

AIR WAR COLLEGE

AIR UNIVERSITY

IMPROVED AF SQUADRON COMMAND STRUCTURE
FOR
LEADERSHIP, ACCOUNTABILITY, AND EFFICIENCY

by

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Biography

Lieutenant Colonel Dawn Lancaster is currently attending Air War College in residence at Maxwell AFB, AL. She graduated US Air Force Academy in 1993 with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Biology and earned a Master's of Science Degree in Strategic Leadership from the AF Institute of Technology in 2007.

Lieutenant Colonel Lancaster began her career as an administrative officer serving as a section commander, protocol officer, and executive officer. She cross-trained into Services in 1997 and has served in various assignments as a Combat Support Flight Commander, Headquarters Readiness Officer, Deputy Services Director, and Squadron Commander, both in-garrison and deployed. Her command experience includes Commander, 375th Services Squadron, Scott Air Force Base, Illinois where she led 600 military, civilian and contract personnel in providing morale, welfare, and quality of life programs to the base community. Most recently, Lt Col Lancaster served as Commander, 86th Services Squadron, Ramstein Air Base, Germany, one of the largest squadrons in the Air Force. She provided oversight of over 1,900 military, appropriated fund and non-appropriated fund civilian personnel on five installations with annual non-appropriated program revenues exceeding \$40 million. She ensured fitness, subsistence, lodging, mortuary, honor guard, mobility, child development and youth activities, and leisure-time facilities and programs that contributed to readiness and esprit de corps for over 53,000 personnel in the Kaiserslautern Military Community.

Introduction

Throughout its history, the U.S. Air Force has periodically redesigned organizational structures. Rationale for these efforts varied from mission changes as well as manpower and resource reductions, but largely stemmed from efforts to improve efficiencies and mission performance. Over the last decade, several organizations and career fields have reorganized, realigned, or merged, resulting in squadrons encompassing greater responsibility and complexity. Since squadron commanders have legal responsibility for the mission and resources,¹ senior leadership and the American people should reasonably expect them to be held accountable for their organizations' actions. Therefore, the squadron must be properly structured for manageable oversight to ensure justified accountability. The purpose of this paper is to analyze the adverse impacts inappropriate unit structure, size, and scope of responsibility have on squadron commanders' abilities to successfully lead personnel and accomplish their missions. It will also provide recommendations within current AF structure to improve unit and leadership effectiveness and efficiencies.

The AF must be organized to use resources effectively and efficiently. The principal characteristics desired in AF organizations are mission orientation, unambiguous command, decentralization, agility, flexibility, simplicity, and standardization.² Current AF guidance and organizational configurations allow exceedingly large, multi-functioned squadrons without the proper command structure necessary to embody these characteristics. Increased unit size, additional functions, and greater scope of responsibility without the proper organizational and command support structure do not enable commanders to effectively and efficiently execute the mission and lead squadrons.

For direct supervisory or oversight purposes, civilian corporations and the Department of Defense respectively focus on span of control. The concept of span of control was developed in 1922 by Sir Ian Hamilton based on the assumption that managers have finite amounts of time, energy, and attention to devote to their jobs. Research showed that the amount of time managers spent on supervision increased geometrically as the managers' span of control became larger.³ This research led to the accepted “fundamental concept of management that a manager can effectively manage only a limited number of subordinates under his or her direct control.”⁴

By definition, larger squadrons do not directly correlate into a larger span of control for their commanders because they do not directly supervise every unit member. However, one can argue that due to military commanders' unusual responsibilities and administrative requirements for each member, the concept of span of control does directly relate because the commanders' responsibilities and amount of time spent on personnel increase as squadron size grows. As a two-time squadron commander with 600 personnel and 1900 personnel respectively, I experienced first-hand the increased workload and amount of time additional members required. Although commanders do not directly supervise every squadron member, they are responsible for the morale, welfare, and discipline of every member. As the unit's command authority, squadron commanders are engaged in more personnel and supervisory type issues than typical civilian managers. Finally, and most importantly, squadron commanders are held accountable not only for the mission but for the actions of every member. For purposes of clarity in regards to squadron size impact on commanders, this paper terms this concept “span of command.”

This paper will specifically address current AF squadron organization. For many commanders, it results in a large span of command as well as very complex, multi-functional units. This paper will speak to the complexity of placing multiple functions within a single

organization and the impact it has on squadron commanders' abilities to successfully lead their squadron while effectively managing the mission for which they are held accountable. Finally, this paper will illustrate how providing limited commander authority to flight commanders will increase efficiency and accountability.

Organization

Successful review of AF squadron organization and command structure requires a comparative analysis of sister service squadron level organizations. This section will describe various aspects of AF squadron organization and similar Army, Marine, and Navy command level structures.

AF Squadron Organization

The squadron is the smallest AF unit that has both tactical and administrative duties. Squadrons typically consist of two or more flights and vary in size according to responsibility.⁵ Air Force Instruction (AFI) 38-101, *Air Force Organization*, describes a squadron as having a substantive mission of its own that warrants organization as a separate unit based on factors like unity of command, functional grouping, and administrative control, balanced with efficient use of resources.⁶ The AFI prioritizes the mission over other factors by stipulating “do not fragment a capability into multiple squadrons when a single squadron provides a parent wing or group commander the best approach in terms of a coordinated, focused capability under single direction.”⁷

In extreme cases when squadron population exceeds 700 manpower authorizations, the AF allows commands to establish two squadrons;⁸ however, AFI 38-101 does not clarify that these only include appropriated fund positions. It does not calculate full or part-time non-appropriated personnel in the authorization accounting, despite the fact these employees still

require squadron commanders' oversight and management similar to full-time employees. Additionally, the AF equates three contractors for only one position when tabulating manpower authorizations in a squadron population. In accordance with the AFI, "the Contract Manyear Equivalent portion counts for no more than 30 percent of the adjusted population used to meet unit size requirements."⁹ As a result, the scope of responsibility and number of personnel in many squadrons is actually greater than accounted for as manpower authorizations on unit manning documents. The Ramstein Services Squadron demonstrates a gross example of this practice. The AF Manpower Agency credited the squadron with 752 personnel; however, in actuality there were approximately 2,000 employees.

An AF squadron is usually commanded by a field grade officer, either a major (O-4) or lieutenant colonel (O-5). In a review of the CY11 Consolidated Support Squadron Command Release Assignment, 257 O-4s and 259 O-5s were selected for command. Like all operational squadrons, three types of squadrons on the support list--materiel leader, training, and recruiting squadrons, were designated exclusively for O-5s, constituting 68 positions. Therefore, the majority of O-4 support squadron commanders are in logistics, maintenance, and base support type organizations.¹⁰ This is interesting because base support squadrons are typically the larger units on an installation. Furthermore, the AF is the only service that authorizes a large preponderance of O-4s to command at the squadron level. It is also important to note that the security forces and contracting career fields selected a total of six captains for squadron command, which will be addressed later in the paper.

In addition to the commander, a squadron with 75 or more military authorizations is authorized a first sergeant. Prior to 2006, squadrons were also authorized orderly rooms; however, as a result of Program Budget Decision (PBD) 720 manpower reductions in 2006, all

personnel and administrative Air Force Specialty Code authorizations were removed from the squadrons, increasing the workload for remaining personnel and commanders.

Army Battalion Organization

In comparison to an AF squadron, the first level of command authorized a field grade officer in the Army is a battalion. In accordance with Army Publication 10-1, *Organization of the United States Army*, a battalion is normally commanded by an O-5 and is composed of four to six companies totaling 300-1000 soldiers.¹¹ Each battalion has a first sergeant and an administrative section for support. In contrast to an AF squadron, however, an Army battalion is not the first tactical level with Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) command authority. The company, which is basically equivalent to an AF flight, is the basic unit with both tactical and administrative duties.¹² A company comprises 62-190 soldiers, usually commanded by a captain with a first sergeant as the commander's principal non-commissioned assistant.¹³ Unlike AF flight commanders who do not have non-judicial punishment (NJP) authority over members, company commanders are given limited UCMJ command authority. As explained by an Army legal officer, company commanders are only going to be dealing with minor offenses. Jurisdiction over certain types of offenses such as sexual assaults and jurisdiction of E-8s and above will be withheld from company commanders.¹⁴ By providing command responsibility at the appropriate company level, many of the administrative responsibilities such as certain UCMJ actions and performance reports are managed at the company level, allowing battalion commanders to focus on the mission and troops while providing company commanders the authority to support their responsibility as well as crucial leadership development.

Marine Corps Battalion Organization

Like the Army, the battalion is the first level of command authorized a field grade officer in the Marine Corps.¹⁵ Unlike the Army and Air Force, the Marines do not specify any unit's size. The battalion or company size depends primarily upon the unit type and mission.¹⁶

The Marine Corps, like the Army, endorses authority down to the company commander level. Marine battalions are composed of companies led by company grade officers who have tactical and administrative command. Company commanders have limited NJP authority for minor infractions, and they “have a first sergeant with experience and judgment to assist in this leadership task.”¹⁷ As explained by a senior Marine leader, “most battalion commanders prescribe specific infractions for which the offending Marine's case will be forwarded to them.”¹⁸ As stated by a Marine Judge Advocate General, “The rank of the commander isn't the deciding factor—it's about command, which means that an O-2/O-3 company commander has non-judicial punishment authority.”¹⁹ “Delegating this authority to the company level also takes another rock out of the battalion commander's pack. He does not have time to deal with minor infractions.”²⁰

Navy Ship Organization

The Navy has one commander per ship and does not authorize UCMJ authority lower, consistent with the AF. It is important to consider that unlike some AF squadrons which have missions and people spread throughout an installation, the ship is confined and commanders live on the ship when at sea, providing them more in-depth oversight into the operation and personnel. Although OPNAVINST 3120.32C, *Standard Organizations and Regulations of the U.S. Navy*, does not establish numerical manpower thresholds for command rank commensurate with the size of the unit, a thorough review of all ships within the Navy inventory and their

assigned commander resulted in the following standards: ships with less than 360 personnel are commanded by O-5s; ships with at least 360 crewmembers are commanded by O-6s.²¹

Additionally, naval commanders have a field grade executive officer and complete administrative staff. The executive officer is primarily responsible under the commander for the organization, performance of duty, and good order and discipline of the entire command. This organizational structure allows the commander to focus on the primary mission and not be encumbered by administrative paperwork. In addition, for leadership development and continuity, Navy officers selected for 36-month command tours commonly spend the first 18 months as executive officer in the unit they will eventually command,²² gaining more knowledge about the specific mission and sailors.

Organization Summary

As described above, there are stark differences in command opportunities and responsibilities in each service. AF squadrons commanded by field grade officers as the single command authority can be as large as 700 personnel. The Army and Marines endorse command authority down to company commanders for better oversight and leadership development. The Navy has one commander per ship; however it appropriately limits the mission and size of the ship's crew an O-5 can command. Additionally, unlike the AF, the Navy, Army and Marines provide commanders administrative staffs required to properly manage daily organizational requirements.

Squadron Commander Responsibility and Accountability

“We expect our commanders to be more than the head of a unit; we expect them to be leaders and to be accountable for mission performance.”²³—General John Michael Loh

To understand the importance unit structure, size, and scope of responsibility have on commanders' abilities to lead unit personnel and oversee the mission, one must first comprehend

squadron commanders' extensive responsibilities. "The concept of command carries a dual function: legal authority over people, including power to discipline and legal responsibility for the mission and resources. Command is exercised by virtue of the office and the special assignment of officers holding military grades who are eligible by law to command."²⁴

Commanders assume full responsibility to lead personnel in accomplishing the unit's mission; however, they must also understand the tasks at hand and maximize resources while minimizing the cost of people, materiel, and money to accomplish their mission.²⁵

As is most clearly stated by Navy OPNAVINST 3120.32C, *Standard Organization and Regulations of the U.S. Navy*, but understood by commanders in all services, command also "includes responsibility for promoting the health, welfare, morale, effectiveness, and discipline of assigned personnel."²⁶ As such, "commanders must be ready to hold themselves and their people accountable."²⁷ Accordingly, commanders must be both leaders and managers. "Leadership is about people, management is about things. Successful commanders understand that they are equally responsible for both...and balance their time between leadership and management responsibilities"²⁸ Nevertheless, there is only so much time in a day and as span of command and mission responsibility increase, commanders are forced to spend less time on either the mission or personnel. As a result, commanders' performance as leaders and managers is not optimum.

Impacts of Larger, More Complex Organization Structure

*"The Defense Department, with its excessive layers of management, suffers because those at the top who make decisions are generally isolated from their subordinates, who have the first-hand knowledge."*²⁹—Admiral Hyman G. Rickover

As stated by Dr. W. Edwards Deming, "A system must be managed. The bigger the system, the more difficult it is to manage it for optimization."³⁰ In an effort to make

organizations and processes more efficient and maximize use of available resources over the last two decades, the AF has restructured them repeatedly. Some reorganization efforts consisted of consolidating personnel performing various functions from different agencies or even merging entire squadrons. These restructuring initiatives provided numerous efficiencies; however, they also created complex units with multiple goals and missions for commanders as well as more personnel to lead. “The squadron’s primary mission needs to be a commander’s number one priority, since many factors affect a unit’s ability to perform its mission effectively.”³¹

Unfortunately, when reorganizing units, the AF did not address options to better manage squadron personnel and administrative issues, degrading the squadron commander’s ability to effectively oversee the mission. This section of the paper will show that increased organization complexity and size makes this priority more difficult to achieve.

An effective and efficient organization must minimize both within sub-group variability and between sub-group variability.³² For the AF, this means squadrons must be organized across a wing to minimize inconsistency within units as well as across them. A study by Dewar and Simet found that “When an entire organization becomes complex, the executive span grows large, reflecting a need for top level coordination of this diversity.”³³ In relation to AF squadrons with multiple functions and as a result multiple goals, a study of nearly 600 public bureaucracies found evidence “that public bureaucracies are typically faced with multiple goals creating potential conflicts due to structural choices.”³⁴ This conclusion is supported by Worthy who “contends narrower spans of control are generally more appropriate in government due to government’s multiple and conflicting goals and due to the complex nature of accountability in government.”³⁵ As explained in the previous section, the Army and Marines achieve narrower spans of control through company commanders.

According to Colonel Goldfein, “As the lead mission manager, commanders must get down deep enough into the organization to understand the key processes required to accomplish the mission. Commanders cannot solve problems if they do not understand how their people do their jobs.”³⁶ At some point, the initiative to add additional functions into squadrons over-tasks commanders and specifically prohibits their ability to understand the processes required to accomplish their mission, detrimentally impacting their accountability and unit performance. For optimum mission effectiveness and reasonable commander accountability, the AF must institute initiatives to promote efficiencies while providing commanders controllable span of command.

Administrative Workload

In addition to the daily oversight and leadership responsibilities squadron commanders are expected to accomplish, the elimination of orderly rooms from their organizations imposed significant administrative burdens on unit personnel and commanders. The workload, such as performance reports and administrative requirements, once shouldered by dedicated personnel assigned to each unit must now be accomplished by other unit personnel and commanders. These time intensive requirements directly detract from the squadron’s primary mission. In response to competing requirements, commanders utilize Airmen “out of hide” for administrative staff. This utilization negatively impacts Airmen’s core job training and most importantly reduces the work section’s available manpower to perform primary tasks, detrimentally impacting the mission. Moreover, Airmen employed from within the squadron are untrained on administrative functions and require additional commander oversight, therefore resulting in additional inefficiencies.

AF guidance does allow commanders of large units (squadron or above with over 250 military personnel authorized) to delegate administrative control of all assigned members to a unit administration function by appointing a squadron section commander on special orders.³⁷ Unfortunately, this option also requires a commander to utilize a company grade officer “out of hide.” This officer with NJP authority is outside of the daily chain of command and is for administrative purposes only. Furthermore, the AFI states the squadron section commander’s NJP may be withheld by superior competent authority.³⁸ As a second lieutenant, I was assigned as section commander for a 700-person maintenance squadron and had the authority to close out performance reports and issue non-judicial punishment for infractions. However, I was not in their daily mission chain of command and did not have oversight of job performance, yet I had more command authority than did the higher ranking, more experienced flight commanders.

Overall, the additional administrative responsibilities imposed by PBD 720 strains commanders’ ability to effectively oversee people and missions. Even the best commanders experience degraded effectiveness when they spend more time managing administrative issues and less time focusing on their vision, mission and long-term goals.

Impact on Organization’s Morale and Welfare

First and foremost, the greatest impact a large, overextended span of command can have on an organization is the limited amount of time a commander can allocate to unit members. As General Fogleman, stated “To become successful leaders, we must first learn that no matter how good the technology or how shiny the equipment, people to people relations get things done in our organizations.”³⁹ New commanders are encouraged to visit every work center and every shift within the first 30 days of command and to keep visits regular.⁴⁰ I fully concur with this

direction; however, current AF structure that allows for large squadrons with extensive sections and functions impedes this recurring practice.⁴¹

Face to face time with commanders and a tight organization environment contribute to Airmen's morale and sense of belonging. They need and deserve commanders' time to ensure strong morale and welfare as well as the resources required to accomplish the mission.

Unfortunately, units with large span of command, complex functions, and several hundred personnel overextend squadron commanders' abilities to provide consistent focus and attention to all personnel.

Former Commanders' Leadership Perspectives

In order to attain a brief indication of the benefits limited command authority at lower levels provides to large complex organizations, various Army, Marine and AF commanders provided comments. The officers represent different career fields that include field artillery, armored reconnaissance, and aviation. As company commanders, their unit sizes ranged from 38 to 275 members while as battalion or squadron commanders, their organizations ranged from 300 to 650 personnel.

All Army and Marine members expressed how important company command was in their overall leadership development and preparation to lead larger battalions. When asked how company level command prepared her for battalion command, LTC Gene Meredith stated, "It was absolutely critical. The leadership training as a battery commander was irreplaceable in preparation for battalion command. It not only taught me my job but how to lead my subordinate battery commanders."⁴²

More directly to the scope of the paper, when battalion commanders were asked how company commanders aided in regards to overall responsibility of the mission and troops, every

individual stated it was essential. As COL Todd Keitron explained from his experience, “Company commanders ensured efficiency of orders for training and mission execution. They allowed issues to be solved at the proper level more rapidly given the number of soldiers in a battalion sized organization.”⁴³ Lt Col John Carroll specifically addressed the administrative and NJP issues handled by his commanders: “Because my company commanders ran company level non-judicial punishment, I was not overwhelmed with administrative issues.”⁴⁴ LTC Meredith declared, “With 650 soldiers it would be impossible to effectively command without company commanders.”

Furthermore, when asked if the AF should consider authorizing flight commanders limited command authority similar to the Army and Marines, all overwhelmingly agreed. COL Wade Doenges put it most eloquently by stating, “The only way to truly know if an officer is capable of leading and taking care of their people is to give them that responsibility. The earlier they get the chance to be in charge, the better senior leaders they will be.”⁴⁵

Finally, Lt Col Craig Theisen, summed up the current AF command structure quite well when he commented, “Having authority at higher levels makes it very difficult for Airmen to build their own leadership. Essentially, we have squadron commanders acting in roles that should be taken care of at flight level. This creates an organization that relies too strongly on the focus and actions of a very small number of leaders, rather than a dynamic organization full of leaders at all levels able to flex and adjust automatically to changing conditions.” Although the limits of this paper allowed only a few individuals to be consulted, the critical importance and benefits of empowered company commanders for mission and leadership in the Army and Marines is clear. The AF should consider doing the same for flight commanders and provide them limited UCMJ command authority.

Recommendations

Over the past several decades the AF has downsized and as a result, frequently reorganized to maximize resources and manpower. These efforts have resulted in large, complex organizations with tremendous span of command; however, at no point has policy addressed this issue or changed the level of command to ensure proper mission oversight and justifiable accountability. Like the Navy, the AF could set field grade command thresholds at 350 personnel per squadron. Additionally, as other services have done, the AF could limit squadron command level opportunity to O-5s. Both of these options, however, would potentially require additional personnel and O-5 billets which may not be feasible in today's constrained environment. The following recommendations are based on the research presented in this paper and the assumption that AF manpower billets are fixed.

Authorize Flight Commanders UCMJ Authority

Current Air Force organizational structure only gives command authority down to squadron commanders.⁴⁶ AF senior leadership consistently emphasizes the importance of leadership development. Leadership development requires opportunities throughout officers' careers that provide the experiences needed for future roles with increased responsibilities.⁴⁷ Despite this, AF officers typically do not command until they are field grade officers, which is in great contrast to the Army and Marines. These services provide officers opportunities to lead and grow into more complex leadership positions through experience, responsibility, and accountability. The AF should, like the Marines and Army, authorize flight commanders limited UCMJ authority. This change not only provides officers earlier leadership opportunities, but helps provide commanders manageable span of command, allowing them to focus on the mission and Airmen rather than daily administrative requirements.

The precedence for authorizing levels below squadron commanders, including company grade officers, UCMJ authority has already been set with the authorizations for section commanders and certain career fields currently selecting captains as squadron commanders. As a senior Marine officer stated when briefed on the practice of section commanders, “an officer separate from the rest of the chain of command who is set aside to manage discipline and performance reports does not make sense.”⁴⁸ Authorizing flight commanders limited UCMJ authority instead of establishing section commanders provides a better option. Flight commanders typically have more leadership and job experience than officers detailed as section commanders. Additionally, this decision does not remove an officer from a mission position. Also, most administrative work signed off by commanders, such as performance reports, is already coordinated through flight commanders. Workload would actually be reduced with flight commanders closing out reports, eliminating the bureaucratic coordination process. Most importantly, flight commanders would be responsible and accountable for their flight’s mission and people.

Typically, larger squadrons in a wing are base support and maintenance organizations as opposed to operational flying units. Furthermore, these organizations possess mostly enlisted and civilian personnel. Habitually, enlisted Airmen require more involvement from a commander for administrative issues such as discipline, family issues, and morale and welfare. In 2010, the AF administered 6,709 Article 15s. Of those, 6545 (97.5%) were issued to enlisted personnel.⁴⁹ In accordance with the UCMJ, a company grade officer can administer Article 15s to MSgt and below. Therefore, flight commanders could have processed 6536 (97.3%) of the Article 15s in 2010.

The Army and Marines provide first sergeants to company commanders as their principal non-commissioned assistants. AF flight commanders would also require guidance for UCMJ issues; however, based on this paper's assumption of fixed billets, each flight would not be given a first sergeant. The policy authorizing squadrons with 75 or more military positions a first sergeant would not change. The squadron first sergeant who already has responsibility for all enlisted members in the squadron would maintain that responsibility. Squadron first sergeants would remain assigned to squadron commanders but would advise individual flight commanders on disciplinary issues, individual performance reports and so forth as they do now. This concept provides a three-fold benefit. First, it does not increase manpower requirements. Second, it provides flight commanders the guidance and assistance needed in dealing with personnel issues. Finally, it provides consistency throughout the squadron, ensures the commander's intent is fulfilled, and helps to keep the commander abreast of morale and welfare issues throughout the squadron.

Authorizing flight commanders command authority would incur training requirements to ensure proper implementation. Similar to the training AF squadron commanders receive prior to assuming command, flight commanders would require additional training on items such as UCMJ actions, base support agencies, and administrative requirements. Army company commanders attend a one-week course at their installation that entails briefings by base agencies and leadership.⁵⁰ The AF could adopt a similar approach or consider options to incorporate additional training within existing professional military education courses. Despite the course of action selected, the AF would incur some costs; however, the benefits of leadership development and squadron efficiencies undoubtedly outweigh the costs as the Army and Marine company commander structure demonstrates.

To successfully prepare leaders for larger commands and joint leadership roles, the AF must reassess how it develops officers. As with squadron commanders, not every flight commander will be successful. Instances will occur when squadron commanders have to further limit a flight commander's UCMJ authority or even relieve a flight commander of duty; however, providing officers manageable command opportunity earlier in their career is a smart decision. Authorizing flight commanders limited UCMJ authority provides them a greater leadership role and more development opportunities while reducing squadron commanders' administrative workload, allowing them to focus on both the mission and the people. As stated by Col Kim Toney, USSOUTHCOM J-1, "I agree 100% with standardizing UCMJ command opportunities...it is time we recognize our leaders for their real responsibilities."⁵¹

Evaluate and Establish Squadron Size Parameters

In contrast to setting large thresholds allowing multiple squadrons of like capability only in extreme cases of large population size, recently updated AF guidance stipulates a minimum of only 35 personnel is required to establish a squadron. To efficiently utilize field grade positions, the Air Force should reevaluate minimum squadron size parameters. As stated previously, the minimum number of personnel in an Army battalion normally commanded by an O-5 is 300 soldiers, which is in great contrast to the Air Force's minimum requirement of only 35 personnel.⁵²

Today's constrained resource environment requires the effective application of every field grade commander billet and lack of AF guidance leads to inefficient use. Furthermore, the expansive squadron size variations that exist today bring into question the AF expectation for standards of responsibility and accountability. Holding squadron commanders of 700 personnel as accountable as commanders of the same rank with only 38 personnel defies logic. The AF

needs to do analysis to determine the minimum number of personnel a squadron should possess. This effort will also require some reorganization of individual units; however, it will enable efficient use of field grade billets and potentially lead to additional mission efficiencies.

Track and Analyze Reasons All Squadron Commanders are Relieved of Command

The AF currently does not track reasons squadron commanders are relieved of command.⁵³ Some career fields track statistics but not causality. The AF should track why squadron commanders are relieved of duty as well as data factors surrounding the unit. Factors such as squadron mishaps, squadron size, budget, scope of responsibility, past leadership experience, and career field experience should be examined. Although this effort will require additional efforts at AFPC, this data will allow analysis for adverse trends or required changes that could be addressed to prevent issues and improve success of future commanders.

Conclusion

The optimum span of command for squadron commanders depends on numerous variables including organizational structure, number of people, and complexity of functions being performed. In the military, structure dominates how the organization behaves.⁵⁴ Large, diverse squadrons without the proper leadership and administrative structure do not enhance accountability, efficiency, or leadership. The mission is getting done, but not as efficiently and effectively as possible.

AF squadrons must be organized with the right command structure to allow effective and efficient management, mission accomplishment, and commander accessibility. In today's constrained environment, the AF does not have the manpower to reduce squadron size, thereby increasing the number of squadrons. Furthermore, this option does not improve leadership development opportunities at lower levels. Options exist within current AF organizational

structure to allow large efficient multi-functional squadrons while enabling more focused and involved leadership of the AF missions and people. Recommendations in this paper relatively incur little cost, utilize and increase existing squadron efficiencies, and provide critical leadership development opportunities earlier in officers' careers. For the benefit of squadrons, officers, and the AF, it is time the AF empower flight commanders with the command authority.



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