service member belongs to their unit of assignment for all administrative matters.

Do I in-process the AME or my unit?

Service members will in-process with their unit of assignment. AME is a service program and is not considered a unit/organization. (For individuals who are assigned to the Pentagon)

Who is responsible for generating the Temporary Change of Station (TCS) orders?

The service members unit of assignment is responsible for producing the TCS orders.