



INTRODUCTION TO MEDICAL OPERATIONS

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Air Force medical forces provide the joint force with several distinct capabilities. These include health services support, en route casualty support, and health care to eligible beneficiaries.¹ Air Force medical forces assist in sustaining the performance, health and fitness of every Airman in-garrison and while deployed within the Continental United States (CONUS) or overseas (OCONUS) in support of global operations. The Air Force is increasingly called upon to deliver medical capabilities throughout the range of military operations. Diverse medical missions may consist of civil-military operations, global health engagement, or humanitarian assistance/disaster relief as part of joint or multinational operations.

AIRMAN'S PERSPECTIVE

First and foremost, Air Force medical operations are focused on life-saving expeditionary medical support. They ensure rapid casualty stabilization, treatment, staging, and evacuation to definitive care, all while maintaining the standard of care and providing patient safety en route. The [En Route Casualty Care System](#) (ERCCS) is a versatile and flexible component of military medicine. Personnel are able to determine the required medical capability and designate the optimal mix of assets based on mission demands.² Home station medical operations are postured at military and civilian facilities to provide health care while maintaining advanced clinical skills currency.³

Air Force medical forces are made up of regular, Air Force Reserve, Air National Guard, Air Force civilians and contractors. Though regular, Reserve, and Guard medical forces are interoperable, each has distinctive mission areas.⁴

Command and organization of medical forces consist of both the internal command and operational relationships within the [Air Force Medical Service](#) (AFMS) and the external command relationships for home station and expeditionary operations. See [Roles and](#)

¹ Air Force Instruction (AFI) 41-106, [Medical Readiness Program Management](#).

² Joint Publication (JP) 4-02, [Health Service Support \(HSS\)](#).

³ [JP 4-02](#).

⁴ AFI 10-401, [Air Force Operations Planning and Execution](#). For additional information on Air National Guard medical forces, see [Home Station Planning and Execution](#) in Annex 4-02.

[Responsibilities](#) and [Organization, Command and Control](#) for a detailed discussion of command and organization.

Medical capability objectives are designed to support the force. These objectives are to: promote and sustain a healthy and fit warfighter; prevent illness and injury; restore health (to include expeditionary health care); and optimize and sustain human performance. This information is discussed in depth in [Medical Forces Objectives](#).

[Expeditionary Operations Planning Considerations](#) tie together expeditionary operations, home station operations, medical stability operations, and other medical support operations worldwide. These considerations include [Medical Forces Employment](#), [Medical Forces Support in Joint Operations](#), [the En Route Casualty Care System](#) and [Medical Logistics](#). These considerations are explored in detail in their respective chapters.

The global security environment is constantly evolving. No single nation can address every challenge and priority alone. With this in mind, the USAF actively partners with allies to further US and partner nation mutual interests in air, space, and cyberspace. Air Force [medical forces](#) may be required to support stability operations, build partnerships, and improve partner capacity. They leverage military health engagement and training opportunities to enhance military capabilities necessary to achieve objectives for all operations. This information is discussed in depth in the [Engagement, Cooperation & Deterrence Operations](#) chapter.

Responsive medical assistance within our borders is also vital to effective support of the Service as a whole. Air Force medical personnel support homeland operations as effectively as they do in an expeditionary environment. The topic, [Home Station](#), has a discussion of home station planning and execution.
