Improving the Effectiveness of Air Force Squadron Commanders

Assessing Squadron Commander Responsibilities, Preparation, and Resources

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Preface

A top priority for Gen David Goldfein, chief of staff of the Air Force, is to revitalize the squadron as the warfighting core of the Air Force. Concerns associated with revitalizing the squadron include understanding the major responsibilities and tasks of the squadron commander and how they vary by squadron; whether squadron commanders have adequate preparation, resources, and accountability mechanisms to fulfill their responsibilities; what gaps exist; what improvements can be made; and how the impact of these improvements can be measured. The present study used a variety of data sources and interviews with 75 squadron, group, and wing commanders to develop recommendations for how the Air Force can address squadron commander responsibilities, improve commander preparation, and monitor resources better.

The research reported here was commissioned by the Director, Force Development, Deputy Chief of Staff for Manpower, Personnel and Services, Headquarters U.S. Air Force, and conducted within the Manpower, Personnel, and Training Program of RAND Project AIR FORCE as part of a fiscal year 2017 project, "Enhancing the Effectiveness of Squadron Commanders".

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Summary

A top priority for Gen David Goldfein, chief of staff of the Air Force, is to "revitalize[e] the squadron as the warfighting core of . . . [the] Air Force." In discussing this goal, he refers to the Air Force squadron as "our most essential team" and as offering the "greatest potential for operational agility" (Goldfein, 2016). Concerns associated with revitalizing the squadron include understanding the major responsibilities and tasks of the squadron commander and how they vary by squadron; whether squadron commanders have adequate preparation, resources, and accountability mechanisms to fulfill their responsibilities; what gaps exist; what improvements can be made; and how the impact of these improvements can be measured.

To help the leadership address this important task, the Air Force asked RAND to explore ways to enhance the effectiveness of squadron commanders with emphasis on the following objectives:

- Examine issues related to responsibilities, preparation, and resources that could affect the ability of squadron commanders to succeed as they prioritize their responsibilities and manage associated risk.
- Analyze key factors behind concerns that squadron performance may be degraded by an imbalance between squadron commander workload and resources to accomplish it.
- Develop recommendations to address any major gaps that must be closed to help posture squadron commanders for success.

RAND explored squadron commander responsibilities, preparation, and resources using a two-pronged approach. First, we examined a variety of data sources that could shed light on these three areas, including data from the Manpower Programming and Execution System (MPES), the Air Force Total Ownership Cost system, the Air Force Budget and Execution Analysis Tool (AFBEAT), the Defense Readiness and Reporting System, and limited data from three Air Force climate surveys.

Second, we augmented our data findings with interviews with seven career field managers and 75 squadron commanders, group commanders, and wing commanders. During the hour-long, semistructured interviews, commanders discussed squadron commander duties and responsibilities, preparation, and squadron resourcing.

To permit timely completion of the study, we focused on a select group of squadrons from the nearly 2,000 squadrons in the Air Force. In narrowing our scope, we selected 12 squadron types (which included 628 squadrons) that varied by type, total manpower, average size, and average percentage of officer and enlisted personnel—aiming for a representative sample among these and other characteristics—to use in our data analysis. The Air Force requested we add six other squadron types, which we included in our interviews with squadron commanders.

Our findings and recommendations are presented in the three areas on which we focused: squadron commander responsibilities, squadron commander preparation, and squadron resources.

Squadron Commander Responsibilities

Air Force Instruction (AFI) 1-2, *Commander's Responsibilities* (2014), lists four duties and responsibilities for all Air Force commanders: execute the mission, lead people, manage resources, and improve the unit. And the squadron commanders with whom we spoke view leading and managing people as the most important among these duties. In fact, approximately 70 percent of the squadron commanders, 73 percent of group commanders, and 50 percent of wing commanders interviewed discussed how leading and managing people is the most important squadron commander responsibility.

Beyond this broad list, no single document describes all duties and responsibilities of a squadron commander. Thousands of AFI compliance statements direct commanders to ensure that certain tasks are accomplished. The Air Force also directs squadron commanders to ensure that their squadrons perform duties classified as "additional duties" and accomplish ancillary training. Although squadron commanders can delegate certain duties and responsibilities to those in their command, regulations require squadron commanders alone to perform many requirements. The Air Force is in the process of reviewing AFIs in order to eliminate compliance statements that are unnecessary, and in recent efforts, it has also worked to reduce the burden imposed by additional duties and ancillary training.

However, our interviews revealed that when commanders speak of the burden of additional duties, they often are not referencing the responsibilities that the Air Force officially designates as additional duties. Rather, they are often referring to other duties they recognize as being necessary to maintain the squadron but for which they believe they do not have sufficient manpower. In our interviews, squadron commanders also expressed concerns regarding the number of "taskers" they received from major commands (MAJCOMs), Headquarters Air Force, and various functional managers that are added to their overall responsibilities. In addition, commanders discussed how administrative duties tend to require most of a squadron commander's time. In speaking about their range of responsibilities, commanders expressed frustration with the time required for duties not perceived as key to a squadron's mission.

Although the Air Force is taking steps to review compliance AFIs and reduce the burden of other duties, a thorough review of the time required of commanders by the full range of duties and responsibilities may help identify where responsibilities currently levied on commanders can be reduced or eliminated and what risks might arise in reducing the number of duties and

responsibilities commanders currently must address. To achieve this aim, we recommend the following:

Continue to review AFIs, and record the number of responsibilities levied on squadron commanders. Eliminate responsibilities that are not essential.

- Establish an independent committee comprising cross-functional senior leadership to serve as AFI reviewers. These reviewers should use clear and objective criteria when evaluating AFIs. Review of AFIs should be conducted on a regular basis, such as every two to five years.
- To promote squadron commander knowledge of and compliance with requirements, the office of the vice chief of staff of the Air Force should maintain and widely disseminate a central database that clearly lists and describes the requirements of squadron commanders described within AFIs, which may be structured with consideration of variation across locations and mission types. This office should publish a summary statement that addresses the cumulative burden that AFI requirements place on squadron commanders.

Evaluate the level of waiver authorities within AFIs to determine if authorities at a lower level than currently listed could be allowed to grant waivers with minimal risk.

- Permitting commanders at lower levels of authority to waive certain requirements may further reduce the burdens placed on commanders. The AFI review mentioned in the previous recommendation should include an evaluation of waiver approval authorities to determine the lowest acceptable level of waiver authority for each requirement.

MAJCOMs, Headquarters Air Force, and functionals should track information regarding the number of taskers they disseminate and readily provide this information to commanders.

- To raise awareness of and increase the ability to reduce taskers, MAJCOMs, Headquarters Air Force, and functionals should utilize a standardized data collection format, or possibly a database, to record the number of taskers they disseminate, details regarding the requirements of these taskers (e.g., information requested), which units (e.g., wings, groups, squadrons) must assist with these taskers, and the number of manpower hours expected to complete the taskers. The office of the vice chief of staff of the Air Force should provide oversight to ensure continuous and standardized collection of data regarding taskers.

Squadron Commander Preparation

Air Force officers are prepared for assignment to squadron commander in two ways: from the prior assignments and experiences during their career and through squadron commander courses that are conducted by MAJCOMs and functional organizations. Existing personnel data allow analysis of the career paths of individuals selected for squadron command, and data indicate some differences among the 12 squadron types we considered. For example, our analyses showed differences in intermediate development education accomplishments in residence,

assignments to headquarters, and experiences in operations-officer-like positions before assuming command. Other elements of career development can easily be examined using MPES data. Improvements in personnel data, such as inclusion of reliable information on commanders who were removed from command and reasons for the removal, might promote understanding of the positive (or negative) impact of different paths among squadron types.

Our review of squadron commander preparation courses provided by MAJCOMs showed limited overlap in the topics addressed across courses. We also observed variation in the amount of time spent on similar topics in different MAJCOM courses, suggesting different information on these topics may be disseminated across MAJCOM courses. Further, many topics addressed in a now-canceled course taught by the Air Force Personnel Center did not appear in any of the current MAJCOM courses—topics for which many squadron commanders felt least prepared for upon taking command.

Most of the individuals we interviewed indicated that squadron commanders have a good understanding of roles and responsibilities when initially taking command, but our discussions also revealed some potential gaps. Commanders we interviewed noted they felt least prepared for administrative and disciplinary responsibilities. When addressing elements of their training that were least helpful in preparing individuals for squadron command, interviewees indicated that Air Command and Staff College training did not provide sufficient information on the specifics of commanding. They also believed that MAJCOM training was not relevant, too broad, not memorable, or too short. Areas in which squadron commanders expressed interest in additional training included more information on how to command and more-focused leadership training. The value of mentorship and breadth of career experiences before command was also frequently mentioned. We recommend a number of actions to standardize and expand commander training and preparation.

Increase standardization of MAJCOM squadron preparation courses.

- Establish a committee, or board, that includes leadership from across MAJCOMs to review the current topics presented in MAJCOM courses and develop a core curriculum of topics that should be covered. These topics would form a core curriculum for squadron preparation courses to which each MAJCOM could add additional topics that are specific to its mission.

Provide additional training to squadron commanders on Air Force personnel management systems, disciplinary procedures, and money management.

- These topics appear to be missing from course schedules or are addressed in only a limited way and were consistently highlighted as gaps by the squadron commanders to whom we spoke. The committee established to evaluate the MAJCOM curriculum should determine how best to address these topics, whether in the MAJCOM core curriculum or in a separate requisite training.

Provide promising Air Force personnel with a diversity of leadership experiences and opportunities to work with commanders.

- Development teams need to ensure that as many squadron commanders as possible have leadership experiences before they become squadron commanders. Individuals who have not had these experiences will have to exert more effort and may experience more stress as new squadron commanders than those who have had previous leadership experiences in the Air Force. Active mentorship from commanders can increase the utility of these experiences in preparing individuals for squadron command.

Squadron Resources

This project examined resource distribution across squadron types and whether there may be a distinction between "have" and "have-not" squadrons when it comes to adequacy of resources. One difficulty with such an assessment is that there is no official Air Force definition of when a squadron is under- or overresourced.[1] Without such a standard, the best we can do is use available data to compare the resource levels of different squadron types using a variety of resources, and in this research we considered current (and potential) data sources for

- manpower fill rates
- funding levels
- readiness ratings
- perceptions of Airmen about having what they need to accomplish their missions.

Aggregating across these data sources, it is possible to develop a "stoplight" chart to compare resources by squadron type and illuminate when a squadron type may be under- or overresourced.

Many of the squadron commanders we interviewed expressed concerns about squadron manning levels and the need for more personnel. They expressed concerns not only about the total number of people in the squadron but also about the distribution of people with the right skills and experience. These responses highlight the importance of having a better understanding of the validity of existing manpower standards and the meaning of MPES data. As is discussed in more detail in the report, when data indicate that all squadron types (except for security squadrons) have 95 percent or more of their requirements funded, one might not expect complaints about a lack of manpower. But the mismatch may suggest the need to review and modify the tasks and responsibilities required of squadrons and squadron commanders, as previously recommended.

[1] Manpower standards come close, since the Air Force makes a distinction between requirements in a unit and funded requirements. As we learned in our interviews, however, many squadron commanders feel that manpower standards are out of date, so comparing assigned personnel to authorized personnel may not provide an accurate picture of whether a unit is over- or underresourced.

Squadron commanders recognized Air Force efforts to increase commander staff support manning and often spoke in positive terms about the additional staffing. Some commanders also expressed concerns about defining the duties for the new personnel, the amount of time it will take to fill those positions, and the amount of time it will take to train new personnel assigned to those positions.

To gain better insight into squadron resourcing and ensure that resources match requirements, we recommend the following:

The Air Force should identify resource categories of interest and establish resource standards in those categories.

- The office of the vice chief of staff of the Air Force should create and maintain a squadron resource dashboard to track resourcing among squadrons or squadron types using information from databases that track data on these resources. This tool can highlight similarities and differences in resourcing across different categories of interest and highlight areas that warrant further investigation.

More regularly review and update manpower standards to reflect current responsibilities.

- The Air Force may be able to address some manning concerns by reviewing and eliminating duties and responsibilities that are not essential. Once an updated set of duties and responsibilities is established, the Air Force should update manpower standards and then continue to update these standards on a regular basis, making the process visible for squadron commanders.

Provide guidelines regarding the responsibilities new commander support staff should assume and the length of time they will need to become fully functional.

- To promote the success of the initiative to increase commander support staff, wing commanders should provide squadron commanders with clear guidelines regarding the responsibilities new staff should and should not assume, training they should receive, and the amount of time they may require to become fully functional. This may reduce potential confusion regarding the roles and responsibilities of these staff across different squadron commanders.

General Goldfein has highlighted the profound and lasting impact squadron commanders have on Airmen and their families. By improving how the Air Force develops and assigns squadron commander responsibilities, standardizing squadron commander training as appropriate, and establishing and monitoring resource metrics, the Air Force can ensure that squadron commanders are postured for success.

Acknowledgments

This research would not have been possible without the support and cooperation of numerous individuals throughout the Air Force at the headquarters, wing, group, and squadron levels. We especially thank our project sponsor, Mr. Russel Frasz, director, Force Development in the Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Manpower, Personnel and Services, Headquarters U.S. Air Force, who guided the structure of the project and ensured our access to the many individuals who participated in the informal and formal interviews that were so important for our work.

Maj Gen (S) Steven L. Davis, director of manpower, organization, and resources in the Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Manpower, Personnel and Services, made additional suggestions for our research approach as he took over responsibilities for the chief of staff's "revitalizing the squadron" initiative. Mr. Greg Parton, in the Manpower and Requirements Branch, was very helpful in providing up-to-date information on Air Force policies associated with additional duties, ancillary training, and initiatives related to commander support staff.

Mr. Oscar Padeway, deputy director of inspections, guided us to background information on new Air Force unit effectiveness inspection regulations. We very much appreciate the assistance of Col Steven J. Minkin, chief of the Budget Formulation Integration Division, and his team, who introduced us to AFBEAT.

The Air Force is rightly protective of its climate survey data, so we thank Ms. Ashley Romero and her team at the Air Force Personnel Center Survey Office for creating a data extract that allowed us to use the data in a new and interesting way while protecting the anonymity of the survey respondents, and Dr. David Cribb, who approved the release of the data.

Dr. Michael R. Matheny, professor emeritus of the U.S. Army War College; Ken Turner, assistant professor in the Department of Command and Leadership at the Army Command and General Staff School; and Charles S. Soby of the Army's School for Command Preparation provided valuable insight into training courses attended by Army squadron commanders.

We are grateful to RAND colleagues Laura Werber, John Crown, and Jim Leftwich for conducting numerous interviews, and we appreciate the participation of Al Robbert, Darrell Jones, Shirley Ross, and Barbara Bicksler in a forum on how best to present the interview results. Our reviewers, Jeffrey Kendall and Sean Robson, made detailed and thoughtful suggestions, and we appreciate their efforts to improve the quality of the report. Any remaining errors are the responsibility of the authors.

This research required the cooperation of dozens of wing, group, and squadron commanders around the world who agreed to participate in hour-long telephone interviews addressing their duties as commanders, their preparation for command, and the resources they have as commanders. They were all generous with their time and candid in their responses, and we are grateful for their participation.

Abbreviations

ACC	Air Combat Command
ACSC	Air Command and Staff College
ADAPT	Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention and Treatment
AEF	Air Expeditionary Force
AETC	Air Education and Training Command
AF	Air Force
AF/A1	Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Manpower, Personnel and Services, Headquarters U.S. Air Force
AF/A1D	Office of the Director of Force Development, Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Manpower, Personnel and Services, Headquarters U.S. Air Force
AF/A2	Air Force Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance
AF/A3	Air Force Operations, Plans and Requirements
AF/A4	Air Force Logistics, Engineering and Force Protection
AF/A10	Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff of the Air Force for Strategic Deterrence and Nuclear Integration
AFBEAT	Air Force Budget and Execution Analysis Tool
AFCEC	Air Force Civil Engineer Center
AFGSC	Air Force Global Strike Command
AFI	Air Force Instruction
AFIMSC	Air Force Installation and Mission Support Center
AF/JA	Air Force Judge Advocate General
AFMAN	Air Force Manual
AFMC	Air Force Materiel Command
AFOSI	Air Force Office of Special Investigations
AFPC	Air Force Personnel Center

AFPC/DSYS	Air Force Personnel Center Survey Office
AFSC	Air Force Specialty Code
AF/SE	Office of Air Force Safety
AF/SG	Office of the Air Force Surgeon General
AFSOC	Air Force Special Operations Command
AFSPC	Air Force Space Command
AFTOC	Air Force Total Ownership Cost
AMC	Air Mobility Command
AMS	assignment management system
BCE	base civil engineer
BLSDM	base-level service delivery model
BMT	Basic Military Training
CBT	computer-based training
CCC	command chief master sergeant
C.F.R.	Code of Federal Regulations
CGSOC	U.S. Army Command and General Staff Officer Course
CJCSI	Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Instruction
CSAF	chief of staff of the Air Force
CSS	commander support staff
DO	director of operations
DoD	Department of Defense
DoDD	Department of Defense Directives
DoDI	Department of Defense Instruction
DoDM	Department of Defense Manual
DRRS	Defense Readiness and Reporting System
DTS	Defense Travel System
EFMP	Exceptional Family Member Program
EO	Executive Order

EST	expeditionary skills training
ETCA	Education and Training Course Announcement
FSS	force support squadron
FY	fiscal year
HAF	Headquarters Air Force
HQ	headquarters
IDE	intermediate developmental education
IDRMP	Integrated Defense Risk Management Process
JAG	judge advocate general
MAJCOM	major command
MAF	Mobility Air Forces
MGA	Major Graded Area
MilPDS	Military Personnel Data System
MPES	Manpower Programming and Execution System
NAF	nonappropriated fund
NDAA	National Defense Authorization Act
O&M	operation and maintenance
PACAF	Pacific Air Forces
PACE	Profession of Arms Center of Excellence
PAD	Program Action Directive
Pub. L.	Public Law
RCM	Rules for courts martial
RETOC	Recruiting, Education and Training Oversight Council
SAF/AA	Administrative Assistant to the Secretary of the Air Force
SAF/AQ	Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Acquisition
SAF/CIO A6	Office of Information Dominance and Chief Information Officer

SAF/FM	Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Financial Management and Budget
SAF/FMBOI	Budget Formulation Integration Division, Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Financial Management and Comptroller
SAF/IE	Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Installations, Environment and Logistics
SAF/IG	Office of the Air Force Inspector General
SAF/PA	Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Public Affairs
SAPR	Sexual Assault Prevention and Response
SARC	sexual assault response coordinator
SFS	security force specialist
SORTS	Status of Resources and Training System
SFT	selected force training
TDY	temporary duty
TFAT	Total Force Awareness Training
TPP	Trans-Pacific Partnership
UCMJ	Uniform Code of Military Justice
UEI	unit effectiveness inspection
UMD	Unit Manpower Document
USAFE	United States Air Forces in Europe
U.S.C.	United States Code

1. Introduction

On July 1, 2016, Gen David Goldfein, the chief of staff of the Air Force (CSAF), released a short paper entitled "The Beating Heart of the Air Force . . . Squadrons!" In this paper, he stated that the Air Force squadron is

> our most essential team. We succeed or fail in our missions at the squadron-level because that is where we develop, train, and build Airmen. . . . Squadrons are the engines of innovation and esprit de corps. Squadrons possess the greatest potential for operational agility. . . . It is time to revitalize the squadron as the warfighting core of our Air Force. . . . Revitalizing squadrons as the core fighting unit in our Air Force will be the primary focus in my first year as your Chief. (Goldfein, 2016)

In September 2016, General Goldfein formally announced three areas on which he would focus during his term as chief, appointing general officers to lead the efforts in each. One of these three areas emphasized squadron revitalization, which was consistent with his earlier paper (see Defense Media Activity, 2016):

1. revitalizing squadrons (focus area lead officer: Brig Gen Stephen Davis)
2. strengthening joint leaders and teams (focus area lead officer: Brig Gen Brian Killough)
3. advancing multidomain, multifunctional command and control (focus area lead officer: Brig Gen Chance Saltzman).

In this chapter, we briefly describe the origin of the RAND project on improving the effectiveness of squadron commanders, discuss our research methodology, and give an overview of the remaining chapters.

Project Origin and Objectives

Even before his promotion to chief of staff, General Goldfein expressed interest in revitalizing the squadron. Toward the end of his tenure as vice chief of staff and immediately before his appointment as chief, he discussed the importance of addressing squadron commander concerns about resource constraints affecting mission accomplishment.[1] Building from General Goldfein's questions and concerns, the Office of the Director of Force Development in the Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Manpower, Personnel and Services, Headquarters

[1] General Goldfein has a long-standing interest in the development of squadron commanders, having written a book on the subject as a colonel (see Goldfein, 2001).

U.S. Air Force (AF/A1D), outlined several questions to address as part of revitalizing the squadron:[2]

- What are the major responsibilities and tasks of squadron commanders (including additional duties)?
- How do these responsibilities vary by the size, type, and location of the squadron?
- Do squadron commanders have adequate preparation, resources, and accountability mechanisms to fulfill these responsibilities? If not, what gaps exist?
- How can the Air Force address these gaps and improve the effectiveness of squadron commanders?
- How can the effects of these improvements be measured?

One additional question raised was whether there are "have" and "have-not" squadrons in the Air Force as a result of inequitably distributed resources. This could have an impact on the ability of commanders to be successful in their positions.

Project Objectives

Based on feedback from other Air Force leaders and discussions with RAND leadership, the director of AF/A1D asked RAND to explore ways to enhance the effectiveness of squadron commanders, with emphasis on the following objectives:

- Examine issues related to responsibilities, preparation, and resources[3] that could affect the ability of squadron commanders to succeed as they prioritize their responsibilities and manage associated risk.
- Analyze key factors behind concerns that squadron performance may be degraded by an imbalance between squadron commander workload and resources to accomplish duties.
- Develop recommendations to address any major gaps that must be closed to help posture squadron commanders for success.

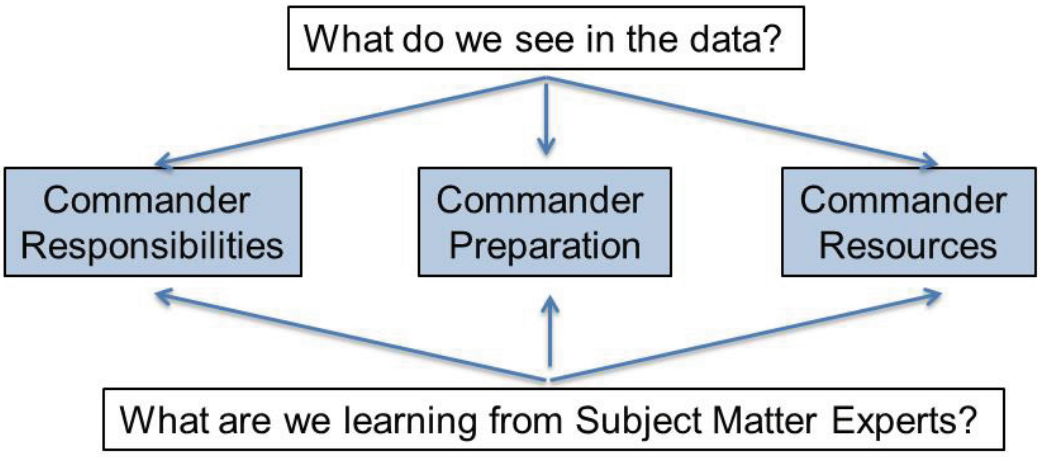
Research Approach

Figure 1.1 displays the two-pronged research approach RAND used to examine the responsibilities that Air Force squadron commanders have, how commanders are prepared (educationally and professionally) to fulfill those responsibilities, and how resources available to them affect their ability to accomplish their missions. First, we examined a variety of data sources to determine what information they could provide about squadron commander responsibilities, preparation, and resources. Second, we interviewed subject-matter experts to gain insights into areas for which data were unavailable or inconclusive. Transcribed interviews

[2] This list of concerns was presented in a May 3, 2016, email from the director of AF/A1D to Air Force general officer colleagues, seeking suggestions for guidance to RAND for a project addressing these issues.

[3] The sponsor was particularly interested in learning about the potential importance of squadron commanders networking with other commanders, so questions about networking were included in our interviews.

Figure 1.1. Research Approach



were coded and analyzed using Dedoose software in order to provide more-objective metrics for comparative purposes.

Characteristics of Air Force Squadrons

The diversity among Air Force squadrons, including size and type, was an important factor in designing our research approach. According to Air Force Instructions (AFIs), squadrons are the "basic building block organizations in the Air Force, providing a specific operational or support capability."[4] A squadron "has 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," and it may exist to perform a type of wartime mission (as a fighter aircraft squadron does) or provide support in a certain functional area (as a maintenance squadron does).[5] While squadron sizes will depend on a variety of factors, they are supposed to have a "minimum adjusted population" of at least 35 people.[6]

Units designated as squadrons in the major commands (MAJCOMs) range in size from 1,878 Airmen in a large Air Education and Training Command (AETC) squadron to only

[4] A squadron is a unit comprising a certain number of personnel. AFI 38-101, 2011, p. 13, provides additional information regarding squadron structure; also see paragraph 2.2.8 of this instruction.

[5] *Unity of command* means that one person is in charge. *Functional grouping* means that an organization has "a clear-cut purpose, goal and scope, with one individual in charge; parts that form a logical, separable activity; a close relationship among the parts, constituting a complete entity; and natural divisions of work that clearly define where responsibility begins and ends" (AFI 38-101, 2011, paragraph 1.2).

[6] The definition of *minimum adjusted population* is fairly complex, requiring several paragraphs in the regulation (AFI 38-101, 2011, section 2.2).

3 Airmen in small squadrons in both AETC and Air Combat Command (ACC), with an overall average size of 187, as shown in Table 1.1. The number of squadrons in the commands varies widely, as does the size of the largest squadrons. The Manpower Programming and Execution System (MPES) database shows a total of 130 squadrons that are below the squadron size threshold of 35, some of which are specialized in some way. For example, some of the small squadrons in AETC are student squadrons at Air University. These squadrons may have 250 students who are attending school, but only the three officers who have administrative control over them are recorded in MPES as permanent squadron members. At the other end of the spectrum, six of the ten largest squadrons are civil engineer squadrons with populations that are 71 percent to 95 percent civilian.

The Air Force occasionally conducts organizational threshold reviews to determine whether wings, groups, or squadrons below certain sizes should be disbanded or reorganized, or whether they should receive official waivers to maintain their status despite their small size. These reviews may also explore the possibility of changing regulations about the existing size thresholds. A 2014 Air Force study on the sizes of wings, groups, and squadrons noted that at the time, 22 out of 1,973 squadrons had waivers from the Headquarters Air Force (HAF) Office of Manpower, Personnel and Services (AF/A1), and 29 needed review (Johnson, 2014).

Table 1.1. Squadron Counts and Sizes

Major Command	Number of Squadrons	Largest	Smallest	Average
AETC	297	1,878	3	140
AFMC	218	1,507	12	209
PACAF	173	1,193	17	217
ACC	443	1,050	3	185
AMC	239	923	28	208
AFSPC	122	917	25	174
AFGSC	150	802	28	206
USAFE	144	766	30	196
AFSOC	76	710	42	194
Other	122	685	2	86
AF-wide	1,984	1,878	3	187

SOURCE: FY (fiscal year) 2016 third-quarter data from the Manpower Programming and Execution System on authorized personnel examined by RAND.

NOTE: The table is ordered by the size of the largest squadron in the command. Squadron size includes funded officer, enlisted and government civilian personnel, and contractor civilian personnel. “Other” commands include organizations such as the Air Force Academy (whose 10th Civil Engineer Squadron is the largest in this category, with 685 personnel) and the Air Force District of Washington.

Making the Analysis Manageable

There are almost 2,000 squadrons in the Air Force with various missions, sizes, compositions, and locations. To permit timely completion of this study, we systematically reduced the number of squadrons we would consider within our analyses by considering (1) different squadron types as designated by the squadron title used in the MPES data set (of which there are over 200, such as aircraft maintenance and communications) and (2) characteristics that might capture variation among these types. Several characteristics that capture variations in squadrons are

- prevalence of a squadron type among major commands
- total manpower in a squadron type
- average size of a squadron type
- average percentage of officer personnel
- average percentage of enlisted personnel.

Generally, if a squadron type was among the top ten squadron types for one of these criteria, that type was selected for analysis, and this led to an initial list of 12 squadron types. Table 1.2 shows the number of squadrons of each type, the average size of each squadron (including military, government civilian, and contractor civilian personnel), the average percentage of enlisted personnel, and the average percentage of civilian personnel. As shown in the table, fighter squadrons, consisting mostly of pilots who are officers, have the smallest average size among the squadron categories and an average enlisted population percentage of only 33 percent. Aircraft maintenance squadrons have the largest average size and an average enlisted percentage of 72 percent. Air refueling and fighter squadrons have, on average, very few civilian personnel, while force support and civil engineer squadrons have on average 63 percent civilian personnel. It is a reasonable assumption that the responsibilities and resources of squadron commanders would be different for squadrons of such different sizes, compositions, and missions, and such variation is what we sought to explore in our data analysis and interviews.

After this project began, the director of manpower, organization, and resources in the Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Manpower, Personnel, and Services (AF/A1D), who had been appointed to lead the CSAF's effort on revitalizing the squadron, requested that six more squadron types be examined because of recent Air Force efforts to improve recruitment for those types. These were attack (unmanned aerial vehicle), cyber operations, information operations, missile, network operations, and network warfare squadrons. Since there are relatively few squadrons in these types, we focused on the initial twelve types when exploring data sources but included the new types in our interviews with commanders.[7]

[7] There are only three network operations squadrons, two network warfare squadrons, and one information operations squadron.

Table 1.2. Distribution and Some Characteristics of Selected Squadron Types

Squadron Type	Number of Squadrons	Average Squadron Size	Average % of Enlisted Personnel	Average % of Civilians (Government and Contractor)
Aircraft maintenance	81	470	72	26
Airlift	33	109	49	6
Air mobility	12	220	75	22
Air refueling	19	123	56	1
Civil engineering	76	458	36	63
Communications	65	166	66	32
Fighter	58	48	33	6
Force support	72	255	34	63
Intelligence	52	225	84	8
Operations support	91	149	60	24
Security forces	79	256	85	13
Special operations	23	126	40	9

NOTE: This selection of squadron types includes 661 squadrons, or about 33 percent of the 1,984 squadrons in the Air Force. Average squadron size includes funded officer, enlisted and government civilian personnel, and contractor civilian personnel.

Data Sources

We used a variety of data sources to better understand responsibilities, preparation, and resourcing. To better understand documented responsibilities of squadron commanders, we examined AFIs on general responsibilities related to command, instructions regarding Air Force inspections that provided detailed lists of inspection items for which a squadron commander is responsible, documentation of additional duties, and documentation of ancillary training requirements.

Syllabi for squadron commander preparation courses that are managed by the MAJCOMs provided us with detailed information about the topics considered important for officers to understand as commanders and the amount of time devoted to them in the courses.[8] To assess differences in the amount of time spent on topics related to leadership and command, we also examined syllabi for intermediate developmental education (IDE) courses in the Army, Navy, and Marine Corps. To analyze these materials, a RAND researcher coded topics listed in course schedules, and afterward, another RAND researcher reviewed the schedules and assigned codes. Discrepancies were addressed through discussion.

[8] We are extremely grateful to Col Samantha Weeks for providing detailed information on squadron commander courses that she attended as part of her research for a Ph.D. program sponsored by Air University.

In addition to educational preparation for command, we assessed some aspects of the career paths of squadron commanders in the squadron types we were considering. We examined these to determine whether there were clear differences in experiences, such as assignments to headquarters (HQ) positions, IDE attendance, or previous experiences as commanders.

Data sources we explored in an effort to understand the resources available to squadrons included the MPES for personnel issues and, for money and equipment, funding data contained in the Air Force Total Ownership Cost (AFTOC) system, budget data in the Air Force Budget and Execution Analysis Tool (AFBEAT), and resource readiness assessments that are recorded in the Defense Readiness and Reporting System (DRRS). We also gained limited access to Air Force climate survey data to see if they revealed any differences in perception about squadron resources and other issues based on squadron type.

Limitations

Notably, there are limitations to the data sets we used and our analyses of these data sets. We obtained documents regarding AFIs, additional duties, and ancillary training from records maintained by the Air Force, which frequently change. In addition, one primary researcher coded course content. Therefore, we could not assess interrater reliability of assigned codes. Further, we were only able to assess limited data from MPES, AFTOC, AFBEAT, and DRRS.

Interviews

To further explore initial insights gained from the data analysis and to learn about individual squadron commander assessments of responsibilities, preparation, and resources, we conducted two sets of interviews. We conducted the first interviews with a limited number of career field managers.[9] These discussions provided information on potential data sources of interest, introduced us to sources of information about squadron commander courses, and highlighted potential areas of concern for squadron commanders.

We also conducted 75 semistructured telephone interviews with squadron commanders, group commanders, and wing commanders in the Air Force. During these hour-long interviews, commanders discussed squadron commander duties and responsibilities, squadron commander preparation, and squadron commander and squadron resourcing. Although our focus was on squadron commander knowledge and experiences, interviews with group and wing commanders allowed us to obtain perspectives on squadron commanders from those in higher levels of command. Appendix A contains additional information regarding our interview protocol and procedures.

[9] The director of AF/A1D suggested that seven career field managers covered the initial 12 squadron types of interest. Discussions with these seven field managers took place in June and July 2016 and lasted about an hour each.

To select commanders for interviews, we obtained a random sample of email addresses, which was stratified based on two dimensions: time serving as squadron commander (3 to 12 months; more than 12 months) and squadron mission (airlift, aircraft maintenance, air refueling, attack, civil engineering, communications, cyber operations, force support, fighter, intelligence, air mobility, missile, operations support, security forces, special operations, information operations, network operations, and network warfare). We did not include those who had been serving as squadron commander for less than three months because we wanted to ensure that interviewees would be able to provide somewhat informed comments regarding their experiences as squadron commanders. Table 1.3 provides information regarding the 56 squadron commanders we interviewed. We also obtained stratified random samples of group and wing commanders, such that commanders included in these samples commanded one or more squadrons addressing our mission types of interest. We interviewed 11 group commanders and 8 wing commanders to obtain perspectives on squadron commanders from those in higher levels of command, as well as their own experiences as squadron commanders, if applicable.

Table 1.3. Squadron Commander Sample Characteristics

Squadron Mission Type	3 to 12 Months' Experience	More Than 12 Months' Experience
Aircraft maintenance	2	1
Airlift	2	2
Air mobility	1	2
Air refueling	2	2
Attack	2	2
Civil engineering	1	2
Communications	2	2
Cyber operations	2	2
Fighter	1	2
Force support	2	2
Information/network operation/warfare	2	2
Intelligence	2	2
Missile	2	1
Operations support	2	1
Security forces	2	2
Special operations	1	1

Limitations

Although the structure of our interview sample facilitated the identification of potential themes across commander comments, a more comprehensive needs analysis would facilitate

assessment of the generalizability of these themes among commanders across the Air Force. Notably, at the request of the CSAF, Brig Gen Stephen Davis began an effort in fall 2016 to assess Air Force squadron revitalization. That effort utilized interviews and focus groups that were conducted with approximately 3,700 individuals, including Air Force enlisted personnel and officers of varying ranks. RAND provided feedback on the interview and focus group protocols used by General Davis's team, and several questions were similar to those described in this report. Several elements of that effort were intended to serve as a needs assessment for the Air Force.

In addition, during this project, our sponsor and others asked us to consider similarities and differences across comments made by commanders of different mission types. However, an additional limitation of our sample size is that we interviewed a relatively limited number of individuals who commanded each mission type. Although we include comparisons, these should be interpreted with caution. We do not claim that the comments of those we interviewed are representative of all commanders of the same or similar mission types. Further, interviews may only reveal salient themes at the time of the interview. Failure to mention a topic should not be considered indicative of a lack of topic importance.

Organization of This Report

The rest of this report is structured around our three research categories. Chapter Two discusses squadron commander responsibilities as described in Air Force documents and as perceived by those we interviewed. Chapter Three outlines how squadron commanders are prepared to take on their role as commanders and how well those we interviewed think they are prepared for command. Chapter Four describes several potential data sources the Air Force could use to assess how well squadrons are resourced and presents interview results of commander perceptions of how well squadrons are resourced in various areas. Chapter Five presents conclusions and recommendations.

2. Squadron Commander Responsibilities

In this chapter, we first describe sources of information about a squadron commander's responsibilities. Following these descriptions, we then discuss the perceptions of those we interviewed regarding squadron commander duties and responsibilities.

Sources of Information

There are four primary sources of information about a squadron commander's responsibilities: AFIs in general, AFIs specifically related to unit effectiveness inspections, officially designated additional duties, and ancillary training. In the subsections that follow, we discuss information on and, where applicable, recent changes to these sources.

General Responsibilities in Air Force Instructions

AFI 1-2, *Commander's Responsibilities* (2014), lists four duties and responsibilities for all Air Force commanders:

1. Execute the mission.
2. Lead people.
3. Manage resources.
4. Improve the unit.

Beyond this broad list, there is no single document that describes the responsibilities of a squadron commander. However, there are indications that commanders have a vast number of responsibilities. A 2016 study of AFIs found 130,000 compliance statements—statements such as "compliance with this publication is mandatory" or "the commander will ensure that . . ."—that require commanders to monitor different types of performance.[1] Many of the responsibilities outlined in these AFIs must be performed by commanders and cannot be delegated to those under their command, which was a topic discussed in our interviews. Several AFIs contain broad information about what commanders are expected to do, specific information about what responsibilities will be graded during formal inspections, and additional duties and ancillary training that a commander must ensure are accomplished.

Inspection-Related Responsibilities

While the four duties and responsibilities in AFI 1-2 are broad, they are considered the Major Graded Areas (MGAs) for Air Force unit effectiveness inspections (UEIs, conducted at the wing

[1] This is shown in a slide summarizing a study by a company called AATD. According to a March 2017 article in the *Air Force Times*, the Air Force is reviewing "more than 1,100 Air Force Instructions to cut out pointless rules that limit squadron commanders' authority to make decisions" (Losey, 2017b).

level) and the Commander's Inspection Program (inspections of wing programs and of groups and squadrons), from which other inspection items are derived. There are three categories of inspection items described in AFI 90-201 (2016), the regulation that governs Air Force inspections:

- Air Force inspection requirements: Air Force functionals have developed a list of inspection items for which noncompliance "puts Airmen, the commander, the Service or our nation at significant risk" (AFI 90-201, 2016, p. 131).[2] For example, a maintenance squadron will be inspected on its maintenance operations, quality assurance program, and tool and equipment management. MAJCOM inspectors general are to use these requirements to build a sample strategy for inspections at each organization, but all of the items are supposed to be inspected during the UEI cycle (24–30 months)—the MAJCOMs can accept the results of wing-level inspections during the cycle.
- "By law" requirements: AFI 90-201 identifies 13 programs or inspections that are directed by organizations above the Air Force level (such as the Department of Defense [DoD] or Congress) and that require inspection (AFI 90-201, 2016, Table 5.1). Examples are the Federal Voting Assistance Program and the Suicide Prevention Program.
- Other requirements: In addition to Air Force inspection requirements and inspections that are required because of higher levels of authority, there are over 80 additional inspections that are authorized by the Air Force because of international treaties or accreditation requirements (AFI 90-201, 2016, Attachment 2). These can range from the significant (Conventional Armed Forces in Europe Treaty inspections) to the mundane (pest-management program reviews).

While not all items in all categories apply to every squadron commander, the inspection item lists describe the range of responsibilities that a squadron commander might face.

Additional Duties and Ancillary Training

Airmen are required to perform many tasks that are not directly related to the formal mission of their squadron. Called additional duties, the Air Force has a formal definition of these duties, as well as a process for managing them. Ensuring that these duties are accomplished is another responsibility of a squadron commander. An additional duty is a task that is

> required by federal law, executive order, and/or departmental publication and which is deemed external to the unit's primary mission/duties and not identified as direct or indirect workload. This definition is further clarified to include tasks mandated by a HAF 2-letter and levied upon another HAF 2-letter and its subordinate units. (AFI 38-206, 2014a, paragraph 1)

One example of an additional duty is the assignment of a squadron sexual assault victim advocate, a duty mandated by Congress and DoD instructions; another is a unit tax adviser, who is required by Air Force instruction. The Air Force's AF/A1 deputy chief of staff is the

[2] The list is contained in Table A3.1 of AFI 90-201. The Air Force Inspection System Governance Process is used to make changes to the list.

"gatekeeper" who manages these duties, and a list of them is maintained on an official Air Force website; as of August 2016, the list included 61 duties (see Appendix B and AFI 36-2201, 2013b).

In August 2016, the secretary of the Air Force and General Goldfein released a memorandum (Goldfein and James, 2016a) addressing concerns about the amount of time spent on additional duties detracting from squadrons' primary missions. In the memo, they announced a review of additional duties over which the Air Force had control. This review was intended to eliminate some additional duties and explore ways to reduce the burden imposed by others (such as moving the duty from the squadron level to another organization). The list in Appendix B notes which duties were eliminated and duties for which responsibilities were changed. As described later in this chapter, however, interviews with squadron commanders suggest there are many duties in a squadron that are considered to be "additional" even though they do not have that official designation in AFIs. For example, flying units need someone to ensure that flight publications are up to date, and this duty is usually given to a pilot in the squadron. While duties such as these are recognized as necessary, they can be perceived as a burden if low squadron manning means that individuals are assigned more than one.

Squadron commanders must also monitor ancillary training, which is "universal training, guidance or instruction, regardless of AFSC [Air Force Specialty Code], that contributes to mission accomplishment. It does not include functional, occupational or additional duty training" (AFI 36-2201, 2013a, paragraph 7.1). Examples of ancillary training are motorcycle safety courses and hazardous waste management training. These courses might be required by international treaties, U.S. law, or DoD or Air Force instructions. As with additional duties, there is a formal process for managing ancillary training courses and a website that lists required courses.[3] As of October 2016, there were well over 100 of these courses, as shown in Appendix C.

As was the case with additional duties, Air Force leaders heard the concerns of Airmen about the relevance of, and the amount of time required to accomplish, some ancillary training—in particular, annual computer-based training that Airmen considered repetitive and nonproductive. An October 2016 memorandum from the secretary of the Air Force and the CSAF announced a review of ancillary training that focused on 42 courses that required 60 hours of an airman's time (Goldfein and James, 2016b). The review led to the elimination of 15 courses, the consolidation of 16 others, and a promise to seek flexibility in the requirements for other courses that are mandated by federal statute or DoD policy.

[3] The approved list of ancillary training is posted on the Education and Training Course Announcement (ETCA) website (see AFI 36-2201, 2013b). The training is divided into four categories: annual Total Force Awareness Training (TFAT), which is "general awareness-level training for the 'Total Force' mandated by Congress, DoD or USAF [U.S. Air Force] combined into concise, Computer Based Training (CBT)"; selected force training (SFT), which is targeted to specific groups or populations; event-driven training, which is training associated with an event such as in-processing for a new assignment; and expeditionary skills training (EST), which is training related to skills necessary to operate in a contingency environment (AFI 36-2201, 2013a, Chapter 7).

Commander Perceptions of Responsibilities

We now discuss commander perceptions of their roles and responsibilities. Interviewees discussed which squadron commander duties and responsibilities are most important for ensuring that the squadron can meet its mission, which squadron commander duties and responsibilities require the most time on a regular basis, how squadron commanders prioritize their duties and responsibilities, and the extent to which squadron commanders can delegate responsibilities. Many interviewees also discussed responsibilities outlined in AFIs and additional duties. The subsections that follow provide results and illustrative quotes from our commander interviews.

Most Important Responsibilities

Most commanders indicated that responsibilities involving leading and managing people are most important for squadron commanders. Approximately 70 percent of the squadron commanders, 73 percent of group commanders, and 50 percent of wing commanders interviewed discussed how leading and managing people is the most important squadron commander responsibility. This was mentioned with similar frequency by squadron commanders of different tenures (i.e., 3 to 12 months; more than 12 months) and by commanders of squadrons with different missions. One exception was that leading and managing people was not mentioned as the most important aspect by special operations squadron commanders, who instead focused on equipping the squadron and guiding the training of those in the squadron.

Commenting on the importance of leading and managing people, one squadron commander stated,

> For me, and this is definitely part of who I am and that effective communication to my subordinates of who I am, but I really believe [in] being able to empower your subordinates to do their job. I think too often, some people can confuse management with leadership. Us as commanders, we're here to lead our people and not manage them. We manage time. We manage money. We manage our resources, but we need to be in the business of leading people, and that's where you delve into the difference of telling someone to do something versus empowering them to do it. I think we can be much more effective as a unit both from a morale perspective and a productivity perspective if people are empowered to do their job at every level, or as much as we can.

In a related point, several squadron commanders discussed the importance of promoting work-life balance among those in the squadron. For example, one stated, "I've always been a big proponent of quality of life: Keeping our Airmen by doing good things for our Airmen. Making sure that they have their time off, they feel like they're being treated fairly/adequately and well taken care of."

As noted earlier, other responsibilities discussed as most important for squadron commanders, but mentioned less frequently overall than leading and managing people, included equipping the squadron, identifying and addressing operational risk, and guiding squadron training.

Commanders of squadrons with different missions and different tenures on the job discussed these roles and responsibilities at similar rates.

Responsibilities That Require Most Time

Interviewees identified administrative duties and duties involving managing people as the responsibilities requiring most of a squadron commander's time on a regular basis. Approximately 73 percent of squadron commanders, 64 percent of group commanders, and 50 percent of wing commanders interviewed discussed the time spent on administrative duties. In addition, 50 percent of the squadron commanders, 73 percent of the group commanders, and 63 percent of the wing commanders interviewed discussed aspects involving managing people as requiring the most time. Commanders of squadrons with different missions and commanders with different lengths of tenure put similar emphasis on these two elements. Exceptions were that commanders of missile and cyber operations squadrons did not discuss the extent to which managing people required most of their time, but they did discuss the time required for administrative duties.

In commenting on administrative elements, one squadron commander stated,

> I believe that the administrative impact of being a squadron commander is pretty intense, especially as you move up the chain, or move up to a large unit like myself where, you know, I've got 500 people that I have to command. The number of things that I have to sign, the administrative minutia of what I do is very intense.

Another squadron commander stated,

> You know, I spend a lot of time working on admin stuff; I think I already said that before. . . . Every day I probably sign at least 50 documents; either it's somebody wanting to go on a trip back home and need me to sign a—what do they call those Space A requests? I forget, there's another name for it. But it can be anything from that to someone being assigned a job or an extra duty that I have to be responsible for, that someone's assigned to that job, signing those memorandums of who's in charge of the program. It's so many things that go into the admin realm that it seems to me that I spend way too much time on that and not enough time on things that I think are important. I'd like more time to do those things, put it that way. Getting out and talking to my airmen and finding out ways in which we can better do our mission.

In discussing managing people or personnel issues, one squadron commander noted,

> I would say personnel issues and this might be—whether it's disciplinary actions, and it just amazes when you go into disciplinary actions how much time is actually eaten up with any—and [other] personnel issues. So, sometimes it's a complete supportive role. I had a member of one of my crews while they were TDY [on temporary duty] in a different country was sexually assaulted. Well, 100% of your attention now shifts to that individual and that crew to make sure that they're taken care of, that they're safe, they're getting the support that they need; they're getting the medical attention, the SARC [sexual assault response coordinator], the OSI [AFOSI; Air Force Office of Special Investigations], the local police, whatever it might be. And so, 100% of my day when something like that happens is now shifted to that individual and that day might be 18 hours

> long. And so, like I said, the support structure is out there and we're aware of it. But, all of the phone calls and e-mails and follow-ups and everything else that go [sic] along with that kind of attention, that you just need to make sure that your folks are getting taken care of, it takes a tremendous amount of your day on a reoccurring basis. The same thing would be if you have a disciplinary issue. And so, whether it's a flight-related disciplinary issue, an off-duty, on-duty, AWOL [absent without leave], failure to go, you name it; the variety of disciplinary issues or personnel issues is as vast as is humanly possible. So, that takes up a tremendous amount of your time.

Prioritization of Responsibilities

Interviewees also described several factors that squadron commanders consider when prioritizing their responsibilities, including boss or commander priorities, mission, and needs of those in the squadron. Overall, squadron commanders discussed prioritization based on commander priorities (43 percent) and needs of those in the squadron (46 percent) at a relatively similar rate, with less discussion of prioritization based on mission (20 percent). Group commanders more frequently discussed prioritization based on boss or commander priorities (64 percent) than needs of those in the squadron (18 percent) or mission (27 percent). Wing commanders discussed prioritization based on commander priorities (38 percent) and mission (38 percent) at a higher rate than they discussed needs of those in the squadron (13 percent). Commanders of squadrons with different missions or with different lengths of tenure showed similar response patterns in their discussion of responsibility prioritization.

Ability to Delegate

Approximately 84 percent of the squadron commanders interviewed discussed how they could effectively delegate certain tasks, but notably, 64 percent discussed how there were tasks they could not effectively delegate. Among squadron commanders, those with 3 to 12 months of tenure and those with more than 12 months of tenure discussed their ability to effectively delegate and inability to effectively delegate certain tasks at similar rates. When considering commanders of different types of squadrons, those commanding attack squadrons and missile squadrons more frequently discussed how they were able to delegate than commanders of squadrons with other missions. Those commanding security forces and operations support squadrons more frequently discussed how they could not delegate tasks than those commanding squadrons with other missions. Ninety-one percent of the group commanders and 63 percent of the wing commanders we interviewed discussed how squadron commanders can effectively delegate certain tasks. Seventy-three percent of group commanders and 88 percent of wing commanders interviewed indicated that there are also tasks that squadron commanders cannot effectively delegate.

The individuals with whom we spoke indicated they were able to delegate some administrative tasks and taskers, and they frequently referenced delegating tasks to their directors of operations (DOs). When discussing why they felt they were able to effectively delegate, squadron

commanders often mentioned the utility of knowledgeable subordinates whom they could trust and on whom they could rely. For example, one squadron commander noted, "I am very lucky in that I have a strong DO, I have a strong chief and I have a strong first sergeant. So my leadership team here is super helpful in helping me get through and figuring out what I have to do myself and what I can push to somebody else."

Squadron commanders who discussed an inability to delegate effectively often noted that, although they would like to delegate more, rules or regulations prevent them from delegating certain elements to their subordinates. For example, performance reports, awards, and disciplinary actions were referenced as elements requiring commander input. One squadron commander stated, "Some of the things personnel-wise, like signing EPRs [enlisted performance reports], decorations, administering punishment, that relies on me because I'm the commander and I'm the only one that's authorized to do that." Another squadron commander commented,

> You know, it's getting worse and worse. There was a time where I could delegate much more. I mean, even now it seems as if they're trying to push as much as they can onto the squadron commander's lap. You know, the section commander's responsibilities, [there] were much more [that] could be done at that level. You know, (1) we don't have a section commander, but, (2) a lot of things need to get to the squadron commander so that I guess—maybe it's the accountability piece needs someone to be accountable in all these decisions and they want a focal point for that purpose. But it just seems to me as if the squadron commander is getting inundated with much more administrative minutia than they used to be at one time.

Other factors interviewees discussed less frequently that prevent squadron commanders from delegating include a lack of comfort with delegating and a lack of personnel to whom to delegate (i.e., undermanning).

Elements That Interfere with Squadron's Ability to Perform Its Mission

Commanders also discussed administrative or other unit responsibilities that interfere with a squadron's ability to perform its mission. Elements that interfered include paperwork related to enlisted performance reports, officer performance reports, and decorations; attendance at noncritical meetings; taskers from MAJCOMs and HQs; and slow or malfunctioning computer equipment and websites. However, a large majority of the squadron (80 percent), group (91 percent), and wing (100 percent) commanders interviewed commented on interference from additional duties and ancillary duties. Squadron commanders of different tenures and those commanding squadrons with different missions tended to similarly emphasize interference from these additional or ancillary duties.

As noted previously, many of the duties that commanders perceive as additional duties or duties that are ancillary to the core mission may not be classified as such by the Air Force. In

describing the ancillary duties that interfere with a squadron's mission in detail, one squadron commander stated,

> Well, I mean, everyone is beating the additional duties and—Well, I'll put it this way: I think, administratively, over the years lots of Air Force programs and/or wing programs have grown a life of their own, which is codified in AFIs, which drive a lot of extra paperwork and/or squadron command or higher leadership attention that doesn't necessarily need to be there. And I could probably list a bunch of them, but for one example, inventories for munitions accounts or equipment accounts that the squadron commander has to sign once a month and my people have to produce paperwork, etcetera—Once a month. And if you kind of integrate that across all different kinds of additional duties and Air Force level programs, it turns into easily a couple hours a day that you could spend, if you let it, just signing things and/or [crossing t's and dotting i's]. Now, those things are important, but I think they can be done more efficiently. . . . I think the focus on like system and methodology and documentation has gone overboard. I wish I had a little more chance to kind of manage that risk on my own, without maybe getting a black eye from higher up the chain in different functional area managers at the MAJCOM level if we didn't spend as much time making everything look pretty in the system of record. So, little things like that. I think there's a lot of babysitting and handholding that is implicit in just the way the Air Force does business. A lot of it is probably warranted, but it feels like a trust thing sometimes for the squadron commander. If you're given the responsibility and held accountable for doing inaction, whether it be safety or whatever, then let me wear that responsibility instead of looking over my shoulder and holding my hand while I'm doing it.

Commander Recommendations for Aspects to Change

In addition to preparation and resourcing changes, discussed in later chapters, commanders also provided general recommendations for other aspects of their responsibilities that they would like to see changed. Table 2.1 lists the primary themes that commanders provided within these general recommendations. As seen in this table, the most frequently discussed additional recommendation was to change management and administrative responsibilities.

Table 2.1. Recommendations for Responsibility-Related Changes and the Proportion of Commanders Who Mentioned Them

General Recommendation Theme	Squadron Commanders (%)	Group Commanders (%)	Wing Commanders (%)
Management and administrative responsibilities should change	29	36	50
Leadership expectations should change	25	27	13
Higher-level leadership direction should change	18	27	0
Air Force instructions should change	7	18	38
More human interaction should occur	20	0	13

When discussing desired management and administrative changes, squadron commanders referenced desires for fewer meetings, fewer reporting requirements, and fewer approvals requiring squadron commander review and signature. One squadron commander stated,

> I think you can give squadron commanders . . . flexibility. So stop hitting up all the squadrons for those admin things that we talked about because there's no excess capacity to fill it, right? We're always going to have to make a tradeoff, do the mission or do a detail, do the mission or answer this tasker.

Commanders also discussed changing leadership expectations, noting that higher-level commanders should modify their expectations of squadron commanders and squadrons based on the time and resources available. Commenting on a "lack of clear direction from [the] next level up," squadron and group commanders also indicated that higher-level leadership support should change, such as through improved communication.

Other recommended changes included modifications to AFIs and increasing human interaction. Discussing modifications to AFIs, one squadron commander stated, "The first thing that came to mind has to do with regulations or AFIs. I think too much is dictated to us on how we need to train our folks and execute operations. . . . They really should give us some flexibility and trust us as commanders." When discussing human interactions, commanders often referenced desires for increased opportunities to interact with other commanders in their peer group.

Summary

No single document describes the responsibilities of a squadron commander; they are scattered among numerous documents related to inspections, additional duties, and ancillary training, as well as in AFIs containing compliance statements related to squadron operations. Throughout interviews, frustrations with the time required for duties not perceived as key to a squadron's mission, including taskers, ancillary duties, and additional duties, were mentioned often. Recent changes to duties designated by the Air Force as additional duties and ancillary training may address some concerns expressed by commanders. However, many of the concerns they raised addressed duties that are not officially designated as additional duties but that they perceive as requiring significant time to address, including taskers and various administrative duties. Thorough review of the time required of commanders by different duties, including those outlined in Air Force instructions, and the taskers they receive from various authorities may help to identify whether there are responsibilities currently levied on commanders that can be reduced or eliminated. This review may also highlight responsibilities for which lower-level waiver authorities may be granted or that commanders may delegate to others. Such a review would require consideration of the potential risks the Air Force would be willing to allow in order to reduce the number of duties and responsibilities commanders currently must address.

3. Squadron Commander Preparation

Air Force officers are prepared for an assignment as squadron commander in two ways. First, by their career experiences, which can be affected not only by the individual's choices but also by career development teams that work to ensure that officers recognized as having the potential for command are given opportunities for assignments that will prepare them for it.[1] Second, they are prepared for command through squadron commander courses that are conducted by MAJCOMs and functional organizations. We discuss each of these in turn in the following sections, then provide squadron commanders' views about how well prepared they felt upon taking command and areas in which additional preparation could be useful.

Career Experiences

In discussions with career field managers, we learned that several career experiences are considered important by leaders for the development of the skills needed to serve as a squadron commander. Serving as an operations officer or in a similar position can be considered a valuable experience for preparing an individual for command. For example, serving as a DO in a flying squadron (or an analogous position in another career field) not only provides experience in conducting a squadron's mission but also provides an opportunity to learn by closely observing how the commander does his or her job. Experience on an HQ staff might help an individual better understand Air Force strategy and doctrine, as well as processes and procedures that will affect him or her in command. Attending IDE is another valuable career experience for those who might be on the path to squadron commander. Only about 20 percent of officers promoted to major are also selected to attend IDE in residence.[2]

Using data from the Military Personnel Data System (MilPDS), the Air Force's primary database for personnel data and actions, we examined the career histories of all Air Force personnel who were serving as squadron commanders as of May 12, 2017, to see if their experiences before taking command differed based on the type of squadron they commanded. While many aspects of a career could be explored, Table 3.1 shows the percentages of

[1] Development teams are described in AFI 36-2640. Among other things, they "ensure senior leadership within each career field becomes familiar with the people assigned to their functional area, making assessments of member potential for future opportunities" (AFI 36-2640, 2011, Chapter 3, paragraph 3.1.1).

[2] See, for example, Sitterly (2009). Officers not selected for in-residence attendance when promoted to major have other opportunities to compete for a limited number of in-residence slots, so actual attendance is viewed as an indicator of a successful career and potential for future development. However, different squadron types may attach different weights to the importance of in-residence attendance as a prerequisite for squadron command.

Table 3.1. Career Experiences of Squadron Commanders

Squadron Type	Number of Squadron Commanders	IDE in Residence (%)	Served in HAF Position (%)	Served as Ops Officer or Analogous Position (%)[a]
Aircraft maintenance	65	52	15	45
Airlift	34	71	15	56
Air mobility	11	64	0	45
Air refueling	24	71	21	63
Attack	12	50	17	83
Civil engineering	60	35	40	5
Communications	64	52	20	5
Cyber operations	12	58	25	17
Fighter	54	70	7	89
Force support	64	61	36	56
Information operations	1	100	0	100
Intelligence	53	53	34	55
Missile	8	63	75	63
Network operations	4	75	50	25
Network warfare	2	50	0	50
Operations support	96	66	19	73
Security forces	71	56	17	82
Special operations	22	86	9	91

SOURCE: MilPDS data from May 2017 for personnel in squadron command positions as of May 12, 2017.
[a] Coding in MilPDS is not consistent for operations officer positions. There is an "operations officer" prefix associated with these positions, but these positions do not always have "operations officer" in the position title. The reverse is also the case. There is also a functional activity code operations officer, but it also does not appear consistently with the prefix or position title. Percentages in this column are based on a record showing either an operations officer prefix or "operations officer" in the position title.

squadron commanders who had IDE in residence, HAF staff experience,[3] or experience in an operations-officer-like position before becoming a commander, and it illustrates how career experiences differ among the 18 squadron types we examined.

Fifty-six percent of security forces squadron commanders attended IDE in residence, while 70 percent of fighter squadron commanders did. Of squadron types with more than eight squadrons, civil engineer squadron commanders have the highest percentage of HAF staff assignments at 40 percent, while only 7 percent of fighter squadron commanders have that experience. For prior experience in an operations-officer-like position, civil engineer and communications squadron commanders have the lowest percentage (5 percent), while 91 percent

[3] Staff positions at other HQ levels, such as the Joint Chiefs of Staff, a numbered Air Force, or a MAJCOM, can also be seen in the data.

of security forces commanders have served in such positions. This large difference may reflect different job titles associated with similar positions in different squadron types. However, differences in other experiences may be reflections of different opportunities in squadrons of different types or differences in expectations on the part of senior leadership in those functional areas.[4] The Air Force could monitor these differences to determine (1) if and how career experiences should differ for commanders of different types of squadrons and (2) if commanders are in fact receiving the best type of career experiences to prepare them for command. For example, noting the low percentage of fighter squadron commanders who have served in HQ positions, career development teams might explore the possibility of increasing the opportunities for fighter pilots to serve in such positions before assuming squadron command, or they could determine that observed high in-residence IDE completion rates and experience in operations officer positions are more important for this type of squadron.

Formal Course Preparation for Squadron Commanders

Squadron Commander Courses

Each of the nine MAJCOMs conducts a formal squadron commander preparation course that is often, but not always, attended by an officer before assuming squadron command. In addition, some functionals provide additional courses that include specialized topics for newly selected commanders. RAND obtained detailed information on MAJCOM and functional squadron commander courses, as well as on a squadron commander course that was conducted by the Air Force Personnel Center (AFPC) until 2013,[5] in order to determine whether there is a common core of subjects presented and whether there are obvious courses missing.[6]

Generally, the courses last five days and cover from 20 to 60 topics. Appendix D provides details of the topics covered by each of the courses in 2016, but we comment on two areas here. First, despite the reasonably large number of topics in each course, there is surprisingly little overlap among the MAJCOMs. Table 3.2 shows topics or presenters that are included in seven to nine of the MAJCOM courses; only six topics are covered in all nine.

[4] We attempted to explore differences in the performance of squadron commanders among the different types by looking at two MilPDS variables that can be used to show that a commander was removed. However, the data were not reliable.

[5] The last AFPC squadron commander course was conducted in 2013. It was canceled because of budget cuts (email communication from Leon D. Zera, AFPC Field Activities, Randolph Air Force Base, Texas, July 13, 2016).

[6] We are grateful to Col Samantha Weeks, who attended MAJCOM courses in 2015 and provided syllabi and comments about each course. RAND independently obtained course syllabi for three functional courses.

Table 3.2. Common Major Command Courses

Topic or Presenter	Included in All MAJCOM Courses	Included in 7 to 9 of the MAJCOM Courses
Chaplain	X	X
Inspector general	X	X
Judge advocate general (JAG)	X	X
Medical	X	X
Mission briefing	X	X
Sexual Assault Prevention and Response (SAPR)	X	X
First sergeant panel		X
Command chief master sergeant		X
Functional manager		X
Functional time		X
MAJCOM/commander speech		X
Mortuary and casualty		X
Safety		X

SOURCE: RAND summary of MAJCOM courses.

AFPC previously offered a course that was mentioned more than once in interviews with career field managers as an opportunity to learn more about personnel management issues that a commander will face, including military career development and management of civilians. About 33 topics addressed in the AFPC course are not clearly discussed in the MAJCOM courses. Table 3.3 lists 18 of these topics that are associated with important personnel management duties of a squadron commander.

Table 3.3. Personnel Management Units in Canceled Air Force Personnel Center Course That Are Absent from Current Major Command Courses

AF Evaluations and Promotions: Recommendation Forms	Enlisted Retraining and Reenlistment
AF Manpower Agency	Force Management Programs
AF Personnel Accountability and Assessment System	How Do I Fill My Civilian Positions?
Assignment Limitation Codes	Making a Civilian Selection
Assignment Management Systems Demo	Officer Assignment System
Civilian Classification	Officer Development Education
Civilian Hiring Flexibilities	Officer Promotion Board Procedures
Civilian Performance Management	Professional Military Education
Civilian Recognition Program	Taking Civilian Disciplinary Action

Overall, there is wide variability in the topics discussed in the MAJCOM and functional courses. Because MAJCOMs differ in mission and squadron type composition, it makes sense that there is variation in the course topics presented. However, the number of personnel management topics formerly covered in the AFPC course that are not presented in current MAJCOM courses raises the possibility that some important areas are not discussed because of time limitations.

Professional Military Education

RAND also examined the course syllabi for IDE courses for the Air Force (Air Command and Staff College [ACSC]),[7] Army (Command and General Staff Officer Course [CGSOC]), and Navy (College of Naval Command and Staff) to see if there were clear differences in emphasis related to commanding a squadron. The most notable difference across courses is that the Army conducts a Tactical Commanders Development Program for all selected battalion commanders (operationally equivalent to Air Force squadron commanders). The course is

> focused on the tactical commander and his/her upcoming command tour. The command designees will participate in instructor facilitated, officer-led discussions and practical exercises in Organizational Leadership; Information Operations Engagement; Counter-Insurgency (COIN); Cultural Awareness; Media and Strategic Communications; Commander's Visualization; Design; Ethical Decision Making in Combat; Operations in JIIM [Joint, Interagency, Intergovernmental, and Multinational] Environment; Practical Exercises encompassing full spectrum operations (FSO). The course content is introduced from a doctrinal perspective then quickly transitions to an application in the current operating environment the commanders will experience during their command tour. (U.S. Army, 2014, p. 73)

The course is two weeks long—a week longer than any of the Air Force squadron commander courses.

Commander Perceptions of Preparation

Our discussions with squadron, group, and wing commanders provided insight into their understanding of and preparation for squadron commander responsibilities upon initially taking command. The commanders we interviewed also talked in some detail about the courses in which they had participated and aspects of training that they thought were helpful, aspects that were not helpful, and additional training that may be helpful for those who are or soon will be squadron commanders.

[7] The Air Force makes a distinction between professional military education, such as ACSC, and formal training. Developmental education is governed by AFI 36-2301 (2013), and training is governed by AFI 36-2201 (2013a).

Understanding of and Preparation for Squadron Commander Responsibilities

Most of the individuals we interviewed indicated that squadron commanders have a good understanding of roles and responsibilities when initially taking command. Approximately 84 percent of the squadron commanders, 55 percent of the group commanders, and 63 percent of the wing commanders we interviewed either indicated that they had a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities upon initially taking squadron command or that squadron commanders, in general, had a good understanding upon initially taking command. Commanders of squadrons with different missions held similar perceptions regarding their strong level of understanding upon initially taking command. In addition, regarding understanding, squadron commanders who had been in command 3 to 12 months responded similarly to those who had been in command more than 12 months.

Many squadron commanders noted that they had a good understanding due to their previous experiences and responsibilities. For example, one squadron commander noted,

> I think I had a pretty good sight picture on what it meant to be a commander and the requirements of command. I think that's mainly because of some of the previous commanders that I had who have been rather inclusive of the command job; meaning as I came up, I was exposed to their decision making processes to include administrative actions and stuff like that[,] whereas I know other commanders who don't include their young officers in that kind of environment.

A small number of commanders indicated either poor overall understanding of roles and responsibilities upon initially taking command or poor understanding of personnel management. One squadron commander commented,

> But, there are some parts of taking care of people that I did not understand, primarily assignment system, personnel system, and the intricacies of that when you started dealing with people problems. So, what happens when somebody turns an assignment down? What happens when someone has a medical issue, and what does that do to assignments, and then how do they get classified? So, some of those things; that's the personnel side.

In addition, a group commander noted,

> The things they're not prepared for, and I would say I was the same way, is most of them had absolutely no exposure to how to handle discipline. Most of them had no exposure to how to handle resource adviser or money, budget things. Most of them had minimal exposure to really the whole process of how to write performance reports as far as managing them at a squadron level.

Responsibilities for Which Squadron Commanders Are Least Prepared

Interviewees also discussed elements of squadron command for which squadron commanders were least prepared. The two most frequently discussed elements were (1) management and administrative responsibilities and (2) disciplinary issues. Lack of preparation for management and administrative responsibilities was discussed by approximately 50 percent of the squadron commanders, 45 percent of the group commanders, and 25 percent of the wing commanders we

interviewed. Lack of preparation for disciplinary issues was discussed by 41 percent of squadron commanders, 45 percent of group commanders, and 38 percent of wing commanders. Among squadron commanders, these two issues were mentioned with similar frequency by those who had been in command 3 to 12 months and those who had been in command more than 12 months. They also tended to be mentioned with similar frequency regardless of the type of squadrons the commander led. Exceptions were that no commanders of security forces squadrons discussed a lack of preparation for management and administrative responsibilities, and no commanders of aircraft maintenance, communications, or security forces squadrons discussed a lack of preparation for disciplinary issues.

When discussing management and administrative responsibilities, many interviewees mentioned a lack of preparation for management systems, assignments, and performance evaluations. For example, a squadron commander noted,

> There used to be an Air Force Personnel Center Commander's course where they would teach you . . . all the queep basically.[8] So, they'd tell you how to pull people's records. They'd teach you how to make requisitions when somebody moves to get a replacement, and that [course], because of funding limitations and because we never have a budget on time, basically got turned off. So, I never got to go to that. I can tell you that I miss that dearly. I had to learn all that on my own and I've had to learn it through trial and error sometimes and sometimes when it comes to trying to replace somebody that left by finally filling out a requisition online, I did not have what I considered the right training to do that properly and I messed it up the first time.

Another squadron commander stated,

> The assignments process for airmen, helping them change the assignment, helping them get assignments, helping them cancel assignments when some family emergency arises or a need arises. That was a process I wasn't familiar with and I would have liked some training in that before I took command.

Interviewees noted that a lack of understanding regarding nonjudicial punishments and Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) violations contributed to the limited preparation for addressing disciplinary issues. One squadron commander stated,

> I guess the biggest thing I struggled with . . . [was] the legal consequences of my authority, my authority as commander, I don't feel like I was prepared for that, or the Air Force prepared me. I didn't know at all really what my left and right boundaries were in dealing with personnel in terms of UCMJ. I felt that was just a huge, huge limiting factor for me.

Although mentioned less frequently, interviewees also commented on additional elements for which squadron commanders were least prepared, including how to manage money, how to handle the overall number of tasks and responsibilities that squadron commanders have, how to mentor others, and how to cope with the limited available administrative support.

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[8] *Queep* is slang for duties and paperwork that interfere with one's primary duties.

Commander Training

Table 3.4 provides descriptive information regarding ACSC and MAJCOM training in which the commanders we interviewed indicated they had participated. Commanders may have participated in more than one course in each category of training, such as more than one MAJCOM training, or they may not have participated in certain education or training courses. The numbers listed in the table reflect training courses in which interviewees explicitly mentioned participating. Notably, several commanders also indicated participation in functional courses or, if serving in a higher level of command (e.g., group), a course relevant to that level of command. This table highlights the training experiences and backgrounds from which interviewees drew when discussing squadron commander preparation.

Table 3.4. Numbers of Commanders Who Participated in Each Type of Training

Education and Training	Squadron Commanders	Group Commanders	Wing Commanders
ACSC, including ACSC-equivalent education			
In residence	25	6	4
Via correspondence	28	3	1
Both in residence and via correspondence	9	2	4
MAJCOM squadron commander training			
ACC	12	2	2
AETC	8	1	0
AFGSC	4	1	0
AFMC	3	1	0
AFPC	2	1	0
AFSPC	6	0	1
AFSOC	2	0	1
AMC	15	5	2
PACAF	6	2	1
USAFE	7	0	1

NOTE: As discussed in Chapter One, we interviewed 56 squadron commanders, 11 group commanders, and 8 wing commanders.

Perceptions of Previous Training

Commanders discussed which training courses they had taken that were helpful and which were not helpful for preparing individuals for squadron command, and they explained why these courses were or were not helpful. Most commanders focused on elements of ACSC or the squadron commanders' courses provided by their MAJCOMs, described previously. They often commented that the MAJCOM courses are most applicable to squadron commander preparation.

Helpfulness of Training

Commanders identified three primary elements of squadron commander training that they perceived as most helpful for preparing individuals for command: (1) provision of information on specifics of command, (2) spending time with Air Force leadership, and (3) spending time with others who would become squadron commanders. Among squadron commanders, approximately 61 percent of those interviewed mentioned the helpfulness of information on specifics of command, 39 percent mentioned the utility of spending time with Air Force leadership, and 30 percent mentioned the utility of spending time with future squadron commanders. Among group commanders, 64 percent mentioned the helpfulness of information on specifics of command, 36 percent mentioned the utility of spending time with Air Force leadership, and 1 percent mentioned the utility of spending time with future squadron commanders. Among wing commanders, 38 percent commented on the specifics of command, 50 percent commented on time with Air Force leadership, and 38 percent commented on time with future squadron commanders.

Commanders of squadrons with different missions and of different command tenures (i.e., 3 to 12 months, more than 12 months) similarly stated that provision of information on specifics of command was helpful in training, with the exception that no force support squadron commanders discussed this.

Interviewees provided many comments regarding the specifics of command that were most helpful for them. These comments were based on the MAJCOM courses that interviewees attended, and as noted previously in this report, course structure and information can vary across different MAJCOMs and across the time period during which a course was offered within a MAJCOM. Commenting on the MAJCOM course, one squadron commander noted,

> I learned so much about the—I'll call this the science of command, the specific intricacies and ins and outs of due dates for performance reports and how you handle somebody who's got a discipline problem; the UCMJ, how you apply UCMJ; what the commander's roles and responsibilities are for things like accusations of sexual harassment or sexual assault. They go over all that stuff, and they go over it in what I would consider very good, others might call it excruciating, but they go over it in detail, so that when you are presented with a situation like that, in the future—hopefully you don't have to deal with any of the negative stuff—but when you get that stuff, you know A) what to do, and B) who to call.

Also commenting on the MAJCOM course, a group commander stated, "I think it dealt with what you have to do, your responsibilities as a commander, whether it was paperwork, expectations as a commander, judicial, legal requirements, from what I remember, I just felt like I walked out of there better prepared to go to squadron command."

Across commanders of squadrons with different missions, no commanders of fighter squadrons, attack squadrons, air mobility squadrons, missile squadrons, or security forces squadrons mentioned the utility of spending time with future squadron commanders during training. In addition, no commanders of force support squadrons, intelligence squadrons, or special operations squadrons mentioned the utility of spending time with Air Force leadership.

Squadron commanders who had been in command 3 to 12 months more frequently mentioned the utility of spending time with future squadron commanders than those in command more than 12 months.

Discussing why time with Air Force leadership was helpful in training, one squadron commander noted,

> Here's the bottom line, it wasn't death by PowerPoint, if that makes any sense. There was a lot of interaction and of course the General would stop in the middle of it, and emphasize a certain point, so there were a lot of things that were given, as far as his direction, that were great, straight from the MAJCOM commander's mouth. So to be able to get that information and to give it context, while the briefers are up there, briefing their staff function, it was very, very beneficial.

Emphasizing why spending time with future squadron commanders was useful, another squadron commander commented,

> But the reality is, the courses that I've been to, the schools that I've been to, they're all great and they gave me sometimes very specific knowledge. But, the best thing I got was phone numbers, friends, people to call, people to bounce ideas off, or to ask questions of.

Lack of Helpfulness of Training

Although discussed less frequently than helpful aspects, commanders also commented on elements of training they perceived as unhelpful, or less helpful, in preparing squadron commanders. One theme that arose across interviews regarding ACSC training was that it did not provide sufficient information on how to command. Approximately 25 percent of the squadron commanders, 18 percent of the group commanders, and 25 percent of the wing commanders interviewed noted that ACSC training did not provide sufficient information on specifics of command. This theme appeared across commanders of different command tenures and of squadrons with several different missions, but the theme was mentioned most frequently by commanders of communications and information operations squadrons. Commenting on his ACSC experience in general one squadron commander stated,

> It was kind of like just get through the blocks of instruction, go take the test and pass, then go just work as hard as you can to get through it and try to understand it, go take the test, pass and move on. So it was a lot of brain dumping going on. But every once in a while in that[,] if I found a resource that I wanted to keep because I'd like to go back and actually read it and study it a little bit more, then I would take that; and there were probably a couple books like that. But overall, I didn't think that was useful at all; it was more of a measure of how much can you work, and how fast can you probably get this done. I don't know, it just seemed like a time bust.

Themes that arose across interviews regarding MAJCOM commander training were that it was not relevant, too broad, not memorable, or too short. Of these, the most commonly mentioned theme was that MAJCOM training was not relevant. Approximately 18 percent of squadron commanders, 45 percent of group commanders, and 25 percent of wing commanders

commented on the lack of relevance in MAJCOM training. This theme appeared across commanders of different command tenures and of squadrons with several different missions. However, the theme was discussed most frequently by commanders of cyber operations and force support squadrons. One squadron commander commented,

> They spend an awful lot of time talking about programs that are important, but not the ones that are what I call super important. . . . We spent a whole afternoon talking about the key spouse program. Now, it's not that I don't think the key spouse program is fantastic and it's important, but I'd much rather the JAG office spend more time talking about the dos and don'ts of a squadron commander and the A1 Community Force Support Squadron talking to me more about the very intricate details of say the AMS [assignment management system] and ADPs [Airman development plans] and Officer Performance Reports and how they meet boards—there was portions of that and there was stuff I wanted a lot more of, and then there was some stuff—I didn't need to hear from the chaplain for four hours. I'm good. I love the chaplain, but I didn't need to hear from him for four hours.

Another squadron commander stated,

> [In United States Air Forces in Europe training], they're trying to capture stuff that would be common to everyone. Which is useful but it's not as useful as if there was a course for operational squadron commanders, flying squadron commanders or something like that because there's a lot more—a lot of this commander's course was focused on discipline issues and working with the Red Cross, working with the First Sergeant and then the Chief and all that stuff. And we don't do a lot of that stuff because we have such a small squadron. You don't deal with a lot of the discipline issues and you don't have as many of the personnel issues. So, and it's useful, like I still needed that stuff, but if there was some supplement where you talked more about what are you going to deal with as a flying squadron commander taught by people that know, previous squadron commanders and stuff like that, that would be more useful.

One group commander also noted,

> The only thing I would say is within those training sessions, like at the MAJCOM and at the functional level, is anywhere we can formalize those and make those individual sessions better. I guess I think there's some fluff or some maybe "non-valued-added" material in like your MAJCOM training program. And it's maybe not as rigorous as it could be. It ends up just being briefings from each of the two letter functionals at the MAJCOM instead of things that you really need to know as a squadron commander.

Utility of Additional Training

Commanders provided suggestions for additional training that may help to better prepare individuals for squadron command. Most commanders believed that provision of more information on how to command would be useful. Approximately 66 percent of the squadron commanders, 88 percent of the group commanders, and 64 percent of wing commanders interviewed noted the utility of this information. This was a common theme across squadron

commanders with different missions and of different command tenures. Suggesting how to improve training, a group commander stated,

> Well, right off the bat I would flip the Group and Squadron Commander courses and I would actually have the squadron commanders go to that two-week-plus course and the group commanders, who should already be well-versed in all those topics, just get the refresh, one-week course. I think we've got it backwards. I think that right there would prepare us for a lot. The second one is a grander question of how to run the squadron, and this goes back to Gen. Goldfein's discussion on the squadron as being the heart of the Air Force. If you're going to continue to require the squadron commander to be the expert in money, the expert in discipline, the expert in the personnel actions on BLSDM [the base-level service delivery model] and the other programs we use, then I need to train the squadron commander better in how to do all that. I would disagree with that approach though because, again, you didn't hire me—as an officer you didn't hire me to be the squadron commander so that I could push papers around all day; I'm supposed to be leading the unit. So for me it's a two-parter; the first part is give me the two-week class that the OGs [operations group commanders] got and the second part is give me the personnel to handle the actions that need to be done, day in and day out management of the squadron so I can go back and focus on the mission.

Networking Preparation

Commanders also specifically discussed whether squadron commanders were sufficiently prepared for networking before taking command. Although 75 percent of the squadron commanders we interviewed felt they were being adequately prepared for the networking required of them, only about half of the group commanders (55 percent) and 50 wing commanders (50 percent) held this view. This was a common theme across commanders of squadrons with different missions and of different command tenures. In describing why they believed there was sufficient preparation, many indicated that those who reach squadron command are naturally skilled at networking (e.g., personality factors). Others remarked that the MAJCOM course either permitted or emphasized the importance of networking and offered periodic face-to-face gatherings that permitted networking.

However, a wing commander explained the following when discussing why squadron commanders may not be adequately prepared to network:

> Q: Do you feel that squadron commanders are adequately prepared for the networking that they'll be required to do as squadron commanders?
>
> A: No. But that's for me and the leadership above them at their unit level when they get here to encourage them to make them understand that's an expectation. Because every single one of them will come into their job and they will get isolated. They will get overwhelmed in the task that they have at hand. And when somebody is over-tasked they obviously want to go in a turtle shell and hide and just try to manage it on their own. They have to be reminded over and over again that the expectation is you come out of that, that you network across, you go talk to your buddies that you know are experiencing some of the same issues, share your problems, let them share their problems with you, understand that there's helping agencies across this base that are here to help you. . . .

> Q: Okay. And do you know why they don't know that? Why they don't have that network yet?
>
> A: Yeah, I think it's just the nature of how you grow up. You grow up in a stove-piped organization focused on getting whatever mission is that you're assigned done. And that's all you've ever interacted with is your squadron level and below, for the most part.

Squadron Commander Previous Experience

Commanders described how long they believed squadron commanders needed in order to become fully functional and what previous experiences promoted their success. Many indicated that various factors can influence the amount of time required to become fully functional. However, most interviewees indicated that individuals needed at least two to five months and, more typically, at least six months in order to become fully functional squadron commanders.

When discussing experiences that promoted squadron commander success, approximately 63 percent of squadron commanders, 73 percent of group commanders, and 63 percent of wing commanders interviewed discussed the utility of breadth of experience. This was a theme across squadron commanders with different missions and of different command tenures. Describing this, a wing commander stated,

> Starting out as a lieutenant, getting an opportunity to serve in the front office of a squadron; getting the opportunity to serve at the group and then wing level, that helps, that gives you a peek behind the curtain and you understand, you've seen a PRF [promotion recommendation form] before you actually have to write one. You understand how a wing runs, and so when you're a squadron commander, you're aware how the decisions are coming, the taskers are coming at you, and what went into that tasker or potentially where that tasker originally came from. I think having operational experience is important for a commander, whatever that entails, depending on the career field. So some people are deployed in place, but you can't spend so much time at a staff job or in school, and then pop out and expect to be a really great commander, when you haven't been in a unit that is doing that mission.

Many commanders also specifically mentioned the utility of serving in a leadership role, specifically DO or flight commander. Approximately 36 percent of the squadron commanders, 18 percent of group commanders, and 25 percent of wing commanders mentioned the utility of holding this position before taking squadron command. This was discussed at a similar rate across squadron commanders of different tenure lengths, but it was not discussed by commanders of squadrons with certain missions (i.e., air refueling, aircraft maintenance, airlift, force support, and security forces). Discussing why he perceived this to be an important experience to have before taking squadron command, one squadron commander stated,

> If you haven't held a flight commander or a Director of Operations or a position like that where you're making decisions and communicating to people what those decisions are and facilitating them, getting that done, basic leadership tasks, you have to have experience like that. You don't want to learn that sitting in a squadron commander seat or any command billet. And I've seen people who have struggled with those things just because they've never had that opportunity.

Commander Recommendations for Preparation

Commanders then provided general recommendations for how the Air Force can better prepare individuals for command. Three primary themes arose during commander discussions regarding preparation, complementing comments and themes noted previously. The most common theme was that more focused leadership training better prepares individuals for command. This was discussed by approximately 46 percent of the squadron commanders, 73 percent of the group commanders, and 88 percent of the wing commanders we interviewed. This was a theme across squadron commanders with different missions and of different command tenures. Within this theme, several commanders noted the importance of better education on the software and systems that squadron commanders must use. For example, one squadron commander commented on the need for more training on how to use personnel systems, stating,

> I think if I had one bumper sticker for the entire interview—my bumper sticker would be just, "Managing Personnel Systems." And that's what we really need to focus on. What we need to train our squadron commanders is managing of personnel systems, whether that's civilian personnel, military personnel, manpower, all the administrative things, personnel administrative-wise and teaching it prior to command.

Commanders also discussed the utility of more information on resourcing and professional development. One squadron commander noted,

> I mean, I would hate to say to increase the squadron commander course at the MAJCOM level. It's already a week long and it's hard to take that week off. But I would've loved more training in the money aspect and the managing of resources, and developmental education and developmental processes for airmen, both enlisted and officer. So making that course two weeks and having a more in-depth focus on those items that we don't touch as tactical operators would've been nice. But that would improve the processes. That's what I felt least prepared for.

Commanders also believe that a greater breadth of experiences, as mentioned earlier, and valuable mentorship serve to better prepare individuals for command. Commenting on mentorship, several interviewees indicated they appreciated or would have liked to have had more information from previous commanders on what worked well and what did not work well when they were in command. One squadron commander noted,

> [During] the commander's course, it would've been great just to have a couple days of bringing in prior commanders and talking about what they did great and then things that they . . . hadn't done right, some of their recommendations on what not to do but more of the like this is what worked great.

Another squadron commander suggested,

> I think another thing that they could do is . . . what our group commander started, which is having a monthly DO mentorship program; a mentorship talk where our group commander, once a month, after the DOs, all the ops officers, and then have one squadron commander give a talk and it's kind of an open discussion.

> They can talk about whatever they want to, but it's just advice. It's just mentoring the ops officer. And I love going to them. Even if I'm not speaking, I go to them because I feel like I can always learn something. So, I sit there. It's another thing that sucks our time, but it's very, very useful. I think—do you mandate that across the Air Force? I don't know. I don't know if it would work everywhere, but it certainly works in our group.

Summary

Air Force officers are prepared for assignment to squadron command by their career experiences before assuming command and in formal courses provided by the MAJCOMs and functional communities. While these experiences and courses cover a wide range of topics, our discussions with squadron, group, and wing commanders indicated there are some notable gaps:

- **Information on specifics of command.** Many interviewees commented on the need for more information on the specifics of command before assuming squadron command, including additional information on administrative systems, review procedures, and processes for disciplining personnel. Squadron commander training that is lengthier than, or separate from, the current five-day courses and that focuses on topics taught in a now-canceled AFPC course may address many of the concerns and preferences commanders discussed during interviews.
- **Breadth of experience before command.** In addition, ensuring individuals have a breadth of experiences before becoming squadron commanders, including experience as an operations officer (or analogous position) and experience working with higher levels of command, might also better prepare individuals for squadron command.

4. Squadron and Squadron Commander Resources

As mentioned in Chapter One, one concern within the Air Force is that some squadron commanders may incur higher levels of mission risk associated with a disproportionate lack of unit resources. That is, either by design or default, some squadrons could be called informally "have" and "have-not" squadrons. The Air Force has no standard for determining whether an organization is properly resourced. Manpower standards come close to serving as standards, since the Air Force makes a distinction between requirements in a unit and funded requirements. However, as discussed later, many squadron commanders feel that manpower standards are out of date, so comparing assigned personnel to authorized personnel may not provide an accurate picture of whether a unit is over- or underresourced. Therefore, for this part of our research, we examined *potential* sources of information that the Air Force could use to determine whether data support anecdotes about such squadron differences.[1] Within this chapter, we suggest a display of data, such as a resourcing display tool, that could be used to better understand resourcing differences among squadrons. To facilitate better understanding of squadron commander experiences with resourcing, we also include information obtained during interviews regarding commander perceptions of resourcing and manning.

Resourcing Information Within Databases

In describing potential sources of information the Air Force could use to examine resourcing, we focus on four sources of information:

- data related to the number of personnel assigned to a unit compared to the number of people authorized for the unit
- data associated with unit funding
- survey data about Airmen's perceptions of unit resources[2]
- data associated with unit readiness.

In the sections that follow, we describe how this information could be used to provide insight into resourcing within squadrons. Appendix E contains examples of how this data might be depicted graphically.

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[1] AFI 1-2, *Commander's Responsibilities* (2014), highlights six resource categories for which commanders are responsible: manpower, funds, equipment, facilities and environment, guidance, and Airmen's time.

[2] Another potential source of data is the UEI survey. Unfortunately, we were not granted access to this data set. According to AFI 90-201 (2016), during every UEI cycle, MAJCOM inspectors general will administer a survey to the wing "to capture candid, confidential beliefs, attitudes and opinions about matters relevant to the four UEI MGAs. The purpose of the survey is threefold: to gather data since the last on-site evaluation, to assist in determining the inspection team composition and to inform a risk-based sampling strategy for the Capstone, on-site evaluation. . . . Survey results assist inspection teams [to] understand Airmen's attitudes, beliefs and perceptions and to more precisely target their sample strategy for the on-site Capstone visit" (paragraph 4.7).

Personnel: Assigned versus Authorized

MPES includes a database called the Unit Manpower Document (UMD) that contains information about the funded manpower authorizations in a unit and unfunded requirements for personnel in the unit.[3] MilPDS has data on the number of officer, enlisted, and civilian personnel that are actually assigned to a unit,[4] so there are at least two ways of using these databases to assess potential differences in resourcing among squadron types. The first is to compare the funded authorizations to the total requirements, which gives a sense of whether the Air Force is providing adequate resources for enough *total* manpower for a squadron, and the second is to compare the *assigned* personnel to the total requirements, which gives a sense of whether an organization is provided with the right types of manpower. Appendix E provides an example of this type of analysis.

Funding: Requested and Approved

In addressing concerns about have and have-not squadrons, one potential measure of resourcing could be a comparison of desired or requested funding and approved funding. We explored the use of AFTOC data for this purpose but found that AFTOC data for requested and approved funding did not exist at the squadron level. In discussions with personnel in the Air Force's Office of Financial Management and Budget (SAF/FM), we learned of a newly developed tool called AFBEAT that appeared to have the data necessary for such comparisons.

AFBEAT was developed in FY 2016 and is used to track active operation and maintenance (O&M) funding. It contains data from all MAJCOMs and supporting units, HAF and supporting units, and some joint combatant commands, and it is "the first tool to link requirement level details to execution data and strategy" across the Air Force (Kwasnoski, 2016, p. 2). The AFBEAT data break funding into four types: mission priority, mission related, discretionary, and other. In FY 2017, the data set included requested and approved O&M amounts and some information on requests in prior years (and their justifications). Most importantly, it collects this information at the squadron level. There seems to be great potential for use of AFBEAT in comparing funding among squadron types. In a sample data set provided by the Budget Formulation Integration Division of the Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Financial Management and Comptroller (SAF/FMBOI), we were able to find 301 squadrons that are in the original 12 squadron types on which we focused, and Appendix E shows how this information can be displayed.

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[3] The Air Force has developed manpower standards that help determine the number and type (by grade or skill level) of personnel that a unit should have based on various criteria (see AFI 38-204, 2015). A unit may be authorized a certain number but only be funded for a lower number.

[4] As an example of how the information in the two sources can differ, an end-of-month "snapshot" of military personnel at a unit on a given date will include students who may be at the unit temporarily for training, individual ready reserve, and transient personnel who have no corresponding authorized full-time positions in the UMD.

There are several current qualifications for the use of AFBEAT data. FY 2017 is the first year for the tool, and not all organizations are using it.[5] In addition, AFBEAT is meant to be MAJCOM specific; the rules regarding what can be requested and what would be included in this category vary from organization to organization, and MAJCOM-specific definitions are used for AFBEAT inputs. Thus, comparisons across MAJCOMs are difficult.[6] Also, there are some variations among MAJCOMs about "mission critical" and "mission priority" funding, and information on discretionary funding is at this time limited. However, with more experience, the data should allow commanders to see if they are truly funding mission requirements and can inform financial planning at the beginning of the year in order to address discrepancies throughout the year.[7] Within MAJCOMs, commanders above the group level will eventually be able to use the data to address the question of whether have and have-not squadrons exist.

Perceptions of Airmen

The Air Force Personnel Center Survey Office (AFPC/DSYS) periodically conducts climate surveys of the total force (active duty, guard, and reserve) to gain insight into concerns Airmen may have in areas such as senior leadership support, immediate supervisor support, resources, recognition, unit performance, and satisfaction with Air Force life. The three most recent surveys were conducted in 2010, 2012, and 2015.[8] Several questions have been asked consistently over the years—for example, Airmen are consistently asked if they feel they have adequate resources to accomplish their mission and if they feel they have adequate time to do their jobs. Each year's survey may also include areas of special interest at the time. For example, the 2015 survey included a new question about the ability of senior leadership to balance resource reductions with mission accomplishment.

While survey responses can be associated with a variety of demographic information about the respondent (sex, career field, MAJCOM, and others), analysis of results is generally not conducted in a way that differentiates among MAJCOMs or squadron types. For example, a MAJCOM commander does not have access to data broken down by the squadrons in the MAJCOM, which means that squadron commanders can be candid in their responses to questions about MAJCOM leadership without fear that they will be identified. The focus of

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[5] In particular, the new Air Force Installation and Mission Support Center (AFIMSC), which reached full operating capability in October 2016, is not included in the FY 2017 data. AFIMSC "serves as the single intermediate-level headquarters responsible for providing installation and mission support capabilities to 77 Air Force installations, nine major commands and two direct reporting units with an annual budget of approximately $10 billion" (AFIMSC, 2017).

[6] This flexibility was intentional. SAF/FMBOI felt that imposing reporting rules from above might make the tool less popular. Also, it is hoped that as users become more familiar with the tool, Air Force–wide reporting standards will develop over time.

[7] October 24, 2016, discussion with SAF/FMBOI.

[8] There were 132,000 respondents to the 2015 survey, compared to 163,000 for the 2012 survey (Bailey, 2016).

the climate surveys is on getting the unit information to the commander without the results being viewed as a "report card" for his or her performance.[9] AFPC/DSYS created a database of climate survey results that allowed RAND to compare them across squadron types. Appendix E has a detailed example of how this was done.

Unit Readiness

Another potential source of information regarding differences in resources for different squadron types is readiness data submitted in the Resource Readiness Assessment that is part of DRRS.[10] This submission includes data on equipment and supplies on hand (S-level), equipment condition (R-level), personnel status (P-level), and training status (T-level).[11] Each of these resource rankings can range from 1 (the best) to 4 (the worst). We experimented with these data by looking at reported readiness levels as of July 2016 for our original 12 squadron types and determining the percentage of squadrons that reported readiness levels of 1 or 2. Depending on how DRRS data is aggregated, the information may be classified; for this reason the numbers in the DRRS column of Table 4.1 are not actual percentages.

Assessing Have and Have-Not Squadrons

The data sources just described can be used to assess resourcing levels across squadron types in different resource categories. The data have the potential to provide evidence that certain squadron types are underresourced in some areas and could be an indicator that the Air Force may need to evaluate whether to redistribute resources. However, such evidence requires standards of resourcing, which do not yet exist. Table 4.1 is an example of how information in these data sources might be aggregated and used by the Air Force to determine whether potential problems exist, assuming such standards are established. The resource categories in Table 4.1 are just examples of areas that the Air Force might consider important. For example, Air Force leadership has been concerned for years about enlisted manning in aircraft maintenance squadrons—particularly 5-level (craftsman or supervisor) personnel, so 5-level fill rates are shown in the table (see Losey, 2017a).

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[9] September 12, 2016, interview with AFPC/DSYS.

[10] This reporting used to be known as the Status of Resources and Training System (SORTS). See AFI 10-201, 2016, Chapter 1.

[11] Personnel measurements are based on a unit's authorized and funded positions in its UMD. Units compute the personnel P-level based on the percentages of total and critical personnel authorized, assigned, and available to accomplish the unit's full-spectrum mission or missions. There are three ways to determine T-level. Method A computes training via an aggregated percentage of qualification tasks, or via specific training qualifications or events. Units may use multiple, different authoritative data sources to calculate their T-level. See AFI 10-201, 2016, Tables 3.6 and 3.12.

Table 4.1. "Stoplight" Chart Comparing Squadron Resourcing

Squadron Type	% of Authorized Positions That Are Funded	Assigned Officers as % of *Total* Authorized	Assigned 5-levels as % of *Funded* Authorized	% of Commanders Who Say They Have Adequate Time	% of Squadrons with Training Levels Reported T-1 or T-2	% of Requested O&M Funding Approved
Fighter	96	84	83	33	50	81
Security forces	91	82	94	66	30	64
Communications	98	153	83	53	20	46
Air mobility	99	137	99	50	20	57
Airlift	97	104	99	43	100	71
Intelligence	100	107	87	58	80	43
Air refueling	99	110	90	55	100	66
Operations support	96	91	105	53	50	80
Force support	95	139	91	64	70	61
Special operations	99	87	85	50	100	100
Aircraft maintenance	98	93	90	67	25	80
Civil engineering	96	88	100	56	80	100
Air Force desired level	**87**	**87**	**87**	**50**	**60**	**75**
Source	MPES	MPES and MilPDS	MPES and MilPDS	2015 climate survey	DRRS (aggregated DRRS data can be classified, so values in this column are notional)	AFBEAT

The percentages in the last row of the table, "Air Force desired level" are notional levels included solely for the purpose of illustration, since the Air Force has not established standards in these categories. A cell is colored green if the squadron type meets or exceeds the Air Force desired level. It is colored red if it is below the desired level. In the first three columns, a cell is colored yellow if the percentage exceeds 100.

For example, MilPDS and MPES data show that Air Force–wide, 87 percent of manpower authorizations are funded. If this is considered the Air Force desired level, Table 4.1 shows that on average, squadrons in all 12 squadron types are well resourced in terms of manpower (column 2), because more than 87 percent of their authorized positions are funded. Using the same standard, Table 4.1 shows that, on average, squadrons in a majority of squadron types

exceed the standard for the percentage of authorized officers that are assigned (column 3), while for three of the squadron types, squadrons have, on average, fewer 5-level enlisted personnel than their *funded* authorizations would allow (column 4). Six of the squadron types in column 3 are highlighted in yellow because, on average, these squadron types not only exceed the desired level of assigned officers but apparently have more than they are authorized to have. This could indicate a resource distribution problem as much as having too few officers.

Air Force climate survey results show that fewer than 50 percent of the squadron commanders in airlift and fighter squadrons responded that they have adequate time to accomplish their work (column 5). Notional DRRS data indicate that six squadron types in the table reported fewer than 60 percent of their squadrons at T-1 or T-2 levels of training readiness (column 6), and AFBEAT data indicate that 7 of the 12 squadron types had less than 75 percent of O&M funding requests approved (column 7).[12]

Evaluating the measures by column reveals that there are generally high levels of resourcing for most resource measures—cells in the first four columns are largely green—but considering resourcing by squadron type reveals a different picture and begins to illustrate a potential divide between have and have-not squadrons. For example, fighter squadrons are red in four of the six resource categories addressed in Table 4.1—more than the other squadron types. Security forces and communications squadrons are red in half of the six resource categories—though with differences among them. Whether these differences indicate resourcing problems or align with different standards for categories of squadrons (if the Air Force chooses to set such standards) is not immediately evident. However, by establishing resource categories of interest, developing resource standards, and displaying them in a similar manner, the Air Force can increase its understanding of resource differences across squadrons, identify areas that may warrant further investigation, and provide an analytic foundation for resource decisionmaking.

Commander Perceptions of Manning and Resourcing

We now address the perceptions regarding manning and resourcing of squadron commanders and squadrons more generally.

Squadron Manning

Throughout the interviews, commanders frequently discussed undermanning. Approximately 73 percent of the squadron commanders, 91 percent of the group commanders, and 63 percent of the wing commanders we interviewed commented on lower-than-desired levels of squadron manning. Although Table 4.1 suggests undermanning may not be an issue for all squadron types, overall, commanders of squadrons with different missions discussed squadron undermanning

[12] We emphasize that such use of AFBEAT data at this stage of AFBEAT development is very preliminary. In addition, our DRRS data analyses are not publicly available. Therefore, we include notional descriptions.

at similar rates. One exception was that none of the individuals we interviewed who commanded air mobility squadrons discussed undermanning. Squadron commanders who had been in command 3 to 12 months discussed undermanning at a rate that was similar to that of commanders who had been in command more than 12 months. When describing factors contributing to their perceptions, commanders often mentioned both UMDs and their own experiences.

Rather than indicating they were severely undermanned across all positions, commanders often emphasized that certain positions within their squadrons were not manned appropriately. One squadron commander highlighted manning discrepancies, noting, "There's disparities all over the place. And it's some of the internal stuff that we created here at [my installation]. So I have two mission statements that require manning numbers to meet. And I do not meet one of those but I do meet the other."

Commanders also specifically emphasized a lack of support staff as contributing to their perceptions of undermanning. One squadron commander commented, "We don't have the right people in the right places, especially in our support areas. We have a number of billets that never get filled. So, we're undermanned in those areas."

Notably, 55 percent of squadron commanders, 54 percent of group commanders, and 63 percent of wing commanders also discussed effective levels of manning strength in certain positions or according to certain guidelines.[13] For example, one squadron commander commented, "Yeah. So, by the books, I'm 100%, and this is something I hope gets into the study. One of our biggest problems is that our manpower standard is very dated and does not incorporate all the things that we have to do."

Underresourced Elements

Commanders also discussed which elements of squadron command they felt were most underresourced. Similar to their comments on manning specifically, commanders most frequently commented on underresourcing in manning, such that approximately 88 percent of the squadron commanders, all of the group commanders, and 88 percent of the wing commanders interviewed commented on manning issues contributing to underresourcing perceptions. Among squadron commanders, those with 3 to 12 months' experience and more than 12 months' experience discussed manning at similar rates, and this issue was also discussed with similar frequency across commanders of squadrons with different missions.

[13] Throughout the interviews, commanders may have commented on more than one element or aspect of each topic. For example, under squadron manning, commanders discussed undermanning in certain areas, and several of those same commanders discussed effective manning in other areas.

Among those who expressed manning concerns, many mentioned insufficient commander support staff (CSS) or insufficient personnel in general. While discussing insufficient CSS, one squadron commander stated,

> So, when the Chief of Staff put out that memo saying these additional duties will go away, they didn't really go away. We still have to perform them in some way, some function. Somebody's still responsible for doing it. And so, a lot of those additional duties, the memo talks about shifting it to the commander support staff. Well, my commander support staff is two people. There's no way those two individuals will be able to perform all of those duties and continue with their primary function, their administrative responsibilities and duties.

Similarly, another squadron commander commented,

> I would say it's support staff. . . . I don't know what commanders did 20 years ago when I was younger and they sat at a desk with no computer because now there's so much virtual stuff that it comes nearly direct to the commander. And although we would like commanders to get out and about and share [over 20] years' worth of information and have oversight over processes in their squadron and lead their people directly instead of from behind a desk, well, we're under-resourced support-staff-wise because I get tied so much to a computer that I'm either going to fail at the administrative stuff that we have to do or I'm going to fail because I'm not giving direct, clear guidance, face-to-face more often with my people. So that's why I'd say we're undermanned [in] support staff because a lot of these things can get filtered and reviewed and quality checked without a commander having to do it and then it could just be sitting in my office waiting for me to get to it on many weekends that we have to come in and catch up on.

Although not specifically referencing CSS, commanders also commented on underresourcing of squadron administration more generally. When responding to the question regarding which elements of squadron command are underresourced, one squadron commander stated,

> The administrative tail, so there are many tasks that are leveraged upon squadrons and specifically squadron commanders, that to be honest I haven't even scratched the surface in eight months, and I'm talking about AFIs referencing, saying the squadron commander will provide this person or the squadron commander will be responsible for this program, or those type things. I don't have time in the day to do what I believe is the most important function as a squadron commander, which is to lead and provide development for those members of my squadron and to accomplish all of the other things that are mandated by AFIs and DoDIs [Department of Defense Instructions] and so forth and so on. And come up with the different go-do's from my group and wing leadership. So to be honest, when there are sharks circling the boat, I smack the sharks that are closest to the boat, so the things that I think are going to either come up or get me in trouble, like security-type things or money-type things, those are the ones that I am mainly focused on. But when it comes to this CBT or that CBT, it's hard for me to accomplish or make sure the squadron is accomplishing those tasks, because I don't have the ability to focus on it.

A smaller number of commanders, 16 percent of the squadron commanders and 27 percent of the group commanders, indicated underresourcing of equipment. No wing commanders commented on equipment issues.

Squadron Perceptions of Underresourcing

Commanders also frequently discussed perceptions of underresourcing among those they command. Specifically, approximately 79 percent of squadron commanders, 82 percent of group commanders, and 88 percent of wing commanders commented on perceptions of underresourcing. Squadron commanders who had been in command 3 to 12 months discussed underresourcing at a rate that was relatively similar to that of commanders who had been in command more than 12 months, but there were differences among commanders of different types of squadrons. Commanders of aircraft maintenance and air mobility squadrons either did not discuss or rarely discussed underresourcing perceptions among those whom they commanded.

When providing additional information regarding perceptions of underresourcing, the most common theme discussed was that individuals believed the squadrons were undermanned. One squadron commander stated, "I would say they perceive that we're under resourced, and it depends on whether we're talking about people or things, but definitely with manpower. Everybody can see that." Other areas contributing to underresourcing perceptions, though less frequently mentioned, include underresourced facilities (e.g., old buildings, lack of space), old equipment, and the presence of insufficiently trained personnel within squadrons.

Commander Support Staff Increases

Commanders discussed how the recent initiative to increase the number of support staff within squadrons would influence squadron commander roles and responsibilities. Approximately 70 percent of the squadron commanders, 73 percent of group commanders, and 50 percent of wing commanders interviewed commented on how the increase is or would be helpful—similar rates were observed regardless of command tenure or type of squadron commanded. Although most interviewees perceived benefits, a few interviewees discussed how the increase had not, would not, or might not have a beneficial impact on squadron commanders. Discussing this in more depth, one squadron commander stated,

> I guess it depends on how we actually do it, so for example, I have a unit program coordinator and an admin assistant or admin—I can't remember what his actual career field is called, but a 3 Alpha. So those guys do great work, but I don't know what an orderly room is supposed to look like because I never really had one going up through the years. We've always had a secretary . . . in the squadrons that I've been in, and most of the time we've had some type of a personnelist or somebody who would liaise with the personnel. But in terms of a full orderly room, I don't even know what that looks like, and I don't know what the plan is for each and every squadron. I can take an additional duty, a member of one of my flights and bring him into the front office and call them part of my CSS, but I don't know what that means, in terms of the career fields so that it would be helping out, so I can't really answer that. But additional support manning helps, it takes some of the burden off of operational personnel, but really what I need is more operational personnel.

Commander Recommendations for Resource Provision

When discussing resources they would like the Air Force to provide, commanders most frequently discussed a desire for more manning. Sixty-three percent of squadron commanders, 64 percent of group commanders, and 50 percent of wing commanders mentioned a desire for more manning. This was discussed with equal frequency by those who had been in command 3 to 12 months and those in command more than 12 months and by commanders of squadrons with different missions. One exception, however, was that aircraft maintenance squadron commanders did not indicate they would like additional manning when discussing resources the Air Force could provide. Approximately 43 percent of commanders who discussed a desire for more manning emphasized the need for more CSS.

Commanders also discussed outdated manpower standards and the need for appropriately trained or experienced personnel. Addressing manpower standards, one squadron commander commented,

> I need enough people. So, they need to look at the manpower standard and be honest and not try to make numbers do a certain thing, but look at what we're actually doing, what it would actually take to meet all of the requirements properly and say that's how many people we need. And if they're unfunded then so be it. At least we're telling the story up the chain the right way.

Discussing inappropriately trained personnel, another squadron commander commented,

> That would be one of the key things that I would change is if a squadron is authorized a set number of personnel and a set number of AFSCs and experience level, we really need to work as much as possible to get those squadrons manned to what they're authorized to do because we're expecting them to do the mission with less people and less experienced people. By flooding them with first-term airmen and things of that nature, it's hard for you to adequately perform your mission when you don't have the right manning. . . . AFPC will go one up and one down, and they may flood you with 3-level airmen. Well, you're getting a body to fill that position, but are they qualified and are they trained?

Providing a general summary of commander perceptions regarding the manning issue, one squadron commander stated,

> People, I think, is the main issue, I call it the death spiral. [We] don't have enough people, so we work our people harder to accomplish the mission, so that people who are here accomplishing the mission want to get the hell out as soon as they can, which leaves us with fewer people, which means the people remaining behind have to do more work, and eventually all work will stop because we won't have enough people to do the mission. . . . We have constantly ridden the crest of that wave, hoping that it doesn't crash from underneath us and just trying to max perform our people, and get the most out of them, when in reality we all know the answer is get more qualified individuals to lessen the strain.

Notably, approximately 20 percent of squadron commanders and 36 percent of group commanders, but no wing commanders, discussed a desire for more funding. In addition,

approximately 11 percent of squadron commanders, and 13 percent of wing commanders, but no group commanders, mentioned that the resources available are adequate.

Summary

Our review identified at least four different databases that the Air Force could use to obtain a more holistic picture of squadron resourcing. These databases are MilPDS, AFBEAT, climate surveys, and DRRS. To most effectively utilize these databases for this purpose, the Air Force would need to identify resource categories of interest and resource standards, then consider similarities and differences in resourcing conclusions reached through use of the different data sources.

It is important to recognize that the quantitative picture of the adequacy of squadron resources provided by the data may not correspond with perceptions of those within the squadrons. Throughout the interviews, commanders mentioned the need for more personnel, including but not limited to CSS. However, the data suggest that undermanning was not an issue for all squadrons. This indicates that manpower standards that are captured within the databases might not appropriately capture the numbers and types of tasks that squadrons, and squadron commanders more specifically, must address or whether there are mismatches between needs and staff experience, which aggregate numbers do not illuminate. If so, this suggests that tasks and responsibilities required of squadrons and squadron commanders may need review and modification. It may also suggest that manpower standards need to be reviewed and adjusted appropriately.

5. Summary and Recommendations

In this chapter, we summarize our findings and make specific recommendations regarding squadron commander effectiveness. We structure the summaries and recommendations based on the three areas of interest—namely, squadron commander responsibilities, preparation, and resourcing.

Squadron Commander Responsibilities

No single document describes all the duties and responsibilities of a squadron commander. Thousands of AFI compliance statements direct commanders to ensure that certain tasks are accomplished. Squadron commanders must also ensure that their squadrons perform duties classified as additional duties by the Air Force and accomplish ancillary training. Although squadron commanders can delegate certain duties and responsibilities to those under their command, regulations require squadron commanders alone to perform many requirements. The Air Force is in the process of reviewing AFIs in order to eliminate compliance statements that are unnecessary, and in recent efforts, it has also worked to reduce the burden imposed by additional duties and ancillary training.

However, our interviews revealed that, when commanders speak of the burden of additional duties, they often are not referencing the responsibilities that the Air Force officially designates as additional duties. Rather, they are often referring to other duties they recognize as being necessary to maintain the squadron but for which they believe they do not have sufficient manpower. In our interviews, squadron commanders also expressed concerns regarding the number of taskers they received from MAJCOMs, HAF, and various functionals that are added to their overall responsibilities.

Recommendations

Continue to review AFIs, and record the number of responsibilities levied on squadron commanders. Eliminate responsibilities that are not essential.

Based on a previous review of AFIs and discussions with commanders, squadron commanders have numerous duties with which they must comply. They can have difficulty complying with all of the requirements listed across multiple AFIs. Current efforts to review AFIs and reduce responsibilities may reduce the burden placed on squadron commanders. To promote the utility of this review, reviewers should establish and use clear and objective criteria when evaluating AFIs, and they should clearly communicate what criteria they used during their reviews. To further promote objectivity, an independent committee comprising cross-functional

senior leadership should serve as the AFI reviewers. This review process should occur regularly, such as once every two to five years.

Reviewers should record the number of requirements placed on squadron commanders within an AFI and across AFIs, the amount of time squadron commanders must use to meet these requirements, and the level of authority required to waive requirements. The Air Force should then eliminate nonessential requirements. To promote squadron commander knowledge of and compliance with requirements, the office of the vice chief of staff of the Air Force should maintain and widely disseminate a central database that clearly lists and describes the requirements of squadron commanders set out in AFIs; the database may be structured with consideration of variation across locations and mission types. In addition, this office should publish a summary statement that addresses the cumulative burden AFI requirements place on squadron commanders.

Evaluate the level of waiver authorities within AFIs to determine if authorities of a lower level than currently listed could be allowed to grant waivers with minimal risk.

Currently, unit level requirements can be waived by specified levels of Air Force command or waiver approval authorities, and units can submit requests for waivers, as needed, to the appropriate command level or authority. Permitting commanders at lower levels of authority to waive certain requirements may further reduce the burdens placed on commanders. AFIs currently include the level of waiver approval authority needed for different AFI requirements. During the AFI review, described earlier, reviewers should reevaluate waiver approval authorities to determine the lowest acceptable level of waiver authority for each requirement. However, allowing lower-level waiver authorities may also increase the risk that units will not perform necessary duties. Therefore, the Air Force should maintain information regarding the justification for the level of waiver authority approval connected to each requirement. As noted previously, this review process should occur regularly.

MAJCOMs, HAF, and functionals should track information regarding the number of taskers they disseminate and readily provide this information to commanders.

During interviews, commanders discussed frustration with the number of taskers they received and the amount of time these taskers required. To raise awareness of and reduce taskers, MAJCOMs, HAF, and functionals should utilize a standardized data collection format, or possibly a database, to record the number of taskers they disseminate, details regarding the requirements of these taskers (e.g., information requested), which units (e.g., wings, groups, squadrons) must assist with these taskers, and the number of manpower hours expected to complete the taskers. Having those who are issuing the taskers keep track of this information will reduce the potential for wing, group, or squadron commanders to acquire an additional record-keeping responsibility. The office of the vice chief of staff of the Air Force should provide oversight to ensure continuous and standardized collection of data regarding taskers. Information

regarding the approximate number of taskers they may expect to receive each year and the approximate number of manpower hours required for each tasker should be disseminated to wing, group, and squadron commanders.

Squadron Commander Preparation

Existing personnel data allow analysis of the career paths of individuals selected for squadron command, and data indicate some differences among the 12 squadron types we considered. For example, our analyses showed differences in IDE accomplishment in residence, assignments to HQs, and experiences in operations-officer-like positions before assuming command. Other elements of career development can easily be examined using MPES data. Improvements in personnel data, such as inclusion of reliable information on commanders who were removed from command and reasons for the removal, might promote understanding of the positive (or negative) impact of different paths among squadron types.

Our review of squadron commander preparation courses provided by MAJCOMs showed limited overlap in the topics addressed across courses. We also observed variation in the amount of time spent on similar topics in different MAJCOM courses, suggesting different information on these topics may be disseminated across MAJCOM courses. Further, many topics addressed in a now-canceled AFPC course did not appear in any of the current MAJCOM courses.

Commanders we interviewed noted they felt least prepared for administrative and disciplinary responsibilities. When addressing elements of their training that were least helpful in preparing individuals for squadron command, interviewees indicated that ACSC training did not provide sufficient information on the specifics of commanding. They also discussed perceptions that MAJCOM training was not relevant, too broad, not memorable, or too short.

Recommendations

Increase standardization of MAJCOM squadron preparation courses.

Our review of MAJCOM courses suggested that the topics addressed across courses vary greatly. Therefore, many squadron commanders receive different information before taking command. By creating a set of topics that should be covered across all MAJCOM courses and a minimum amount of time to be spent on these topics during the courses, the Air Force may promote standardization of squadron commander preparation. These topics would form a core curriculum for squadron preparation courses to which each MAJCOM could add additional topics that are specific to its mission.

To increase standardization of courses, the Air Force should establish a committee, or board, that includes leadership from across MAJCOMs to review the current topics presented across MAJCOM courses and develop a core curriculum. The committee should establish and use clear and objective criteria for making changes to MAJCOM courses, such as the removal, reduction, or addition of topics, and it should meet regularly, such as once a year or every two years. This

committee should remove or reduce the presentation of topics determined to be of minimal value to individuals who will soon assume squadron command.

Provide additional training to squadron commanders on Air Force personnel management systems, disciplinary procedures, and money management.

During our interviews, commanders discussed the desire for additional information on the various personnel management systems and processes utilized by the Air Force. Some also discussed desires for additional information regarding money management (e.g., requesting, recording, disseminating) and on the systems and processes involved in addressing disciplinary issues, including violations of the UCMJ. These discussions and our review of MAJCOM course schedules suggest squadron commanders may not receive information, or they may receive only limited information, on these topics as part of their preparation for squadron command. Thus, we recommend that the Air Force provide additional training on these topics to individuals before they take squadron command.[1]

As part of a MAJCOM course review, a committee can determine how to address these topics in MAJCOM courses, which may involve adding them to the curriculum or addressing them in a separate requisite training. A now-canceled AFPC course can also provide a guide to topics to address in additional training. In considering dissemination options, notably, several interviewees indicated an aversion to CBTs, so the Air Force should carefully consider whether to use CBTs to disseminate additional information to those about to assume squadron command.

Provide promising Air Force personnel with a diversity of leadership experiences and opportunities to work with commanders.

Career field managers and commanders discussed the utility of having different leadership experiences before taking command. The Air Force should continue to provide these opportunities to promising Air Force personnel. Useful career experiences may include, for example, serving as an operations officer (or analogous position) or flight commander. Working in positions at the wing, group, or higher levels can also serve as valuable experiences. Active mentorship from commanders can increase the utility of these experiences in preparing individuals for squadron command. Development teams need to ensure that as many squadron commanders as possible have leadership experiences before they become squadron commanders. Individuals who have not had these experiences will have to exert more effort and may experience more stress as new squadron commanders than those who have had previous leadership experiences in the Air Force.

[1] One of our reviewers noted that enlisted professional development requires more exposure to these topics over the course of an Airman's career. *The Airman Handbook* (Air Force Handbook 1, 2015), for example, provides reference material for enlisted Promotion Fitness Examinations and the United States Air Force Supervisory Examination.

Squadron and Squadron Commander Resources

This project addressed the potential existence of have and have-not squadrons when it comes to resources. One difficulty with such an assessment is that there is no official Air Force definition of when a squadron is under- or overresourced. Without such a standard, the best we can do is use available data to compare the resource levels of different squadron types using a variety of resources, and in this research we considered current (and potential) data sources for manpower fill rates, funding levels, readiness ratings, and the perceptions of Airmen about having what they need to accomplish their missions. Chapter Four presented an example of a stoplight chart that can illuminate when a squadron type, when compared to others, could be considered under- or overresourced.

Many of those we interviewed expressed concerns about squadron manning levels and the need for more personnel. They expressed concerns not only about the total number of people in the squadron but also about the distribution of people with the right skills and experience. These responses highlight the importance of having a better understanding of the validity of existing manpower standards and the meaning of MPES data. As discussed in Chapter Four, when data indicate that all squadron types (except for security squadrons) have 95 percent or more of their requirements funded, one might not expect complaints about a lack of manpower.

Squadron commanders often provided positive responses regarding Air Force efforts to increase CSS manning. Some commanders also expressed concerns about defining the duties for the new personnel, the amount of time it will take to fill those positions, and the amount of time it will take to train new personnel assigned to those positions.

Recommendations

The Air Force should identify resource categories of interest and establish resource standards in those categories.

To better understand the potential inequitable distribution of resources among squadrons, the Air Force should identify resources of interest and utilize information from databases that track information on these resources. Using a display similar to that of Table 4.1, the office of the vice chief of staff of the Air Force should create and maintain a squadron resource dashboard to track resourcing among squadrons or squadron types. This tool can highlight similarities and differences in resourcing across different categories of interest and highlight areas that warrant further investigation.

More regularly review and update manpower standards to reflect current responsibilities.

In addition to the requirements listed within AFIs, squadrons and squadron commanders have other requirements and responsibilities they must address. These include, but are not limited to, requirements in DoD instructions, additional duties, and ancillary training. During interviews, commanders often discussed a need for more manning. By reviewing and eliminating duties and

responsibilities that are not essential, including but not limited to those within AFIs, the Air Force may address some manning concerns. Following the elimination and reduction of nonessential requirements and tasks, the Air Force should update manpower standards to reflect the current requirements of squadrons. Although these manpower standards should be updated regularly, specific information on how often manpower standards have been and should be updated does not appear readily available to commanders.

Provide guidelines regarding the responsibilities new CSS should assume and the length of time they will need to become fully functional.

Many interviewees indicated appreciation for the initiative to include or increase CSS within squadrons. Many also indicated they had not yet been affected by this initiative, as they had not yet received these personnel. To promote the success of this increase, wing commanders should provide squadron commanders with clear guidelines regarding the responsibilities new staff should and should not assume, training they should receive, and the amount of time they may require to become fully functional. This may reduce potential confusion regarding the roles and responsibilities of these staff across different squadron commanders.

Conclusion

This report provides analyses of Air Force documents and data sets, and it also includes analyses of commander interviews. Future research might include job analyses, possibly conducted by the Air Force's Occupational Analysis Division, to guide job redesign and an examination of strategies used by other organizations for leadership preparation. Additional research might also consider the feasibility of utilizing development assessment centers to evaluate and provide feedback on the roles and responsibilities of squadron commanders.

Revitalizing the squadron is a priority that the CSAF, General Goldfein, has established for his four-year term. Goldfein's letter describing squadrons as the "beating heart" of the Air Force highlighted the profound and lasting impact squadron commanders have on Airmen and their families. By improving how the Air Force develops and assigns squadron commander responsibilities, standardizing squadron commander training as appropriate, and establishing and monitoring resource metrics, the Air Force can ensure that squadron commanders are postured for success.

Appendix A. Materials and Methods for Commander Interviews

We used a qualitative approach to gain insights into squadron commander responsibilities, preparation, and resources. Specifically, we conducted 75 semistructured telephone interviews with squadron commanders, group commanders, and wing commanders in the Air Force. Commanders discussed squadron commander duties and responsibilities, squadron commander preparation, and squadron commander and squadron resourcing. In this appendix, we describe procedures we used for these interviews.

Interview Protocol

For the interview protocol, we developed interview domains based on feedback from AF/A1D senior leadership and career field managers. Our interview protocol contained six sections:

- **Background questions.** Sample question: What elements of squadron command do you feel are most critically underresourced?
- **Squadron commander duties and responsibilities.** Sample question: How well did you understand the roles and responsibilities of squadron commanders when you initially took command?
- **Squadron commander training.** Sample question: Which training courses have you taken, particularly in the Air Force, that were most helpful for preparing you to take squadron command?
- **Squadron commander previous experience.** Sample question: Generally, what previous experiences do squadron commanders need to have in order to have the greatest likelihood of success in running their squadrons?
- **Resources.** Sample question: Do those whom you command in your squadron feel they are adequately resourced or underresourced?
- **Recommendations.** Sample question: How can the Air Force assist with better preparing individuals for command?

Interviews with group and wing commanders allowed us to obtain perspectives on squadron commanders from those in higher levels of command. We asked group and wing commanders to respond to questions regarding squadrons and squadron commanders based on their own experiences as squadron commanders, if applicable, and their experiences with current squadron commanders under their command.

Recruitment and Sample Description

To recruit commanders, we obtained a stratified random sample of email addresses. Our sample of squadron commanders was stratified based on two dimensions: time serving as

squadron commander (3 to 12 months; more than 12 months) and squadron mission (airlift, aircraft maintenance, air refueling, attack, civil engineering, communications, cyber operations, force support, fighter, intelligence, air mobility, missile, operations support, security forces, special operations, and information, network operations, or warfare). We sought to interview approximately four squadron commanders within each mission type, two with 3 to 12 months' experience and two with more than 12 months' experience. We also obtained stratified random samples of group and wing commanders, such that commanders included in these samples commanded one or more squadrons addressing our mission types of interest.

To recruit commanders, AF/A1D senior leadership first sent an email in January 2017 to all commanders within our sample to inform them of the research effort. In this email, AF/A1D senior leadership provided RAND contact information and requested that commanders contact RAND to establish a date and time when they could participate in a one-hour telephone interview. One week after this email, RAND sent a reminder email to commanders of squadrons with mission types for which we had not yet achieved our desired sample and who had not yet contacted us. One week after this reminder, RAND sent another email reminder to commanders of squadrons with mission types for which we had not achieved our desired sample size and who had not yet contacted us.

We conducted interviews with 56 squadron commanders in total. Twenty-one percent of the squadron commanders we interviewed were stationed outside the United States. Thirteen percent of the squadron commanders were women.[1] We also interviewed 11 group commanders and 8 wing commanders. Thirty-six percent of the group commanders and 38 percent of the wing commanders we interviewed were stationed outside the United States. Approximately 1 percent of the group commanders and 25 percent of the wing commanders we interviewed were women.

Interview and Data Analysis Procedures

From January through February 2017, five RAND researchers conducted one-on-one semistructured telephone interviews with squadron, group, and wing commanders. After obtaining consent from each participant, the interviewers audio-recorded each interview. All interviews were then transcribed verbatim.

We uploaded all transcripts to Dedoose, a research tool for qualitative and mixed methods data analysis, and we utilized a two-stage process to code the interviews. In the first stage, we developed a preliminary codebook that corresponded to the specific questions in the interview protocol. In the second stage, we developed subcodes. These subcodes were based on transcript themes that arose from interviewee comments, which we discussed in weekly meetings regarding transcript coding. The general process is similar to assigning Word comments to

[1] Although we considered gender differences, results suggested limited differences in perceptions among the men and women we interviewed.

sections of text, but in this case the Word comments are instead themes that are repeated across or within interview Word files. For example, one topic in the interviews was what commanders felt was most important in their job. This overall code has four subcodes (equipping the squadron, guiding training, identifying operational risks, and leading and managing people). These subcodes were modified as we learned more from the interviews, using a process known as constant comparison.

Two RAND policy analysts coded interviews with oversight from a RAND researcher. We tested code application agreement using the Dedoose training module, focusing on child code reliability within protocol sections. Across coders, we had good interrater reliability.[2]

Responses that are assigned these codes are the basis for the assignment of percentages for a given response—that is, the number of interviewees whose transcripts included comments with a given code compared to the number of interviewees who responded to a question.

Descriptive Information

Interviewees responded to a series of broad questions regarding their career backgrounds. Table A.1 provides a summary of basic descriptive information that interviewees provided regarding their careers.

Table A.1. Numbers of Commanders Interviewed with Each Level of Experience and Characteristic

Interviewee Characteristics	Squadron Commanders	Group Commanders	Wing Commanders
Pay grade			
O-4	4	0	0
O-5	52	2	0
O-6	0	9	8
Commissioning source			
U.S. Air Force Academy	19	3	0
Officer Training School	11	1	3
Reserve Officer Training Corps	26	7	5
Years of service since commissioning			
11–15	8	0	0
16–20	48	2	0
21–25	0	9	8
Prior enlisted experience noted	26	1	1

[2] A Cohen's kappa at or above 0.80 is typically considered indicative of good interrater reliability. Our pooled Cohen's kappa ranged from 0.79 to 0.84.

Appendix B. Additional Duties

Table B.1 shows official Air Force additional duties listed in AFI 38-206 (2014b). The table is broken down into three sections of additional duties as described in the August 18, 2016, memorandum, "Reducing Additional Duties" (Goldfein and James, 2016a): duties to be removed from the official list, duties to be streamlined or consolidated, and duties to be retained.

Table B.1. Official Air Force Additional Duties

Duty Title	Statute/Regulation	Functional Authority
Duty Removed from List of Air Force–Directed Additional Duties		
Aerospace Medical Council Member	AFI 48-101	AF/SG
Air Force Assistance Fund Representative or Key Worker	AFI 36-3101	AF/A1
Anti-Terrorism Working Group Representative	DoDI 2000.16	AF/A4
*Awards or Recognition Program Manager	AFI 36-2803 AFI 36-2805 AFI 36-3108	AF/A1
Central Registry Board Member	AFI 40-301	AF/SG
Combined Federal Campaign Key Worker	AFI 36-3101	AF/A1
Communications Security Responsible Officer	DoDI S-5200.16 DoDI 8523.01 AFMAN 33-283	SAF/CIO A6
Cross Functional Oversight Committee Representative	AFI 44-120	AF/SG
*Cyber Security Liaison	DoDI 8500.01 AFI 33-200	SAF/CIO A6
Destruction Officer	AFI 31-115	AF/A4
Emergency Management Working Group Member	DoDI 6055.17 AFI 10-2501	AF/A4
Environment, Safety, and Occupational Health Council	AFI 90-801	SAF/IE
Exercise Evaluation Team Member	AFI 10-2501	AF/A4
Family Advocacy Committee Member	AFI 40-301	AF/SG
Functional Area Records Manager	AFI 33-322	SAF/CIO A6
*Government Purchase Card Cardholder or Approving Official	EO 12352 Pub. L. 112-194 AFI 64-117	SAF/AQ
Individualized Newcomer Treatment and Orientation Manager	AFI 36-2103	AF/A1
Integrated Defense Council Member	AFI 31-101	AF/A4
Lead or Organizational DTS Administrator	DoDI 5154.31 AFI 24-101	AF/A4

Table B.1—Continued

Duty Title	Statute/Regulation	Functional Authority
Operational Security Coordinators	NSDD 298 DoDD 5205.02E	AF/A3
*Records Custodian	AFI 33-322	SAF/CIO A6
Resource Manager or Adviser	AFI 65-601, Vol. 1	SAF/FM
Secure Voice Responsible Officer	DoDI S-5200.16 DoDI 8523.01 AFMAN 33-283	SAF/CIO A6
Self-Aid and Buddy Care Monitor or Instructor	AFI 36-2644	AF/A1
Self-Assessment Program Manager	AFI 90-201	SAF/IG
SORTS, Enhanced SORTS, or Document Monitor	Title 10 U.S.C. 117 CJCSI 3401.02B AFI 10-201	AF/A3
Top Secret Control Officer	DoDM 5200.01	SAF/CIO A6
Treaty Compliance Officer	DoDD 2060.1 AFI 16-601	AF/A10
*Treaty Escort Official	PAD 07-13 Annex C, Tab W, Paragraph 11.3.1.2	AF/A10
Trusted Agent or Unit Demand Reduction Program Monitor	AFI 90-507 AFI 90-508	AF/SG
Unit AEF Reporting Tool Monitor	AFI 10-244	AF/A3
Unit Anti-Terrorism Representative	DoDI 2000.16	AF/A4
*Unit Deployment Manager	AFI 10-401 AFI 10-403	AF/A4
Unit Emergency Management Representative	AFI 10-2501	AF/A4
Unit Fitness Program Manager	AFI 36-2505	AF/A1
Unit Health Monitor (formerly Occupational or Environmental Health Working Group)	AFI 48-145 29 C.F.R. 19190 29 C.F.R. 1926	AF/SG
Unit Physical Training Leader	AFI 36-2505	AF/A1
Unit Public Affairs Representative	AFI 35-101	SAF/PA
*Unit Security Manager	DoDM 5200.01	SAF/AA
Unit Tax Representative (Adviser)	AFI 51-504	AF/JA
*Unit Training Manager	AFI 36-2201	AF/A1
Unit Voting Assistance Counselor	Title 42 U.S.C. 1973ff	AF/A1
Vehicle Control Officer	DoDM 4500.36 AFI 24-301 AFI 24-302	AF/A4
Web Page Maintainer	AFI 35-101	SAF/PA
Duty Will Be Streamlined or Consolidated		
Child Sexual and Maltreatment Response Team Member	AFI 40-301	AF/SG
Family Maltreatment Case Management Team	AFI 40-301	AF/SG

Table B.1—Continued

Duty Title	Statute/Regulation	Functional Authority
High-Risk Violence Response Team Member	AFI 40-301	AF/SG
*IT Equipment Custodian	DoDI 5000.64 AFMAN 33-153 NDAA FY 2010, Section 10003	SAF/CIO A6
Responsible Person (Property Custodian)	DoD FMR 7000.14-R DoDI 5000.64 AFI 23-101	AF/A4
Unit Personal Wireless Communications Systems Equipment Custodian	AFI 17-210	SAF/CIO A6
Duty Retained on List of Air Force–Directed Additional Duties		
Bailiff	RCM 501 RCM 502 AFI 51-201	AF/JA
Contamination Control Team Member (Augmentee)	AFI 10-2501	AF/A4
*Facility Manager	AFI 32-1001	AF/A4
Family Liaison Officer	AFI 34-1101	AF/A1
Honor Guard Augmentee	Title 10 U.S.C. 1491	AF/A1
Pretrial Confinement Review Officer	RCM 305 AFI 51-201	AF/JA
Sexual Assault Victim Advocate	NDAA FY 2012, Section 584 DoDI 6495.02 AFI 90-6001	AF/JA
Squadron-Assigned Flight Safety Officer	AFI 91-202	AF/SE
Unit Safety Representative	29 C.F.R. 1960.58 DoDI 6055.1 AFI 91-202	AF/SE
Weapons Safety Manager	AFI 21-101 AFI 91-202	AF/SE
Wing Inspection Team Representative	AFI 90-201	SAF/IG

* In survey of Airmen, duty identified as one of the top ten most burdensome additional duties.

Appendix C. Ancillary Training

This appendix has three tables related to Air Force ancillary training as posted on the ETCA website described in AFI 36-2201 (2013b, p. 16). Table C.1 lists TFAT, SFT, and event-driven training; Table C.2 lists EST; and Table C.3 lists ETCA training that does not fall into the other categories.

Table C.1. Total Force Awareness Training, Selected Force Training, and Event-Driven Training

SFT	TFAT	Event-Driven Training
Free Exercise of Religion for Supervisors	DoD Information Assurance CyberAwareness Challenge v2.0	Course 2, Local Conditions
Government Travel Charge Card Refresher Training	Force Protection	Course 3A, Intermediate Traffic Safety
Joint Ethics Reg. Training Chapter II	Free Exercise of Religion	Course 3B, Advanced Traffic Safety
No Fear Act Training	Human Relations	Course 4A and 4B, Training for Motorcycle Operators (Experienced and Basic)
Suicide Awareness: Frontline Supervisor Training	Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Training	Course 5, Driver Improvement and Rehabilitation
Survivor Assistance Awareness Training	Suicide Prevention Training	DTS (Basic) DTS Travel Documents (DTS 101) Training
		DTS (Basic)/About DTS Training
		Equal Opportunity Human Relations Orientation (Continental United States)
		Equal Opportunity Human Relations Orientation (Outside Continental United States)
		First Duty Station Orientation
		Personal Financial Readiness
		Programs and Policies/Travel Policies Training
		Substance Abuse Education
		Uniform Code of Military Justice
		Air Force Inspection System (mandatory one time only)

Table C.2. Expeditionary Skills Training

Tier 2A
AF Counter-Improvised Explosive Device Awareness Course
Air Force 2A Culture General Course (February 2014)
Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear Awareness Course v1.0
Explosive Ordnance Reconnaissance v2.0
Law of Armed Conflict—2014
Professional and Unprofessional Behavior Predeployment Training
Self-Aid and Buddy Care
Tier 2B
AF Advanced Counter-Improvised Device Attack the Network
Biometrics Awareness Course
Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear Defense Survival Skills Course
Collect and Report Information
Communication Engagement Training for Deploying Warfighters
Counterinsurgency Course (Course P-US624)
Counterinsurgency Training—Part 1 (Afghanistan Only)
Culture Specific Awareness Training—Afghanistan
Culture Specific Awareness Training—Iraq
Equal Opportunity/Prevention of Sexual Harassment Deployment Training
Individual Combat Equipment Orientation and Training
Language Guide—Dari
Language Guide—Iraqi
Language Guide—Pashto
Language Module 1—Dari
Language Module 1—Iraqi
Language Module 1—Pashto
Language Module 2—Dari
Language Module 2—Iraqi
Language Module 2—Pashto
Small Arms Training
Survival, Evasion, Resistance, Escape 100 Training
Traumatic Brain Injury Awareness for Deploying Leaders and Commanders

Table C.3. Training Other Than Total Force Awareness Training, Selected Force Training, Event-Driven Training, and Expeditionary Skills Training

AF Confined Space Training Course	Hazardous Materials Management
AF Deployed Safety Course	Hazardous Materials Transportation
AF Hazard Identification and Workplace Safety Inspection Course	HAZMAT First Responder Awareness
AF Lock-Out/Tag-Out Course	Information Management for HAZMAT Personnel/Team Members
AF Reduction in Total Ownership Cost	Initial Accumulation Point/Site Management
Affirmative Procurement	Initial Security Orientation—Cleared
Air Force Emergency Management Program Course	Initial Security Orientation—Uncleared
Air Force Emergency Response Officer (AERO) First and Emergency Responders Course	Integrated Solid Waste Management
Air Force Occupational Safety, Fire Protection and Health On-the-Job Training	Nuclear Surety Training and Refresher
Area-of-Responsibility-Specific Update	Nuclear Weapons Recapture and Recovery Training
Asbestos Awareness	Oil/Water Separator Management
Base Supply Customer Training—Block I: General Supply Indoctrination	Original Classification Authority
Base Supply Customer Training—Block IIA: Bench Stock Management	Physical Training Leader Course
Base Supply Customer Training—Block IIB: Repair Cycle Management	Pollution Prevention
Community Action Information Board/Integrated Delivery System	Protecting Sensitive Information (formerly Security Administration)
Conservation Awareness	Protection from Terrorism, High Risk Personnel and High Risk Billets
Contamination Control Team	Protection from Terrorism, Level II
Continuing Security Education/Refresher Training	Protection from Terrorism, Level III
Control Center Operations Course	Protection from Terrorism, Level IV
Course 1, Introduction to Traffic Safety	Protection of the President
Course 8, Supervisor Safety Training	Public Affairs Accident Procedures Briefing
Declassification Authorities Other Than Original Classification Authority	Response Task Force Course
Deployment Readiness Briefings	Security Manager
Derivative Classifiers	Shelter Management Team
Disposal of Used Materials and Hazardous Waste	Spill Response Management
Emergency Management Support Team	Unit Emergency Management Course
Emergency Operations Center Operations	Unit Safety Representative Training
Emergency Planning and Community Right to Know	Wastewater and Stormwater Management
Environmental Awareness	Water Quality Awareness
Environmental Management Systems—General Awareness Training	Weapons Safety (Explosives) and Refresher
Funds Custodian and Controlled Area Monitor	

Appendix D. Squadron Commander Courses

This appendix lists topics covered, and the amount of time devoted to them, in MAJCOM squadron commander courses (Table D.1) and functional squadron commander courses (Table D.2) from 2016. Table D.2 includes topics covered in the canceled AFPC squadron commander course.

Table D.1. Major Command Squadron Commander Course Content

In Tables D.1 and D.2, the numbers in each cell represent the amount of time spent on a topic within a particular MAJCOM course. Cells that include "+" are referencing hours and minutes. Cells that do not include "+" are referencing only minutes. For example, a cell with "1+45" demonstrates that 1 hour and 45 minutes was spent on a topic, whereas a cell with "45" demonstrates that 45 minutes total were spent on the topic. If the cell has a "Yes," the amount of time spent on that topic is not available, but it is clear that the information was addressed in the course.

Course Presentations	AETC	AMC	PACAF	AFMC	AFSPC	ACC	USAFE	AFGSC	AFSOC
Mission Briefing	15	25	Yes	30	30	45	40	Yes	60
MAJCOM/Commander	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Guest Speaker	60	60					60		
Military and Family Readiness	60		45			40			
Key Spouse Brief	45		45			45	60	35	
Key Spouse Panel	45	50				60	60		
PACE	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes		Yes		Yes
AFOSI	30		30	60	30	45		30	
RETOC	30								
JAG	1+45	1+30	2+00	1+30	2+00	50	1+45	1+25	2+00
SAPR	60	1+15	1+25	3+00	3+00	3+00	3+00	1+30	3+00
SAF/IG	30	60	60	1+15	45	45	50	30	30
Manpower and Organization	45		1+30	60		30		30	
Enlisted Promotions			45			25			
AF/A1 Perspective		90				30			
Developing the Force				1+15		30			

Table D.1—Continued

Course Presentations	AETC	AMC	PACAF	AFMC	AFSPC	ACC	USAFE	AFGSC	AFSOC
Manpower/Military/Civilian Personnel Panel							45		
Enlisted Force Development					60			40	60
Civilian Personnel	45			60	60			30	
Training Management					30			20	
Officer Assignments/ Development					45			30	
Force Management Tools (BLSDM, AMS, Dashbd)							40		
Management-Level Review	60		45		30				
Officer Evaluation System			30		30	30			
Mock Promotion Board			3+30			2+15			45
Officer Promotions								50	1+30
Military Personnel	60			45					
Medical	45	30	45	45	45	45	40	45	30
Mental Health	45			1+10	45				
Chaplain	45	30	30	1+15	30	60	40	60	30
Developmental Special Duty/Enlisted Issues	60								
Squadron Commander Panel	45	60		50		60		1+45	1+30
AEF Deployments	45			45	1+15				
AEF Commander Toolkit	45								
Mortuary and Casualty	45	1+20	60		60	1+30	60	1+30	3+00
Total Force Integration	30				30	45		45	
BMT Prebrief	30								
BMT Graduation	4+00								

Table D.1—Continued

Course Presentations	AETC	AMC	PACAF	AFMC	AFSPC	ACC	USAFE	AFGSC	AFSOC
Flag Level Panel						60			
4 Lenses/True Colors—Personality		60	1+15				1+20		
CCC Perspective		60	60	60	30	45	50	50	
Protocol		30					30		1+30
Etiquette Lunch/Breakfast		2+00			30			1+30	
Public Affairs		45 and squadron commander	1+15		30	30		30	30
Functional Manager		60	45		45	30	50	60	60
MAF Nuclear Ops		30							
Senior Leader Lunch		2+00							
Air Operations Center Tour		45					60		
Functional Time		2+45	2+30	1+40	60	4+00	2+15 (optional)	2+15	
Safety		30	30	45	45	30		30	30
Senior Leader Perspective (Beyond Commander)		2+00					50	1+20	1+10
Maintaining the Human Machine/Commemorative Air Force		45		40	45				
MAF-Rated Officer Development (Career Fields 11 and 38P Only)		60							
First Sergeant Panel	60 w/E9	50	60	45	1+30	60 w/E9		60 (E9 only)	1+15
AF/A1 Orientation—Team-Building PACAF		2+00	60						
What Happens After a Sexual Assault			1+30						

Table D.1—Continued

Course Presentations	AETC	AMC	PACAF	AFMC	AFSPC	ACC	USAFE	AFGSC	AFSOC
AF/A2 Briefing		30	60	60		35			
Readiness Reporting			45	45	30	60		30	30
Air Force Installation Contracting Agency		30	30		30	30			
Group Commander Panel			60						
AF/A4		30	45						30
A3/6 (Air and Cyber Operations)		30 each	60			45 (6)			30 (3)
Antiterrorism/Force Protection Level III		30	60	60				30	
Ethics				60					
Labor Relations				60					
Equal Opportunity				45				50	60
Diversity				45	30		30	45	
Civil Law				1+30					
Wing Commander Panel				60					
Americans with Disabilities Act				60					
Managing a Front Office					30				
First 90 Days in Command						60			
Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute Organizational Climate Survey						45			
TAP						45			
Security Forces (A7S)/Commander Force Protection Response (ACC)		45				45			
Installations and Mission Support		45				30			30

Table D.1—Continued

Course Presentations	AETC	AMC	PACAF	AFMC	AFSPC	ACC	USAFE	AFGSC	AFSOC
Analyses, Assessments and Lessons Learned		30							
Expeditionary Center Commander		30							
NAF Briefing							40		
Aeromedical Evacuation Brief							30		
Commander's Peer Panel							60		
Cops and Robbers (AFOSI, SFS, JAG, First Sergeant)							1+15		
SARC Panel							60		
Your New Command								50	
Command and Perception								30	
How to Lead (w/2 Star)								1+45	
Your Role as a Certifying Official								60	
Force Improvement Plan								60	
Resiliency								55	
Services								35	
Leadership Experiences and Philosophy									2+40
Family Program/Advocacy					30				30
Strategic Plans and Requirements		30							30
Wounded Warrior/Care Coalition									30
EFMP		30							
ADAPT					45				
SFS					30				

Table D.2. Functional and AFPC Squadron Commander Courses

	AFPC (Canceled)	Security Forces	Civil Engineering	Force Support	Cyber Operations
Mission Briefing	1+30				
MAJCOM/Commander	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes
JAG			60		
Enlisted Promotions	35				
AF/A1 Perspective				2+00	
Enlisted Force Development					
Civilian Personnel					2+00
Officer Assignments/Development		30			
Force Management Tools (BLSDM, AMS, Dashbd)	1+50				
Officer Evaluation System					
Mock Promotion Board					
Officer Promotions	45				
Squadron Commander Panel		1+15			60
AEF Deployments				2+00	
AEF Commander Toolkit	60				
Mortuary and Casualty	60				
CCC Perspective		50	1+30		
Public Affairs			60		
Senior Leader Lunch	2+00				
Functional Time	2+40				
Senior Leader Perspective (Beyond Commander)		1+30		1+30	
MAF-Rated Officer Development (11 and 38P Only)				2+00	
First Sergeant Panel		50	60		
Readiness Reporting					60
Group Commander Panel		60			
Labor Relations	50				

Table D.2—Continued

	AFPC (Canceled)	Security Forces	Civil Engineering	Force Support	Cyber Operations
Wing Commander Panel			1+30	1+30	
Commander's Peer Panel				2+00	
Your New Command				2+00	
Leadership Experiences and Philosophy		50		1+30	
Wounded Warrior/Care Coalition	15				
EFMP	30				
SFS			60		
Operations Support	20		60		
Knowledge Management with Air Force Personnel Services Demo	20				
Total Force Service Center Tour	1+10				
Officer Promotion Board Procedures	60				
Commander Records Review	20				
Enlisted Retraining and Reenlistment	45				
Post-9/11 GI Bill	15				
Professional Military Education	25				
Disability Evaluation System	30				
AF Evaluations and Promotions: Recommendation Forms	1+30				
Force Management Programs	50				
AF Manpower Agency	60				
AEF Roles and Responsibilities	60				
AEF Tasking Notification Process	15				
AEF Unit Type Code Reporting Tool	30				
Waivers, Reclamas, and Reclama Processing Tool	20				
Deployment Processing Discrepancy Reporting Tool	20				

Table D.2—Continued

	AFPC (Canceled)	Security Forces	Civil Engineering	Force Support	Cyber Operations
AEF Debrief Metrics	30				
AEF Next	50				
Reintegration	15				
AF Personnel Accountability and Assessment System	25				
Officer Development Education	20				
Officer Force Development	25		60		
Officer Assignment System	30				
AMS Demo	30				
Enlisted Assignments Update	50	30	60		
Indeterminate TDY (365-Day) Deployments	25				
Assignment Limitation Codes	25				
Civilian Classification	45				
How Do I Fill My Civilian Positions?	45				
Making a Civilian Selection	40				
Civilian Hiring Flexibilities	30				
Civilian Reductions in Force	20				
Civilian Recognition Program	20				
Civilian Force Development	30		60	1+30	
Civilian Performance Management	20				
Taking Civilian Disciplinary Action	25				
Security Forces Command 101		1+30			
Security Forces Strategic Update		50			
Department of the Air Force Police Program		50			
Defender's Edge—Forging the Elite Defender		1+40			

Table D.2—Continued

	AFPC (Canceled)	Security Forces	Civil Engineering	Force Support	Cyber Operations
Dealing with Suicide as a Commander		50			
Arming and Use of Force Reliability		50			
Security Forces Enterprise Human Capital Briefing		50			
IDRMP Mentorship—Khobar Towers Case Study		50			
IDRMP Mentorship—IDRMP Simplified		50			
IDRMP Mentorship—Application and Results		50			
IDRMP Mentorship—Accomplishments		50			
IDRMP Mentorship—Tinker Case Study		50			
AFOSI and Installation Defense Force Commander Relationship		50			
Chief Panel		60			
A Group Commander's Perspective on Relieving a Squadron Commander		60			
Nuclear Security		3+40			
Major Accident Response Policies/Air Force Incident Management System			2+00		
Communications			60		
Medical Readiness			60		
Air Force National Security Emergency Preparedness			60		
Emergency Operations Center Director Perspective			30		
Force Support			60		
Civil Air Patrol			60		
Emergency Operations Center Concept of Operations			5+30		
Contingency Contracting			60		

Table D.2—Continued

	AFPC (Canceled)	Security Forces	Civil Engineering	Force Support	Cyber Operations
Logistics Readiness Squadron Perspective			60		
Nuclear Weapons Response			1+30		
Major Accident Response			1+30		
Air Force Incident Management System Critiques			30		
Fire Flight Issues			60		
Explosive Ordnance Disposal Flight Issues			60		
Global Force Management			60		
Readiness Flight Issues			60		
Commander's Inspection Program and Management Internal Control Toolset			60		30
UCMJ			2+00		
Installation Management Flight—Housing Issues			45		
Installation Management Flight—Environmental Issues			45		
Senior Civil Engineer Civilian Perspective			60		
Installation Management Flight—Funding Issues			2+30		
Engineering and Force Protection, AFIMSC Installation Support Division, and AFCEC Cyber Security Liaison Remarks			45		
HQ AFIMSC Installation Support (AFCEC Installation Support Division)			1+15		
Resources (AFIMSC Installation Engineering Division)			60		
Warrior Brief			2+00		

Table D.2—Continued

	AFPC (Canceled)	Security Forces	Civil Engineering	Force Support	Cyber Operations
Financial Improvement and Audit Readiness, Air Force Directorate of Civil Engineers, Sustainment Division			60		
Planning and Integration (AFCEC Planning and Integration Directorate)			60		
Facilities (AFCEC Facility Engineering Directorate)			60		
Energy (AFCEC Engineering Directorate)			60		
Civil Engineering IT and NexGen IT (AFCEC Functional Management Office)			60		
Environment (AFCEC Environmental Directorate)			60		
Installations (AFCEC Installations Directorate)			60		
BCE Perspectives			60		
Civil Engineer Board (Education/Training Focused)			60		
MAJCOM, AFIMSC HQ, and Detachment BCE Breakout Sessions			60		
AF/A4C Perspective			2+00		
Senior Enlisted Perspective			1+30		
U.S. European Command/U.S. Africa Command TPP			1+15		
AF Central Command TPP			60		
U.S. Pacific Command TPP			1+15		
Engineering Fleet Issues			60		
Operations Fleet Issues			60		
Squadron Enlisted Matters			1+30		
Deputy BCE Perspective			60		

Table D.2—Continued

	AFPC (Canceled)	Security Forces	Civil Engineering	Force Support	Cyber Operations
Air Force Institute of Technology Graduate School of Engineering and Management Overview			30		
24th Air Force					13+45
624th Operations Center					45
67th Cyberspace Wing					60
AFIMSC					2+00
Cyber Engineering and Installation					60
Superintendent Briefing					60
Superintendent Panel					60
Money Matters					60
UMD					60
Enlisted Career Field Health/Issues					60
Civilian Topics					60
AEF Process					60
AEF Topics					2+30
Formal Training Process					2+00
Q&A and Standards and Evaluation Function					30
Command Squadron Next					60
Records Management Changes					30
Career Field Strategic Vision					2+00
AFPC Commander Perspective				1+30	
Manpower and Personnel Services Perspective				1+30	
AF/A1 Enduring Principles				2+00	
Air Reserve Components Overview				1+30	
Your AF Services Agency Resource				2+00	

Table D.2—Continued

	AFPC (Canceled)	Security Forces	Civil Engineering	Force Support	Cyber Operations
Command Authority				1+30	
FSS Leadership Team				2+00	
Force Development Flight “Big Rocks”				2+00	
Manpower and Personnel Flight “Big Rocks”				2+00	
Airman and Family Services Flight “Big Rocks”				2+00	
Sustainment Services Flight “Big Rocks”				2+00	
Community Services Flight “Big Rocks”				2+00	
Critical Incident Response				1+30	
NAF and Appropriated Fund Construction Program Management				1+30	
NAF Financial Management				2+00	
Business Practices				3+00	
Marketing				2+00	
Customer Service				2+00	
Manpower				2+00	
FSS Inspections				1+30	
FSS Support Perspective				1+30	
NAF Employee Management				2+00	
Career Field Manager Perspective				2+00	
Professionalism				1+30	
Critical Thinking Case Studies				1+30	
Negotiation				1+30	
Organizational Performance Leadership				2+00	

Appendix E. Data Related to Squadron Resources

This appendix provides more details about the information available in databases mentioned in Chapter Four that are related to manpower and personnel, funding, climate surveys, and unit readiness.

Personnel: Authorized, Funded, and Assigned

Using MPES and MilPDS data, Table E.1 compares our 12 squadron types in the following ways:

- funded authorizations as a percentage of requirements
- assigned *officers* as a percentage of officer requirements
- assigned enlisted 5-level personnel as a percentage of *funded* 5-level requirements.[1]

Table E.1. Funded Authorizations, Assigned Officer, and Assigned 5-Level Percentages

Squadron Title	Funded Authorizations as a Percentage of Requirements	Assigned Officers as a Percentage of Officer Requirements	Assigned Enlisted 5-Levels as a Percentage of Funded Requirements
Intelligence	100	107	87
Air mobility	99	137	99
Air refueling	99	110	90
Special operations	99	87	85
Aircraft maintenance	98	93	90
Communications	98	153	83
Airlift	97	104	99
Civil engineer	96	88	100
Fighter	96	84	83
Operations support	96	91	105
Force support	95	139	91
Security forces	91	82	94

SOURCE: RAND calculations based on MPES and MilPDS data.

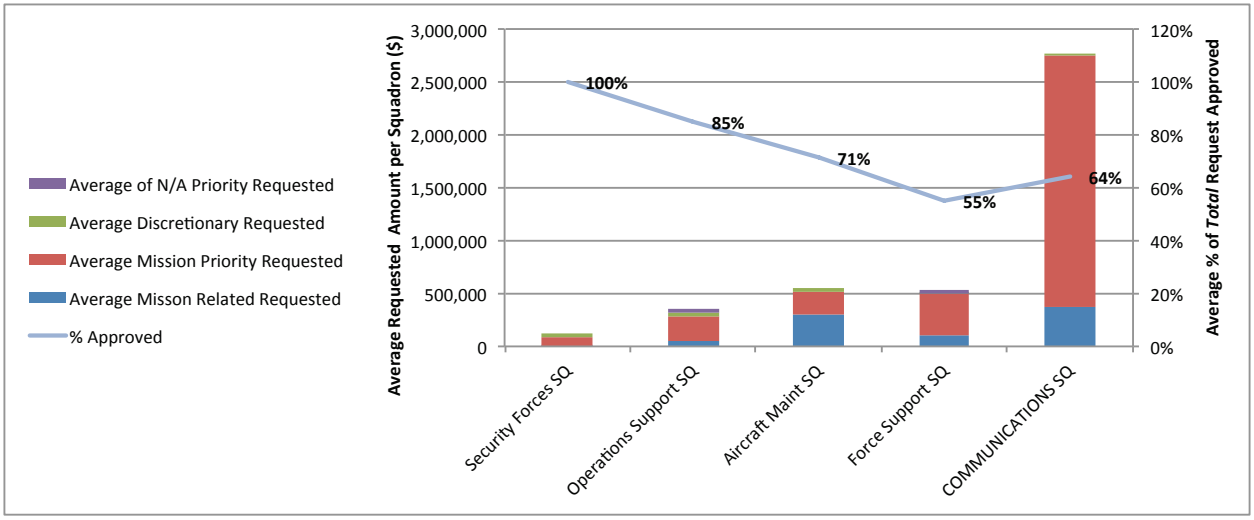
[1] The Air Force could choose a variety of resource levels for a "stoplight" chart, and the "fill" of 3-levels would also be a good choice. We used 5-levels in our example because for several years the Air Force has stressed its shortage of 5-level aircraft maintenance personnel.

On average, security forces squadrons have the lowest percentage of funded authorizations among the 12, at 91 percent; they also have the lowest percentage of assigned officers. Half of the squadron types have, on average, more than 100 percent of the officers they are authorized. However, the average percentage may not always be the best indicator of the level of overstaffing. For example, the 65 communications squadrons in our study are authorized a total of 234 officers but are assigned 298, for an excess of 64. Communications and fighter squadrons also have, on average, the lowest percentage of assigned 5-level enlisted personnel. Given the importance of 5-levels for training younger enlisted personnel, this could be an indication of a problem.

Funding: Requested and Approved

Figure E.1 shows a very preliminary example of how AFBEAT data could be used to explore differences in funding among squadron types, using the 31 squadrons from Global Strike Command that appear in the data set.

Figure E.1. Air Force Budget and Execution Analysis Tool Notional Display with Limited Global Strike Command Data



SOURCE: AFBEAT data from SAF/FMBOI, August 29, 2016. Squadrons were placed in categories by RAND based on squadron names in the AFBEAT database.

Squadron types are on the horizontal axis. The bars break down the average requested funding in each of the four categories (amounts on the left vertical axis) and the line shows the average percentage of total requested funds that were approved for each squadron type. For example, aircraft maintenance squadrons in Global Strike Command requested, on average, a

little more than $500,000 in O&M funding, and the average squadron received 71 percent of the amount it requested. If the data in this case are accurate, they indicate that there may very well be have and have-not squadrons in this command based on the different percentages of funding requests that are approved, as force support squadrons requested about the same amount of O&M funding but only had 54 percent of the request approved.

We stress again that, given the early stage of development of AFBEAT, this is only an example of its potential for use in comparing squadron resourcing.

Air Force Climate Surveys: Perceptions of Resourcing

To allow the examination of the data by squadron type, AFPC/DSYS accepted a list of squadrons categorized by RAND and assigned a number to each squadron before consolidating data associated with them. Thus, for example, if RAND's list had ten fighter squadrons with their squadron names and locations, the AFPC list showed anonymous squadrons designated as one through ten. We focused on the most recently available surveys—namely, those from 2010, 2012, and 2015—and examined three questions (most of which included subquestions) associated with satisfaction, resources, and unit performance; one question about the individual's position (squadron commander or not a squadron commander); and a question that was only asked in 2015 about the ability of senior leadership to balance resource reductions with mission accomplishment. Table E.2 shows the specific questions used.

Most questions used a Likert scale; AFPC provided the number of respondents for each response level, as well as the percentage of respondents who gave that answer. The AFPC display allowed the examination of climate survey responses by squadron type over time, but not by MAJCOM.[2] Figure E.2 shows an example of how the data can be analyzed.

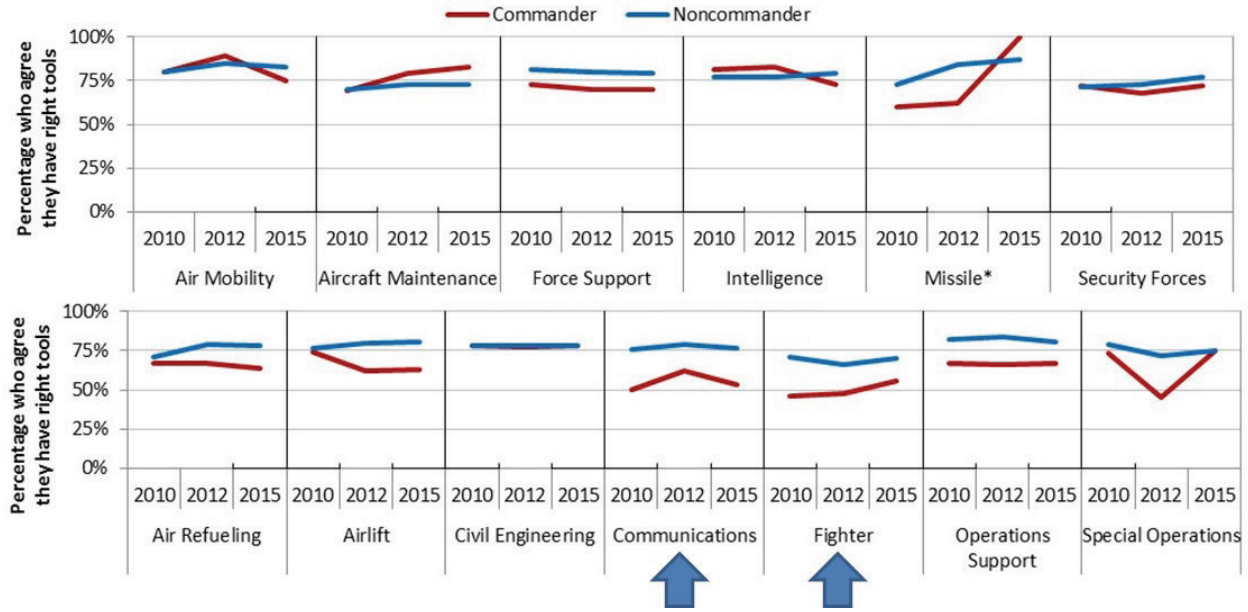
The figure shows responses to the question, "I have the right tools/equipment to accomplish my job," which was asked in the same way in all three years. Each small chart in the figure is for a squadron type; years are on the *x* axis, and the *y* axis represents the percentage of respondents who agreed (answered "strongly agree," "agree," or "slightly agree" to the question). Recall that the data included the number of respondents for each question, so the percentage is the number of people in all squadrons of a certain type who agreed compared to the number of people in all squadrons of the type who answered the question.

[2] This is a new display structure for this data. Items utilized had responses from up to 673 commanders and 42,672 noncommanders.

Table E.2. Air Force Climate Survey Questions Analyzed

Survey Year(s) and Question Number	Question and Subquestions
2010, 2012: 25	**Satisfaction**
2015: 27	**This section addresses the sense of accomplishment and personal fulfillment you receive from the work you do.**
	In general, I am satisfied with my job.
	In general, I am satisfied with the Air Force.
	I have a sense of personal fulfillment at the end of the day.
	The tasks I perform provide me with a sense of accomplishment.
	I am a valued member of my unit.
	2015 Only
	I have the authority I need to make decisions about how to do my job.
	I understand how my job impacts the mission of my unit.
	I am appropriately utilized in my job.
2010, 2012: 28	**Resources**
2015: 30	**This section addresses the effective management of your unit's resources (time, personnel, and equipment) to accomplish the mission.**
	I have adequate time to do my job well.
	We have enough people in my workgroup/team to accomplish the job.
	I have the right tools/equipment to accomplish my job.
	I have enough time to accomplish my daily workload during my duty hours.
	2015 Only
	I have enough training to accomplish my job.
	We have enough resources to accomplish the mission.
	Resources are distributed where they are needed in my unit.
	Workload is distributed appropriately within my workgroup/team.
2010, 2012: 30	**Unit Performance**
2015: 32	**This section addresses the extent to which your unit is satisfying its mission, goals, and objectives.**
	The quality of work in my unit is high.
	The quantity of work accomplished in my unit is high.
	My unit is known as one that gets the job done well.
	My unit is successfully accomplishing its mission.
	My unit adapts to change quickly.
	My unit adapts to changes well.
	2015 Only
	Steps are taken to deal with an individual who does not meet performance standards.
	In my unit, members are expected to exceed minimum performance standards.
2010: 43 **2012: 35** **2015: 36**	Are you a commander or commander-equivalent?
2015: 48f	My unit senior leadership balances resource reductions with the most relevant mission requirements.

Figure E.2. Climate Survey Data: Having the Right Tools



SOURCE: RAND analysis of AFPC climate survey data.

* Small numbers of commanders and noncommanders in Missile squadrons responded to this item during the available years. Therefore, results for Missile squadron should be interpreted with caution.

NOTE: The arrows show that commanders in communications and fighter squadrons have lower assessments of their possession of the right tools to do their jobs.

Figure E.2 shows that, compared to other squadron types, commanders in communications and fighter squadrons have lower assessments of their possession of the right tools to do their jobs, with around 50 percent of them agreeing that they did for all three years of data.[3] Similar displays can be created for the other questions.

[3] For commanders, aggregating across years, results are significant; $\chi^2(12) = 48.14$, $p < .001$. Adjusted standardized residuals (absolute values exceeding 3) suggest that fighter commanders and communications commanders demonstrate particularly low agreement with the statement that they have the right tools or equipment. Civil engineer squadron commanders demonstrate particularly high agreement with the statement. Results for commanders of other squadron types do not meet this cutoff.

For noncommanders aggregating across years, results are significant; $\chi^2(12) = 885.04$, $p < .001$. Adjusted standardized residuals (absolute values exceeding 3) suggest that noncommanders in aircraft maintenance (larger effect), fighter, and security forces (larger effect) squadrons demonstrate particularly low agreement with the statement.

Assuming independence (corresponding with previous analyses): Results are significant for noncommanders, $\chi 2(2) = 28.32$, $p < .001$, but not for commanders. For noncommanders, agreement was lower than expected in 2010, higher than expected in 2012, and at expectation level in 2015.

Unit Readiness

We obtained Resource Readiness Assessment from the DRRS for Air Force squadron readiness levels as of July 2016 for our original 12 squadron types and determined the percentage of squadrons that reported readiness levels of 1 or 2 for personnel, training, resources, and supply. We also obtained data for overall unit C-levels.[4] These data can be used to determine the percentage of squadrons of various squadron types that are reporting different readiness levels, as suggested in the stoplight chart of Table 4.1. Readiness levels of individual units are classified, and, depending on how DRRS data is aggregated, the information may still be classified. For example, the average readiness level of two units in a squadron is still considered to be classified.[5] To avoid any potential classification issues with DRRS data, the percentages in the DRRS column of Table 4.1 are not actual percentages.

[4] Data for specific squadrons is classified, but when aggregated so that individual squadrons cannot be identified, it is unclassified.

[5] See Table 1.1, "Classification Guidance," of AFI 10-201, 2016.

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A top priority for Gen David Goldfein, chief of staff of the U.S. Air Force, is to revitalize the squadron as the warfighting core of the Air Force. The authors of this report used a variety of data sources and interviews with 75 squadron, group, and wing commanders to develop recommendations for how the Air Force can do this by addressing squadron commander responsibilities, improving commander preparation, and refining resource monitoring.

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