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Another financial impact that must be weighed is the economic effect of removing the reserve component member from the civilian workforce and economy. This is a trickier discussion because of the myriad of intricacies this discussion would have to consider and evaluate. AE draws the majority of its members from the healthcare sector; this includes nurses, administrators, Emergency Medical System (EMS) personnel, and nursing assistants and technicians. On the civilian side, these are high-demand, low-supply professionals, with critical shortages in some career fields. The absence of these professionals from the civilian workforce can constitute a significant economic hardship. As reservists, however, their civilian clinical experience provides the Air Force low-cost, highly trained medical clinicians. These factors, when considered together seem to make the financial implications of an all ARC AE a neutral argument.

This potential move would affect recruitment and retention both positively and negatively. Initial recruiting would be negatively affected, especially among those individuals with prior AC experience or those with a disposition for a low operations tempo military career. Doyle's study showed that retention, however, could go up, especially among those members of the ARC that choose a reserve component looking for an experience approximating that of active duty.<sup>80</sup> The ARC would also see an increased retention of individuals that are eager to maintain a higher operational tempo. These would be individuals who have a high interest in serving their country and would possibly even be from the same pool of candidates that the AC currently draws from. The ability to appeal to the "high-taste" individuals would be beneficial to the Air

Force, perhaps enough to outweigh the loss in recruitment. By increasing the satisfaction and overall retention of the individuals who are eager to serve, as opposed to individuals who enter the reserve component for different motives, the Air Force is left with a workforce that is more engaged and enthusiastic. These would be personnel willing to maintain the increased readiness requirements and deployment taskings that would accompany an all ARC AE. This would make the recruitment and retention criteria appear to favor the move of AE to the ARC.

The final criterion, mission readiness, presents the most significant problem to the complete movement of AE to the ARC. Two primary readiness concerns are at the forefront of this debate: the need to staff and maintain mission critical positions at the MAJCOM level, and the need to maintain a highly-ready contingency response force.

AE is a mission that requires a high level of maintenance. It is a member of the Operations Group, and it has most of the same flying requirements as any other operations squadron, including continuous training and frequent evaluations. Mission critical positions that are necessary in the successful operation of the AE enterprise include MAJCOM level Operations (A3), Training (A3T) and Standards and Evaluations (A3V). These positions ensure that the AE mission is performed effectively, all the squadrons are trained similarly, and that they all meet and maintain the same standards of performance, and they cannot be subject to the forces of a civilian labor market.

While AE is a mission that is present and needed even when the US military is at peace, it needs the ability to surge, immediately at times, when natural disasters or unforeseen conflict occurs. It is the unforeseen, short-notice, large-scale military operation response, out of the



scope of any ARC squadron's ability, that makes the AC an indispensable component of the AE enterprise.

The ability to deploy a large contingency response with operationally ready AE crews, liaison teams, and operations teams, along with their equipment, is a time consuming and expensive proposition. This mission essential task requires a higher level of readiness, an almost 100% manning, and an availability of personnel at hand. All of these requirements are difficult for a Guard or Reserve member to maintain due to the nature of the reserves.

## **Recommendations**

While this research discounts the wholesale move of AE to the ARC, it should not be inferred that there is not a more appropriate alignment of the AC and ARC for the AE mission. Re-alignment of the ARC and the AC should be further evaluated. Questions that must be considered include: does the AC need four AE squadrons, and does the ARC need 27 squadrons? If squadrons are having trouble getting their people the operational experience they need, perhaps the AE enterprise has too many assets. This was a sentiment mentioned by many of the ARC AE representatives interviewed, and, while not a single one was in favor of eliminating the AC entirely from AE, they all mentioned that the number of AC AE squadrons should be reduced. Many suggested reducing the AC to three, some even suggested just two, with only the two squadrons outside of the continental United States (OCONUS) AC squadrons remaining.

Further research should also focus on ways to better integrate the ARC and the AC in the AE mission, in an attempt to better leverage the different advantages that each component brings to the mission. Currently, there are two AC squadrons co-located with ARC squadrons.

Additionally, the AE schoolhouse and Initial Qualification program are also located on a base with an ARC AE squadron. Unfortunately, only one of these ARC and AC locations maintain a true Total Force association. For the most part, there is no integration at all and a minimum sharing of resources among the others. The one AC/ARC Association in AE is currently at Pope AAF and is slated for re-location, which will most likely sever the association. This lack of association and integration negates the long-term experience with the AE mission that the ARC provides, as well as the civilian clinical experience of the ARC NC. The ARC/AC association could be used to assist in maintaining the AC's clinical skills. Conversely, the operational and training experience of the AC could be used to assist the ARC in maintaining operational proficiency and readiness, and the schoolhouse could offer the ARC the opportunity to practice and apply its instructional and evaluation skills.

## **Conclusion**

AE is a force multiplier and a force extender. It allows the US military the ability to operate far beyond its support lines, and it provides a way to mitigate casualties, especially the fatalities of conflict, through the rapid and skilled transport of critically ill and injured patients. The AE mission also enables the US government to offer relief after disaster and support in times of crises. It has a strong homeland mission and a large contingency response obligation. It is a high-profile, important mission, with a lot at stake. Too much, in fact, to risk disrupting what, for the most part, appears to be working.

What is needed in the AE enterprise, at this time, is not a further separation of AC and ARC assets, but a better integration of the two components. The ARC provides AE with clinicians with strong clinical backgrounds, as well as a cost-effective way to surge in manpower

when operations tempo requires it. The AC offers AE a readily available source of manpower able to perform the myriad of day to day tasks. These are important, mission essential tasks that cannot afford to be lost or dropped because a civilian position went unfilled due to lack of candidates. Additionally, the AC provides the Air Force the highly-ready, always available AE presence for contingency cases that will invariably arise. “The asymmetrical cost advantages in the two components are reflected in the agility and responsiveness relied upon in the active component, and by the complementary depth and capacity provided by the reserve components.”<sup>81</sup> The combination of ARC and AC assets currently serves the Air Force well, but a further integration of the two components might create a synergistic effect, where both are able to build off their distinct strengths and mitigate their individual weaknesses.

While the idea of moving the AE mission to the ARC seems to offer certain advantages, those advantages are outweighed by the significant disadvantages this move would create. For AE to be the force extender and force multiplier it is, it has to be ready, willing, and able to do a multitude of tasks and do them well, and in an expedient manner. To do that, it currently needs both components, the Active and the Reserve, as they both offer indispensable capabilities to the AE enterprise.

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