

**BY ORDER OF THE
SECRETARY OF THE AIR FORCE**

AIR FORCE MANUAL 36-3004

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Personnel

**EXPERIENCED AVIATOR RETENTION
INCENTIVE (EARI) PROGRAM**

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This publication implements Air Force Policy Directive (AFPD) 36-30, *Military Entitlements*. It provides eligibility requirements and governs the Experienced Aviator Retention Incentive (EARI) program (previously known as the Aviation Bonus (AvB)) for all Air Force officers as described in Title 37 United States Code (USC), Section 334 *Special Aviation Incentive Pay and Bonus Authorities for Officers* as well as Department of Defense Instruction (DoDI) 7730.67, *Aviation Incentive Pays and Bonus Program*. This publication applies to Regular Air Force, Air Force Reserve, and Air National Guard personnel. This manual does not apply to United States Space Force personnel. In collaboration with the Chief of Air Force Reserve (AF/RE) and Director of the Air National Guard (NGB/CF), the Deputy Chief of Staff for Manpower, Personnel, and Services (AF/A1) develops personnel policy for the Air Force EARI program. Ensure all records generated as a result of processes prescribed in this publication adhere to Air Force Instruction (AFI) 33-322, *Records Management and Information Governance Program*, and are disposed in accordance with (IAW) the Air Force Records Disposition Schedule, which is located in the Air Force Records Information Management System. This manual requires the collection and or maintenance of information protected by the Privacy Act of 1974 authorized by 10 USC § 9013, *Secretary of the Air Force* and Executive Order 13478, *Amendments to Executive Order 9397 Relating to Federal Agency Use of Social Security Numbers*. The applicable System of Records Notice T7340, Defense Joint Military Pay System-Active Component is available at <http://dpclo.defense.gov/Privacy/SORNs.aspx>. Refer recommended changes and questions about this publication to the office of primary responsibility (OPR) using the Department of the Air Force (DAF) Form 847, *Recommendation for Change of Publication*; route DAF Forms 847 from the field through the appropriate functional chain of command. This manual may be

supplemented at any level, but all supplements that directly implement this publication must be routed to AF/AIP for coordination prior to certification and approval. The authorities to waive wing/unit level requirements in this publication are identified with a Tier (“T-0, T-1, T-2, T-3”) number following the compliance statement. See Department of the Air Force Manual (DAFMAN) 90-161, *Publishing Processes and Procedures*, for a description of the authorities associated with the Tier numbers. Submit requests for waivers through the chain of command to the appropriate Tier waiver approval authority, or alternately, to the publication OPR for non-tiered compliance items. For the Air National Guard (ANG), non-tiered compliance items will be considered T-2 and requests for waivers will be submitted through the chain of command to the appropriate authority as described in DAFMAN 90-161.

SUMMARY OF CHANGES

This document has been substantially revised and needs to be completely reviewed. Major changes include program name change from Aviation Bonus to Experienced Aviator Retention Incentive and updating the references, eligibility, and the hierarchy of roles.

Chapter 1

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

1.1. Overview. The Experienced Aviator Retention Incentive (EARI) was established by the Secretary of the Air Force (SecAF) to attract and retain officers in a military aviation career by offering special and incentive pays in exchange for extended service. EARI is a strategic talent-management tool tailored annually to improve readiness and increase the lethality of the force by maintaining the correct balance of experienced aviators.

Chapter 2

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

2.1. Deputy Chief of Staff, Manpower, Personnel and Services (AF/A1). The SecAF-delegated AF/A1 approval authority for the EARI program. Military Force Management Policy (AF/A1P) has overall responsibility for development and oversight of the Regular Air Force (RegAF) EARI program, including waiver authority. Rated Force Policy Branch (AF/A1PPR) has overall responsibility for developing the annual EARI program and will ensure compliance with DoDI 7730.67, *Aviation Incentive Pays and Bonus Program* and associated Air Force guidance.

2.2. Director, Air National Guard (NGB/CF). NGB/CF has overall responsibility for development and oversight of the ANG EARI program.

2.3. Chief, Air Force Reserve (AF/RE). AF/RE is the functional authority and is responsible for policy oversight and advisory services related to the Air Force Reserve (AFR) EARI Program.

2.4. Air Force Personnel Center (AFPC) (RegAF only). AFPC Commander (AFPC/CC) has overall responsibility for implementing and administering the annual EARI program. AFPC, Military Sustainment Operations Section (AFPC/DP2SSM) is the office of primary responsibility (OPR) and will:

2.4.1. Execute and manage program progress throughout execution.

2.4.1.1. Communicate current EARI program policies and procedures to eligible EARI applicants and notify them of EARI policy changes via message and web-based platforms.

2.4.1.2. Maintain an accurate database of EARI program information.

2.4.1.3. Assist Air Staff in the collection of accurate EARI program statistics.

2.4.1.4. Provide a forum for answering questions and resolving implementation issues as they arise.

2.4.1.5. Ensure accurate agreement and payment information on each participating officer is provided to the Air Force Personnel Center Operating Location (AFPC-OL) Indianapolis (Formally Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS)).

2.4.2. Review records of participating officers as required to determine continued eligibility.

2.4.3. Retain the capability to manually implement the program.

2.4.4. Retain source documents until archived.

2.4.5. Process and route exception to policies to Rated Force Policy Branch (AF/A1PPR) for final disposition within 7 days of receipt.

2.5. National Guard Bureau, Directorate of Manpower, Personnel, Recruiting and Services (NGB/A1) (ANG Only).

2.5.1. NGB/A1 is the OPR for the development, implementation and policy of the ANG EARI program and shall:

2.5.1.1. Distribute guidance concerning EARI eligibility and program information to each state.

2.5.1.2. Serve as the primary point of contact for all EARI-related communication to the AFPC-OL Indianapolis.

2.5.1.3. Receive, review, and validate EARI agreements and requests and eligibility documents from states and units.

2.5.1.4. Receive, review, and approve requests for withdrawal from the EARI program, or any action affecting EARI eligibility, payment, or recoupment.

2.5.1.5. Coordinate and monitor program implementation and actions.

2.5.1.6. Forward all approved agreements to EARI coordinator for payment processing.

2.5.1.7. Clarify any eligibility questions or changes in eligibility criteria not specifically addressed.

2.6. Air Force Reserve Command (AFRC) (AFR only).

2.6.1. The Directorate of Personnel (AF/REP) will serve as the OPR for developing AFR implementation policy and guidance for EARI. Resources and Requirements (AFRC/A3R) will assist AF/REP in developing the annual AFR EARI program and is responsible for analyzing inventories, retention, rated force management issues and market conditions to evaluate upcoming fiscal year (FY) eligible population.

2.6.2. AFRC, Military Personnel Division (AFRC/A1K) is the Office of Collateral Responsibility and will review and interpret policy guidance related to EARI.

2.6.3. ARPC, Education and Incentives Division (ARPC/DPAT) is OPR for generating quarterly EARI take-rate analysis. This analysis is required to specify which locations and Mission Design Series (MDS) to target in the following year's EARI program. ARPC, Assignments Division (ARPC/DPAA) will coordinate with Directorate of Air, Space & Information Operations (AFRC/A3) to release timely program announcements and messages. ARPC/DPAA will serve as the primary point of contact for all EARI-related communication to the AFPC-OL Indianapolis and validate all EARI agreements.

2.7. Major Command (MAJCOM) Director of Personnel (A1). Designate a MAJCOM EARI point of contact and review this Air Force Manual (AFMAN), applicable implementation guidance, and any instructions located on AFPC's EARI website and/or execution platform. Forward EARI announcements to the field when notified by AFPC of communications regarding current EARI program policies and procedure changes.

2.8. Field Operating Agencies, Direct Reporting Unit, Joint Staffs, and Higher Headquarters. EARI applications for officers at these agencies as well as all personnel outside normal AF reporting channels are available via the respective component's website and/or execution platform. For these personnel, the EARI supervisor remains responsible for all requirements of [paragraph 2.12](#) and countersigning the EARI agreements. Exceptions to this will be handled through AFPC/DP2SSM (RegAF), NGB/A1 (ANG), or AFRC/A1K (AFRC) on a case-by-case basis.

2.9. Wing Commander, Air National Guard Readiness Center Commander (ANGRC/CC), and 1st Air Force Commander (1 AF/CC) (ANG only).

2.9.1. Utilize EARI as a talent management tool and ensure that the unit has a talent management plan that supports member's agreed period of service commitment.

2.9.2. Appoint a primary and alternate EARI Coordinator.

2.9.3. Ensure members meet eligibility requirements and sign EARI agreements.

2.10. The Adjutant General (TAGs) of each state and territory and the Commanding General of the District of Columbia (ANG Only). Will manage their rated force within their respective organizations. They will monitor unit program implementation to ensure it is in line with state force management practices and plans.

2.11. Wing Commander or Equivalent (RegAF only). Ensure EARI disapprovals are in the Air Force's best interest. If the wing commander or equivalent in the applicant's chain of command does not concur with the unit commander or supervisor's disapproval recommendation, they can sign the EARI application recommending approval. Otherwise, an endorsed memorandum recommending disapproval is required to accompany the application and submitted to AFPC/DP2SSM for final disposition. AFPC/CC will render a final determination.

2.12. EARI Supervisors (RegAF and AFR only). The individual responsible for counseling EARI-eligible officers and recommending approval or disapproval of EARI applications. This is normally the member's unit commander. For officers assigned to a wing (wing staff, command post, etc.), but outside a squadron, the operations group commander is the EARI supervisor. For officers not in a squadron or wing (for example, MAJCOM headquarters, military schools, or joint and exchange positions), the first O-6 or Air Force civilian equivalent in the officer's chain of command is the EARI supervisor. They are the rated officer's primary contact for EARI questions and will:

2.12.1. Review this AFMAN, applicable implementation message guidance, and any instructions located on AFPC's EARI execution website, platform, application before counseling eligible rated officers on the EARI program. Ensure each eligible rated officer also reviews all applicable information.

2.12.2. Be responsible for counseling EARI-eligible officers and recommending approval and disapproval of EARI applications.

2.12.3. A memorandum recommending disapproval endorsed by member's EARI supervisor and Wing Commander is required to accompany the disapproved application and submitted to AFPC/DP2SSM for final disposition. AFPC/CC will render a final determination (RegAF Only).

2.13. EARI Coordinator (ANG only).

2.13.1. Review this AFMAN and the applicable ANG FY implementation policy.

2.13.2. Be responsible for disseminating the current FY EARI implementation policy to the unit upon release through message guidance, counseling EARI-eligible officers, and ensuring all rated officers review all applicable ANG FY implementation policy.

2.13.3. Serve as the unit's primary or alternate contact for all EARI related questions.

2.13.4. Manage and execute the unit's EARI program IAW FY implementation policy.

2.13.5. Receive EARI Coordinator training, provided by ANG, Rated Management Branch (NGB/A1PF), within 90 days of appointment.

2.13.6. Notify NGB/A1PF via the Case Management System (CMS) of any changes to the agreement.

2.14. Host Aviation Resource Management. For any suspension or disqualification from aviation service, or return to aviation service, servicing Host Aviation Resource Management office will notify the member's local financial management office for termination or resumption of EARI payments.

2.15. Regular Air Force (RegAF) Rated Officers.

2.15.1. Review this AFMAN and all applicable implementation communications.

2.15.2. Check eligibility and review their agreement options. If an officer believes he or she is erroneously identified as not eligible for EARI, he or she may consult with AFPC, Military Sustainment Operations Section (AFPC/DP2SSM) (RegAF), EARI Coordinator (ANG), or ARPC/DPAA (AFR).

2.15.3. Apply for EARI between release of component program and close of business on the announced close out date of the EARI program for that FY. Close of Business and the program close out date will be identified in the implementation communications.

2.15.4. Ensure their records are current and information determining their eligibility is accurate.

2.15.5. Ensure they still meet all eligibility requirements at the time they enter an EARI agreement. EARI agreements are only valid when all eligibility requirements are met. In a case where personnel records are inaccurate and an EARI agreement is accepted, the validity of the agreement is determined by the correct personnel data on the effective date of the agreement. If later determined that an agreement is or was invalid, recoupment will be required.

2.16. Air National Guard (ANG) Rated Officers.

2.16.1. Review this AFMAN and the applicable ANG FY implementation policy.

2.16.2. Check eligibility and review agreement options.

2.16.3. Notify EARI Coordinator of any changes in eligibility or status, to include if the member believes he or she is erroneously identified either as eligible or ineligible for the EARI.

2.16.4. Release from EARI Agreement. It is the member's responsibility to notify the EARI Coordinator to initiate request for release from his or her EARI agreement. The authority to release a member from the EARI agreement resides with NGB/A1 and will only be considered in extraordinary circumstances.

2.16.5. Unit Transfer. A member who transfers from an Active Guard Reserve (AGR) position to another within the ANG will be allowed to fulfill his or her remaining EARI service commitment in the new position with the concurrence of the gaining commander. Member must notify the EARI Coordinators of the losing and gaining units prior to the transfer.

2.17. Air Force Reserve (AFR) Rated Officers.

2.17.1. Thoroughly read and understand current FY guidance and initiate EARI application.

2.17.2. Notify ARPC/DPAA (AGRs) or Wing Career Assistance Advisor (Air Reserve Technician) if there is a change in status.

2.17.3. Annual EARI payments are made in arrears. Members must meet eligibility criteria of the FY program under which they signed up to receive payment.

Chapter 3

EXPERIENCED AVIATOR RETENTION INCENTIVE ELIGIBILITY

3.1. EARI Entry Eligibility.

3.1.1. To be eligible to enter an EARI agreement, a rated officer must:

3.1.1.1. Meet all eligibility requirements described in 37 USC § 334 *Special Aviation Incentive Pay and Bonus Authorities for Officers* as well as all eligibility requirements in DoDI 7730.67. (T-0)

3.1.1.2. Be qualified for aviation service IAW Air Force Manual (AFMAN) 11-402, *Aviation and Parachutist Service* and AFMAN 11-421, *Aviation Resource Management*. (T-1)

3.1.1.3. Be entitled to Aviation Incentive Pay (AvIP) IAW AFMAN 11-421 and DoDI 7730.67. (T-0)

3.1.1.4. Be in a pay grade of O-5 or below at the time of incurring the EARI contractual obligation. (T-0)

3.1.1.5. Have no more than 25 years of aviation service at the end of their contracted obligation. (T-0)

3.1.1.6. Hold and maintain a valid security clearance for the duration of the EARI contract (minimum of SECRET).

3.1.1.7. Meet all other eligibility and service commitment criteria specified in current FY implementation plan for each component.

3.1.2. Eligibility for those rated officers returning to RegAF component under voluntary return to active duty, Inter-Service Transfer and Air Reserve Component active duty accession programs will be addressed in the annual RegAF EARI program message.

3.2. Service Commitment for EARI (RegAF Only). For RegAF officers, AFPC/DP2SSM will ensure each officer entering an EARI agreement has his or her service commitment updated based on the terms of the individual agreement (see Air Force Manual (AFMAN) 36-2100, *Military Utilization and Classification*). EARI agreement lengths are established in conjunction with each FY's approved EARI program. Specific agreement and service commitment lengths will be addressed in the implementation communications and will be IAW DoDI 7730.67. (T-0)

3.2.1. When an officer's EARI is suspended or terminated, service commitments associated with the member's EARI agreement will not be automatically relieved or shortened. An officer whose EARI entitlement or eligibility terminates prior to the completion of the EARI service commitment may request a waiver to that EARI service commitment from the SecAF, but only as part of submitting a request for separation or retirement (see DAFI 36-3211, *Military Separations*, and AFI 36-3203, *Service Retirements*). (T-1)

3.2.2. An EARI service commitment does not guarantee a participating officer will be retained. The Air Force retains authority to separate a rated officer before the expiration of an EARI service commitment, IAW DAFI 36-3211. (T-1)

3.2.3. Rated officers twice non-selected for promotion to major or lieutenant colonel who are eligible will be considered for the EARI on a case-by-case basis. Officers twice non-selected for promotion who are offered and accept selective continuation on active duty may not voluntarily separate or retire sooner than the service commitment associated with the EARI agreement. Mandatory retirement or separation takes precedence over an EARI service commitment; however, recoupment of a pro rata portion of the EARI equal to the unserved portion of the service commitment may apply and is dependent on the type of separation and associated separation program designator (SPD) code. The DoD SPD code matrix establishes which separations are subject to recoupment of bonuses and special pays. See [paragraph 3.5.3](#) for further guidance.

3.3. Payment Schedules. EARI rates and payment schedules will be IAW the authorized EARI rates and agreement effective dates as outlined in applicable FY program implementation communications. EARI payments are taxable and subject to withholding of applicable federal and state income taxes. For Air National Guard (ANG) and Air Force Reserve (AFR) members, EARI incentive amounts will be paid in arrears and will be accomplished after completion of each annual term, upon validation that the member served in an active status with no break in service. Payments will be based on full years and months (not days) and are subject to withholding of applicable federal and state taxes.

3.4. Approving EARI Agreements. An EARI agreement, once signed by the member and executed by the respective component IAW applicable policies, procedures, and guidance, becomes legally binding and deemed accepted by the SecAF. EARI agreements that are erroneously approved due to an administrative or records error will be terminated, the associated service commitment will be removed and EARI payments will be recouped in full.

3.5. Terminating, Suspending, or Recouping EARI (formerly AvB).

3.5.1. EARI payments terminate if a member:

- 3.5.1.1. Is permanently disqualified from aviation service IAW AFMAN 11-402 and/or AFMAN 11-421 due to medical reasons.
- 3.5.1.2. Separates from the component for any reason including dismissal, or discharge for cause authorized under any provision of law (excludes Career Intermission Program (CIP)).
- 3.5.1.3. Has his or her security clearance permanently revoked.
- 3.5.1.4. Released for training in other competitive categories such as Undergraduate Flying Training (UFT), medicine or law. EARI agreement will terminate at the start of the UFT, medicine, or law program.

3.5.2. EARI payments are suspended if a member:

- 3.5.2.1. Is suspended from aviation service IAW AFMAN 11-402 and/or AFMAN 11-421 for greater than 365 days. If suspension from aviation service is lifted prior to the EARI service commitment, payments will resume on a pro-rated basis with no change to the annual payment date.
- 3.5.2.2. Has a security clearance temporarily suspended or reduced below SECRET. If suspension of valid security clearance (minimum of SECRET) is lifted prior to the EARI

service commitment, payments will resume on a pro-rated basis with no change to the annual payment date.

3.5.2.3. Participates in the Career Intermission Program (if authorized in annual program guidance).

3.5.3. EARI payments will be recouped for members who fail to complete the required service commitment include, but are not limited to the following circumstances:

3.5.3.1. Permanent disqualification from aviation service IAW AFMAN 11-402 and/or AFMAN 11-421 for reasons other than medical. (T-1)

3.5.3.2. Separation for any reason including dismissal or discharge for cause authorized under any provision of law. This includes, but is not limited to, separation under early release programs, separation for twice non-select for promotion, and separation due to Force Management actions.

3.5.3.3. Voluntary or involuntary separation due to twice non-selected for promotion IAW AFI 36-2501 *Officer Promotions and Selective Continuation*. (T-1)

3.5.3.4. If a member dies and it is determined that the death was a result of negligence or misconduct by the member.

3.5.3.5. If a member fails to maintain a valid security clearance (minimum of SECRET).

3.5.4. Unearned EARI payments will be recouped on a pro-rated basis as of the effective date of the separation, disqualification, or death of the member resulting from negligence or misconduct by the member.

3.5.5. Any unearned portion of the EARI will not be recouped and any unpaid portion of the EARI will be paid (lump sum) in the member's final pay for the following situations:

3.5.5.1. If a member dies through no negligence or misconduct of the member.

3.5.5.2. If a member incurs an injury or illness (through no negligence or misconduct of the member) determined to be in the line of duty while serving in a combat zone. The combat zone must be designated by the President or Secretary of Defense (or combat-related operation designated by the Secretary of Defense). The member must be separated or retired for disability under 10 USC Ch. 61, *Retirement or Separation for physical disability* and 10 USC § 1413a Combat-related Special Compensation, specifically 10 USC § 1413a (e) Combat-Related Disability to be eligible. (T-0)

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Attachment 1**GLOSSARY OF REFERENCES AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION*****References***

10 USC Ch 61, *Retirement or Separation for Physical Disability*

10 USC § 1413a(e), *Combat Related Disability*

10 USC § 9013, *Secretary of the Air Force*

37 USC § 334, *Special Aviation Incentive Pay and Bonus Authorities for Officers*

Executive Order 13478, *Amendments to Executive Order 9397 Relating to Federal Agency Use of Social Security Numbers*

DoDI 7730.67, *Aviation Incentive Pays and Bonus Program*, 20 October 2016

AFPD 36-30, *Military Entitlements*, 11 April 2019

AFMAN 11-402, *Aviation and Parachutist Service*, 24 January 2019

AFMAN 11-421, *Aviation Resource Management*, 23 March 2020

AFI 33-322, *Records Management and Information Governance Program*, 23 March 2020

AFMAN 36-2100, *Military Utilization and Classification*, 7 April 2021

DAFI 36-2501, *Officer Promotions and Selective Continuation*, 16 July 2004

AFI 36-3203, *Service Retirements*, 29 January 2021

DAFI 36-3211, *Military Separations*, 24 June 2022

DAFMAN 90-161, *Publishing Processes and Procedures*, 15 April 2022

Prescribed Forms

None

Adopted Forms

DAF Form 847, *Recommendation for Change of Publication*

Abbreviations and Acronyms

ACIP—Aviation Career Incentive Pay

AFI—Air Force Instruction

AFMAN—Air Force Manual

AFPC—Air Force Personnel Center

AFPC-OL Indianapolis—Air Force Personnel Center Operating Location Indianapolis (formerly DFAS)

AFPD—Air Force Policy Directive

AFR—Air Force Reserve

AFRC—Air Force Reserve Command
AGR—Active Guard Reserve
ANG—Air National Guard
AvB—Aviation Bonus (formerly ACP)
AvIP—Aviation Incentive Pay (formerly Aviation Career Incentive Pay (ACIP))
ARPC—Air Reserve Personnel Center
CIP—Career Intermission Program
CMS—Case Management System
DAFI—Department of the Air Force Instructions
DFAS—Defense Finance and Accounting Service
DoDI—Department of Defense Instructions
EARI—Experienced Aviator Retention Incentive (Formally known as AvB)
FY—Fiscal Year
IAW—In Accordance With
MAJCOM—Major Command
MDS—Mission Design Series
NGB—National Guard Bureau
OPR—Office of Primary Responsibility
RegAF—Regular Air Force
SecAF—Secretary of the Air Force
SPD—Separation Program Designator
UFT—Undergraduate Flight Training
USC—United States Code

Office Symbols

1 AF/CC—1st Air Force Commander
AF/A1—Deputy Chief of Staff for Manpower, Personnel, and Services
AF/A1P—Directorate of Military Force Management Policy
AF/A1PPR—Air Force Rated Force Policy Branch
AF/RE—Air Force Chief of Air Force Reserve
AF/REP—Air Force Directorate of Personnel
AFPC/CC—Air Force Personnel Center Commander
AFPC/DP2SSM—Air Force Personnel Center Military Sustainment Operations Section

AFRC/A1K—Air Force Reserve Command Military Personnel Division

AFRC/A3—Air Force Reserve Command, Directorate of Air, Space & Information Operations

AFRC/A3R—Air Force Reserve Command, Resources and Requirements

ANGRC/CC—Air National Guard Readiness Center Commander

ARPC/DPAA—Air Reserve Personnel Center Assignments Division

ARPC/DPAT—Air Reserve Personnel Center Education and Incentives Division

NGB/A1—National Guard Bureau, Directorate of Manpower, Personnel, Recruiting, and Services

NGB/A1PF—National Guard Bureau, Rated Management Branch

NGB/CF—Director, Air National Guard

SAF/MR—Assistant Secretary of the Air Force, Manpower and Reserve Affairs

TAG—The Adjutant General

Terms

EARI Agreement—The aviator's legal contract for Experienced Aviator Retention Incentive (EARI) once received and approved by component approving authority.

EARI Effective Date—The date an EARI agreement begins and the date from which pay amounts are computed.

EARI Supervisor—The individual responsible for counseling EARI-eligible officers and recommending approval or disapproval of EARI applications. This is normally the unit commander. For officers assigned to a wing (wing staff, command post, etc.), but outside a squadron, the operations group commander is the EARI supervisor. For officers not in a squadron or wing (for example, MAJCOM headquarters, military schools, or joint and exchange positions), the first O-6 or Air Force civilian equivalent in the officer's chain of command is the EARI supervisor.