

Final – 11 May 2010

AU/AFF/NNN/2010-XX

AIR FORCE FELLOWS

AIR UNIVERSITY

**CREATING JOINT LEADERS TODAY
FOR A SUCCESSFUL AIR FORCE TOMORROW**

by

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A Research Report Submitted to the Air Force Research Institute/AFRI
In Partial Fulfillment of the Graduation Requirements

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May 2010

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Acknowledgement

I would also like to thank my research assistant, Andrew Badger, a sophomore at Harvard University and an Army ROTC cadet at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. His diligent research allowed me the opportunity to thoroughly explore the variety of developmental opportunities offered to our senior leaders. He will certainly be a welcomed addition to the Army in 2012.

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Preface

As a Colonel in the U.S. Air Force with a career of 22 years behind me, I have always been intrigued as to why our senior leaders in the DoD nominate a particular general or flag officer to a functional or geographic combatant command or joint staff directorate position. What makes that particular senior officer more qualified for the position than another? Whatever the qualifications are, the one thing for certain is that the Air Force always seems to be on the short end of the stick when it comes to putting key leaders into these strategic billets. I choose this research project, then, because I wanted to explore how the Air Force compares to its sister services in grooming senior officers. Are we doing it better, on par, or worse than our sister services when it comes to developing our senior leaders for a shot at a functional or geographic combatant command? In exploring this topic, I hope to shed some light on how the Air Force develops its senior leaders so in the future, they can better identify, groom, and prepare officers for key senior leadership positions.

Abstract

A central Service responsibility of the U.S. Air Force is to identify and prepare Airmen for senior leadership. As of this writing, Air Force general officers hold four of the 10 functional and geographic combatant commander billets. History shows, however, that Air Force flag officers have filled only a small portion of top joint positions, especially combatant commanders. Unfortunately, in comparison to our other services, the Air Force seems to exert only marginal influence on the selection and development of joint operational leaders. So the question becomes, is the Air Force adequately preparing its senior leaders for joint command?

This paper examines this question and argues in favor of providing the time necessary for senior Air Force leaders to receive in-depth officer education on the major processes and institutions of national security, service history, structure, functions, and culture of the Air Force, as well as those of the other services with the goal of having these officers assume joint command. What it also argues for is the idea that the “best qualified, most capable” officer should hold the position, regardless of service affiliation. What it does not advocate for is the idea of “equal rights” among the services, i.e., the idea that there should be an equal number services represented at the functional/geographic combatant commander level; or for the idea that “it is a particular service’s turn” to hold a particular command billet. Simply put, the Air Force needs to groom its senior officers to be competitive in the selection process for functional/geographic combatant command. Taking this step is critical to ensuring the U.S. Air Force's “best and brightest” are identified and groomed for future key senior leadership positions.

Chapter 1

Introduction

The first requirement for any commander is leadership...It doesn't matter if one is air-, land-, sea-, or space-trained...It is important that one understand the strengths, weaknesses, and doctrines of each and how to blend them in battle.¹

—Gen Charles A. “Chuck” Horner

Commanding a functional or geographic combatant command is the pinnacle of a military career. As of this writing, Air Force general officers hold four of the 10 functional and geographic combatant commander billets. History shows, however, that Air Force general officers have filled only a small portion of top joint positions, especially combatant commanders. Since the National Security Act of 1947, a total of 129 four-star general officers and flag officers have been appointed as functional or geographic combatant commander.²

Command	Total Commanders	USAF	USA	USN	USMC	Current Service
USAFRICOM	1	0	1	0	0	USA
USCENTCOM	10	0	6	1	3	USA
USPACOM	22	1	0	21	0	USN
USEUCOM	15	2	11	1	1	USN
USNORTHCOM	3	2	0	1	0	USAF
USSOUTHCOM	31	1	26	2	2	USAF
USJFCOM	23	1	1	19	2	USMC
USSOCOM	8	1	6	1	0	USN
USSTRATCOM	7	3	0	3	1	USAF
USTRANSCOM	9	9	0	0	0	USAF
TOTALS	129	20	51	49	9	

Source: Air Force Magazine, 2009 USAF Almanac, May 2009.

Table 1 Functional and Geographic Combatant Commanders

Of the 129, the Army has had 51 (mostly to lead Central, European, and Southern Commands), the Navy 49 (mostly in the Pacific), the Marines nine, and the Air Force 20 (primarily Transportation and Strategic Commands) selected. It is important, however, to acknowledge that the Army has had the “boots on the ground” skill sets that have dominated the greater part of the strategic environment over the years (Table 1). Thus, the fundamental problem facing the Air Force is that in comparison to the other services, the Air Force seems to exert only marginal influence on the development of joint operational strategy, a situation that, given enough time, can be overcome by addressing its senior leader development process.

It can be assumed that future military operations will be built upon the concept of “joint” operations, which for the purposes of this paper, will apply to operations around the globe and envisions joint operations conducted in conjunction with coalition military partners and other governmental and nongovernmental agencies. It envisions military operations conducted within the context of a national strategy that also incorporates other elements of national power.³ In the construct of this paper, “joint” therefore, means the *integrated employment of U.S. and multinational armed forces and interagency capabilities in land, sea, air, space, and cyberspace and in both the human and virtual domains.*⁴ With this definition in mind, it assumes the joint force will retain two of its main strengths:

1. A diverse set of capabilities inherent in the various services and other organizations that comprise the force; and
2. An exceptional ability to integrate those capabilities in pursuit of a common aim.

These assumptions have profound implications for joint officer development as they implicitly underscore a key principle: *joint officers are built upon service officers...* in other words; it excludes a born joint approach to officer development.⁵ This is a critical assumption for the

services, and particularly the Air Force, since familiarity with other services facilitates the full exploration of ideas and strategies over time, and should, therefore, be a key factor in the combatant commander selection process.

There are actionable steps the Air Force can take to achieve this objective. According to Thomas Ehrhard, author of *The Air Force Strategy for the Long Haul*, “while Air Force leaders seem to have little direct control over the selection and assignment of joint leaders, they can improve their advocacy within the system while they upgrade the strategic competence of their senior officers, making them more attractive for selection to senior joint positions.”⁶ The landmark 1986 Goldwater-Nichols DoD Reorganization Act set the DoD on a path that led to today’s joint force and our current approach to joint development. According to the 2005 CJCS *Vision for Joint Officer Development*, the future joint force “requires knowledgeable, empowered, innovative, and decisive leaders, capable of leading the networked joint force to success in fluid and perhaps chaotic operating environments...(with) more comprehensive knowledge of interagency and multinational cultures and capabilities.”⁷ Today’s joint leaders must be strategically minded, critical thinkers, and skilled joint warfighters in ways that allow them to lead a complex joint force.

The Air Force moreover, as in the words of Rebecca Grant, author of *Why Airman Don’t Command*, “must groom its leading generals for command positions.”⁸ Today, this means not only having officers complete staff assignments, but also combat tours overseas to gain the necessary credibility with other services as “warriors.”

Along these lines, if the Air Force’s objective is to produce the largest possible body of fully qualified joint officers for joint command and staff responsibilities, then the time necessary for that development to take place must be created. To accomplish this, the corporate Air Force

needs to explore a couple of options. First, provide greater opportunities to senior leaders for more in-depth officer education. This can include a wide array of subjects such as the major processes and institutions of national security, service history, structure, functions and culture. Second, the Air Force should evaluate the promotion system to create the time necessary to adequately groom officers for joint billets.

With regard to greater opportunities, the Air Force needs to begin a long-term renovation of its ideology, doctrine, communication, and relationships with other key government organizations and the other three services.⁹ According to Air Force Colonel Howard D. Belote, author of, *Once in a Blue Moon: Airmen in Theater Command*, “airmen appear to have a narrower upbringing and less exposure to the political process than other service members”.¹⁰ Air Force General Gregory S. Martin, former Air Force Materiel Command Commander, echoes these sentiments stating, “it is critical for the Air Force to broaden officers beyond the tactical and operational levels.”¹¹ Additionally, understanding ground operations and the type of counterinsurgency warfare that has dominated U.S. military operations lately is also essential. Therefore, the recent experiences of Airmen in Iraq and Afghanistan should go a long way toward broadening the base of air and space warriors armed with superior skills. Although this combat experience is instrumental to grooming future joint officers, greater time must still be allowed for officers to receive the training and education necessary to be attractive candidates for joint command positions.

Indeed, probably the most critical aspect for developing future Air Force leaders is simply the time to do so. Analyzing career paths and promotion systems for each of the services reveals that the Air Force is the only service to promote brigadier generals at the 24-years in service point and the only service that requires colonels to command twice while they are colonels.¹²

Although leadership is one of the cornerstones for determining the true capabilities of an officer, the Air Force needs to find the time necessary to groom officers in career broadening (joint, interagency, etc.) billets as a colonel.

Thus, it is not surprising that the current directors on the Joint Staff follow similar trends of service dominance, and an historical survey of the same positions over the past decade has revealed the Air Force holding only a small percentage of these critical “proving-ground” positions.¹³ Now, there may be valid reasons for the lack of Air Force visibility in these key combatant commander or directorate billets which include:¹⁴

1. The Army and Navy placed many officers in the command queue who worked their way up in a specific theater.
2. The Air Force and Marines may have deliberately narrowed their general officers’ upbringing, which in turn limited their exposure to the political process.
3. Tradition and politics may have been significant factors and played a role in the selection process.

Nevertheless, these reasons do not fully address the apparent lack of time spent at the major through colonel level - a time critical for properly grooming our senior leaders for future key joint staff positions.

The Air Force has a habit of placing their best officers into outstanding joint jobs and then pulling them out at the earliest possible point (22-month minimum by law). The Air Force then adds insult to injury by continually asking that the joint organizations to allow Air Force officers to be away from their joint job for their “next job’s spin-up training”, which can be two to three-months long. Thus, in many cases, Air Force joint officers will only serve 20 months in the joint billet while their Army, Navy, and Marine Corps counterparts will occupy the job for 36 to 48 months solid. This *dynamic* kills our credibility, reputation, and joint experience. Thus, it is no

wonder that Air Force officers have not done as well as those in the other services in follow-on assignments.

The corporate Air Force needs to eliminate this dynamic by allocating the appropriate time necessary to groom senior leaders who are well educated, strategically minded, and skilled joint warfighters. Using these characteristics as the benchmark of a joint leader, an argument can be made that current CENTCOM Commander, General David Petraeus, is the epitome of that “joint leader.” So who is the Air Force’s version of General David Petraeus? It is critical that the Air Force takes the appropriate steps to ensure that its “best and brightest” are identified and groomed for future key senior leadership positions.

Notes

¹ Belote, Major Howard D., *Once in a Blue Moon: Airman in Theater Command* (Maxwell AFB, AL: School of Advanced Airpower Studies, Air University, 1999), pg 1.

² Air Force Magazine, 2009 USAF Almanac, May 2009.

³ Chairman of the Joint Chief of Staff, *CJCS Vision for Joint Officer Development*, November 2005, pg 2.

⁴ *ibid*, pg 1.

⁵ *ibid*, pg 1.

⁶ Thomas P. Ehrhard, *An Air Force Strategy for the Long Haul* (Washington DC, Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, 2009), pg 57.

⁷ Chairman of the Joint Chief of Staff, *CJCS Vision for Joint Officer Development*, November 2005, pg 2.

⁸ Rebecca Grant, “Why Airman Don’t Command” *Air Force Magazine* (March 2008), pg 49.

⁹ Thomas P. Ehrhard, *An Air Force Strategy for the Long Haul* (Washington DC, Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, 2009), pg 57.

¹⁰ Major Howard D. Belote, *Once in a Blue Moon: Airmen in Theater Command* (Maxwell AFB, AL: School of Advanced Airpower Studies, Air University, 1999), pg 16.

¹¹ Phone interview conducted with Air Force General Gregory S. Martin, 5 January 2010.

¹² Department of the Air Force, AF/DPO Colonel Management Office, *Spread the Word Briefing*, April 2009.

¹³ Department of Defense, Director of the Joint Staff, Joint General Officer Management Office.

¹⁴ Rebecca Grant, “Why Airman Don’t Command,” *Air Force Magazine* (Mar 2008), 48.

Chapter 2

Overview

“Good leaders are people who have a passion to succeed...to become successful leaders, we must first learn that no matter how good the technology or how shiny the equipment, people-to-people relations get things done...”¹

—General Ronald R. Fogleman
Former Chief of Staff of the Air Force, 1994-1997

The author’s overall objective in the following chapters is to describe how the Air Force can find the time necessary to train, educate, and develop senior officers to be competitive for key Joint Staff opportunities.

The discussion will begin in Chapter 3 with a brief examination of the Goldwater-Nichols DoD Reorganization Act of 1986 and how it led to today’s Joint Officer Development (JOD) model. This discussion will build a foundation for understanding the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Vision for Joint Officer Development and how this *Vision* ties to the Capstone Concept for Joint Operations (CCJO). Chapter 4 will outline the new Joint Qualification System (JQS) that certifies Joint Qualified Officers (JQO) and describe alternative methods of receiving joint credit for operational experiences.

Chapter 5 will explore the Air Force Officer Development model that currently exists and how that model ties to the chairman’s *vision* for developing joint officers within the DoD. The

Air Force Officer Development model consists of three levels of leadership that foster a detailed roadmap to identify, groom, educate and train senior leaders.

Chapter 6 describes the six discriminators used to identify future Air Force leaders – command experience, completion of a joint duty assignment (JDA), in-residence attendance at Intermediate Developmental Education/Senior Developmental Education (IDE/SDE) programs, operational credibility, the requisite Pentagon tour, and selection for early promotion – and the impact these discriminators have on the officer development model. Chapter 7 will describe how these six discriminators tie to the promotion of Air Force general officers and how the emphasis on early promotion has created a ripple effect in the career development of senior officers.

Chapter 8 will use the Army officer development model to provide an alternative perspective for developing future Air Force leaders. It also describes how our sister services view early promotions as well as their selection process for general/flag officers.

Finally, Chapter 9 will provide an alternative approach to developing Air Force officers in the rated community. When the 2007 National Defense Authorization Act changed the mandatory retirement dates (MRD) for general/flag officers, the need to promote general/flag officers early became less critical than it used to be. This significant change has allowed the Air Force the essential time necessary to develop a deeper bench of highly qualified joint officers with the hope that these officers will go on to key joint billets or geographic/functional combatant commands. The last chapter leaves the reader with some final thoughts and conclusions.

Notes

¹ Department of the Air Force, Air Force Doctrine Document 1-1, *Leadership and Force Development*, 18 February 2006, pg 2.

Chapter 3

Understanding Joint

“One of the landmark laws of American history...the Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Act is probably the greatest sea change in the history of the American military since the Continental Congress created the Continental Army in 1775”¹

—The Honorable Les Aspin
Congressman and later Secretary of Defense

The U.S. Congress enacted the Goldwater-Nichols DoD Reorganization Act of 1986 (known as “the Act”) simply because of an overarching concern focused on the excessive power and influence of the four services, which precluded the integration of their separate capabilities for effective joint warfighting.

The Goldwater-Nichols Act

The Act, sponsored by Sen. Barry Goldwater and Rep. Bill Nichols, transformed the way the U.S. military organized for war. The purpose of the Act is described below.

The Act: To reorganize the Department of Defense and strengthen civilian authority in the Department of Defense, to improve the military advice provided to the President, the National Security Council, and the Secretary of Defense, to place clear responsibility on the commanders of the unified and specified combatant commands for the accomplishment of missions assigned to those commands and ensure that the authority of those commanders is fully commensurate with that responsibility, to increase attention to the formulation of strategy and to contingency planning, to provide for more efficient use of defense

resources, to improve joint officer management policies, otherwise to enhance the effectiveness of military operations and improve the management and administration of the Department of Defense, and for other purposes.²

The Act centralized operational authority through the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs as opposed to the service chiefs, and the chairman was designated as the principal military advisor to the president, National Security Council, and secretary of defense. The Act also established the position of vice-chairman and streamlined the operational chain of command from the president to the secretary of defense to the unified commanders. Additionally, it brought together individual services into a joint warfighting organization that was meant to be a force multiplier necessary to meet today's modern threat.

With its desire to create a more appropriate balance between joint and service interests as a backdrop, Congress declared eight purposes for the Act:³

1. to reorganize DoD and strengthen civilian authority
2. to improve military advice provided to the President, National Security Council, and Secretary of Defense
3. to place clear responsibility on the commanders of the unified and specified combatant commands for the accomplishment of missions assigned to those commands
4. to ensure that the authority of commanders of unified and specified combatant commands is fully commensurate with the responsibility of those commanders for the accomplishment of missions assigned to those commands
5. to increase attention to strategy formulation and contingency planning
6. to provide for the more efficient use of defense resources
7. to improve joint officer management policies
8. otherwise to enhance the effectiveness of military operations and improve DoD management and administration

For the scope of this research, the most significant proposal listed above is improvement of the joint officer management policies, which is laid out in Title IV (Joint Officer Personnel Policy) of the Act.

Prior to the enactment of Goldwater-Nichols, jobs on the Joint Staff were considered taboo, and, according to the 1985 report on *Defense Organization*, “military officers do not want to be

assigned to joint duty; are pressured or monitored for loyalty by their services while serving on joint assignments; are not prepared by either education or experience to perform their joint duties; and serve for only a relatively short period once they have learned their jobs.”⁴ Congress, on the other hand, viewed the Joint Staff and headquarters staffs of unified commands as the most important military staffs within the DoD and found the situation just described to be intolerable. Thus, Title IV of the Act established procedures for the selection, education, assignment, and promotion of joint duty officers.

To say the least, Title IV was unpopular among senior military leaders. Admiral William Crowe, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff when the Act was enacted, wrote of his unfavorable view of Title IV: “...the detailed legislation that mandated every aspect of the “joint corps” from the selection process and the number of billets to promotional requirements was, I believe, a serious mistake that threatened a horrendous case of congressional micro-management.”⁵

The services had similar concerns and resisted a joint officer personnel system since they knew that the loss of absolute control of officer promotions and assignments would weaken their domination of the Pentagon. Congress on the other hand, was equally determined, since it had concluded in *Defense Organization* that the “current system results in incentives to protect service interests rather than to think in joint terms. Joint thinkers are likely to be punished, and service promoters are likely to be rewarded.”⁶

The joint officer incentives, requirements, and standards prescribed by the Act have notably improved the performance of those selected to serve in joint duty assignments. Then Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney noted in an interview with *Proceedings* that the requirement for joint duty “prior to moving into senior leadership positions turned out to be beneficial...and that as a result of joint officer policies, the Joint Staff is an absolutely vital part of the operation.”⁷

General Norman Schwarzkopf, Central Command Commander during the Gulf War, found the same result in his command, noting before the Senate Committee on Armed Services, “the quality of the people that were assigned to Central Command at all levels changed dramatically as a result of Goldwater-Nichols.”⁸

These positive results were achieved despite indifferent implementation of the joint officer provisions by the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) and the Joint Staff. Now, some 25 years after the enactment of the Goldwater-Nichols Act, the DoD, in particularly the U.S. Air Force, is still conceptualizing a better approach to joint officer management. The Goldwater-Nichols Act’s objective of improving joint officer management policies has been achieved, but many would argue that the Air Force still lacks a vision for developing joint officers and how to reward them for their vital service. Air Force Lieutenant General Paul J. Selva, Assistant to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, comments that, “the Air Force has lost its way with how we communicate with the other services so that we become a joint whole instead of individual pieces...and the Air Force recognizes that.”⁹

Joint Development

Training to fight jointly did not come to full fruition in the U.S. military until the 1990s. Since 1991, the successes in Iraq, Bosnia, and Afghanistan have testified to the effectiveness of the joint military force and its warfighting potential. The ways in which joint officers are currently educated and trained are largely governed by Title IV of the Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986.¹⁰

Defining Joint and Joint Matters

In order to better understand the issue of “joint,” one has to define it. For our purposes, “joint” refers to the management of officers with education and assignments in joint matters.

The DoD further defines “joint matters” as:

Matters related to the achievement of unified action by multiple military forces in operations conducted across domains such as land, sea, or air, in space, or in the information environment, including matters relating to national military strategy; strategic planning and contingency planning; command and control of operations under unified command; national security planning with other departments and agencies of the United States; and combined operations with military forces of allied nations. In the context of joint matters, the term “multiple military forces” refers to forces that involve participants from the armed forces and one or more of the following: other departments and agencies of the United States; the military forces or agencies of other countries; non-governmental persons or entities.¹¹

The Strategic Plan for Joint Development

The core responsibility of the DoD is to defend the United States from attack upon its territory at home and to secure its interests abroad.¹² This responsibility is executed by maintaining an unmatched high-quality military force, deterring war in the most dynamic environments known, and protecting the interests of the United States in domains previously unimagined. The DoD *Strategic Plan for Joint Officer Management* articulates that the military needed to meet our national and military goals must be comprised of personnel who are trained, educated, experienced, and acculturated in jointness.¹³ Within that construct, our military must evolve into a force that thinks more critically, is more strategically minded, and is the most skilled joint warfighting force. Today's and tomorrow's military force will work as a joint and combined team to rapidly plan and adapt to fluid situations with greater effect. As stated in the *Strategic Plan*:

Joint Task Forces (JTFs) now define the way we array our armed forces for both war and operations other than war. The effectiveness of joint operations is no

longer simply the integration and/or interoperability of two or more military services; it requires the synergistic employment of forces from multiple services, agencies, and nations. Non-governmental agencies and commercial enterprises must now be routinely combined with these traditional military forces and the interagency component to achieve national objectives. Such a dynamic and varied environment demands flexibility, responsiveness, and adaptability not only from the individual Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, and Marines, but also from the processes supporting them.¹⁴

Every component of the national command structure recognizes the need for jointness as a means of maximizing force capabilities. The National Security Strategy, the National Defense Strategy, and the National Military Strategy advocate joint operations. A recurring theme throughout is the need for personnel to be trained, educated, experienced, and qualified in joint operations. Therefore, the strategic link between the mission and goals of the DoD and the vision for developing its personnel is paramount.

Strategic Objectives

Although the DoD has made great strides in achieving the original objectives identified in the Act, it recognizes the need to modernize the current joint management processes to enable a flexible joint qualified officer construct to meet the ever-changing challenges of today and the future warfighting environment. Therefore, the DoD outlined the following enhancements to the original objectives set forth in the Act, to ensure that they would remain viable and relevant well into this century.¹⁵

<u>Strategic Objectives</u>	<u>Action</u>
Develop a Joint Officer Management system relevant to 21 st Century mission and force structure requirements.	Increase flexibility in the established management assessment mechanisms, practices, policies, and statutes which act as controlling influences on joint operations and personnel.
Produce the largest possible body of fully qualified and inherently joint officers suitable for joint command and staff responsibilities. ¹⁶	Enhance methods for delivering joint education, training, and experience across the spectrum of grades and specialties by establishing a joint learning continuum of four interdependent supporting pillars.

Develop a pool of fully qualified and inherently joint leaders for promotion to general/flag officer rank. ¹⁷	Ensure officers are strategically minded, critical thinkers who are skilled in those capabilities specific to joint warfighting. Shift focal point to growing the largest possible number of fully qualified and inherently joint colonels and captains.
Maintain the quality of officers in joint assignments.	Develop more robust tracking and management system for officer joint qualifications and competencies and directly linked Service systems supporting assignment selection.

Source: Department of Defense, *Strategic Plan for Joint Officer Management and Joint Professional Military Education*, 3 April 2006.

Figure 1 Strategic Objectives and Associated Actions

CJCS Vision for Joint Development

Given these strategic objectives and the actions required to implement them, Congress took the initiative to effect a change in the DoD with reference to joint development. Overcoming the complex and evolving global security challenges facing the United States as this millennium unfolds will be the priority of the future force. The Capstone Concept for Joint Operations (CCJO), as the head of a family of joint operations concepts, describes how joint forces are expected to operate across the range of military operations circa 2016-2028.¹⁸ While the purpose of the CCJO is to lead force development, implicit in this purpose is that the leaders of the CCJO-envisioned force must also be developed, and developed with a joint mindset.

The 2005 Ronald Reagan National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) charged the Secretary of Defense with developing a strategic plan for joint officer management and joint professional military education that links joint officer development (JOD) to the overall missions and goals of the DoD.¹⁹ With this requirement as the legislative impetus, then Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS), General Peter Pace, USMC, developed the CJCS Vision for Joint Officer Development, which is intrinsically tied to the emerging CCJO.²⁰

The Vision for JOD outlined by the CJCS set the objective for transformative changes in how the DoD will develop leaders of the CCJO-envisioned force. The chairman's vision was intended to guide the development of strategies and approaches that, in turn, produce the joint leaders required by the nation...and at the heart of JOD are joint leader competencies.

Objective of Joint Officer Development (JOD)

The overall objective of JOD is to produce the largest possible body of fully qualified joint officers suitable for joint command and staff responsibilities. The focal point for that development will be inherently joint colonels and captains. The chairman's vision for JOD ensures that all colonels and captains are skilled joint warfighters, who are also strategically minded, critical thinkers. In broad terms, these three descriptors overarched the more discrete and uniquely joint-leader competencies inherent in every joint officer²¹

- *Strategically Minded.* Those competencies that allow an officer to lead the CCJO-envisioned force within a multi-Service, multi-agency, multi-national environment and to be able to participate in and contribute to informed decision-making on the application of all instruments of national power – not just the military instrument.
- *Critical Thinker.* Those competencies associated with acuity of mind at the highest level – gained as a result of a continuum of learning across a lifetime.
- *Skilled Joint Warfighter.* Those competencies and skills steeped in functional component core competencies and infused with an operational and strategic understanding of mission tasking across the range of military operations in the physical, virtual, and human domains.

Prior to accepting any competencies as uniquely joint, however, those leader competencies common to all services should be distilled. Service leader competencies will vary by service, but they are developed in a joint context and are the foundation for joint officer development. The collective body of leader competencies (i.e., uniquely joint + common + service) inculcated in

the officer corps through career-long development will properly produce and prepare the leaders of the tomorrow's joint force.²²

Continuum of Joint Learning

A distinctive attribute of the military profession is that military leaders are created internally and not hired off the street. Senior military leaders join the military in entry-level positions and, through a career of training, education, experience, and self-development, grow to become senior military leaders. Performance and potential are the alchemy of this growth, but nothing ensures they are properly prepared leaders more than the service's oversight of the content of their training, education, experience, and self-development opportunities. Having already discussed the desired output of JOD and the uniquely joint leader competencies necessary to lead today's joint force, content of joint learning needs to be addressed so as to ensure it produces the desired outcome. With that in mind, the chairman's vision established a joint learning continuum of four interdependent supporting pillars. These pillars are:²³

- Joint Individual Training (JIT)
- Joint Professional Military Education (JPME)
- Joint Experience
- Self-development

Inherent in the joint learning continuum is the provision for multiple paths to JOD's desired objective, which is to produce the "best qualified" inherently joint leaders.

Capstone Concept for Joint Operations (CCJO)

The Capstone Concept for Joint Operations describes in broad terms how the joint force circa 2016-2028 will operate in response to a wide variety of security challenges.²⁴ In addition to the "how" it will operate as a joint force, the CCJO also outlines the need to select, educate, train, equip, and manage our force differently to meet our joint needs.

Of the 17 institutional implications for adopting the CCJO (all have significant implications for the way the services organize, man, train, and equip the units that compose the joint force), three deal specifically with the development of joint leaders.²⁵

- *Develop innovative and adaptive leaders down to the lowest levels.* The broadened range of situations future joint forces will confront, and their increased complexity, will put a premium on leaders at all levels that are able to respond quickly and flexibly to the unexpected.
- *Develop joint commanders who are masters of operational art.* The commander's role in this process is absolutely critical. He must drive the process of operational design, which conceives the framework that underpins all the planning and execution, based on an understanding of each unique situation in its political and strategic context.
- *Develop senior leaders who are experts not only in the operational employment of the joint force, but also in the development and execution of national security.* While operational expertise is essential, it is not enough. In a future requiring integrated national effort, joint force commanders cannot afford to focus narrowly on achieving assigned operational objectives, but must contribute to the development of strategic objectives as well. They must be knowledgeable about the use not only of the military instrument, but also all the other elements of national power, how those elements interact with military force, and how they ultimately might supplant the need for military force. Development of that broader strategic understanding must begin early in the military education process and continue throughout every military officer's professional development.

The theme common to all 17 implications is creating greater adaptability and versatility across the force to cope with the uncertainty, complexity, unforeseeable change, and persistent conflict that will characterize the future operating environment.

Services Responsibilities Regarding Joint Officer Development

As stated earlier, the key joint principal is: *joint officers are built on Service officers.*²⁶ While the CCJO explicitly recognizes the value of service diversity as a main strength and enabler of the joint force, young Americans today seek commissions in a specific service and not the joint force. Therefore, in a broad sense, it is a service responsibility to develop officers with

the desired joint leader competencies. The services must foster this development, and they must be institutions whose individuals pursue learning and intellectual development with a passion and are rewarded appropriately for doing so. In practical terms, this entails the services rewarding (through promotions and increased responsibilities and authorities) those officers who demonstrate the desired joint leader competencies and the potential for them earlier in their careers. Services must know where officers are in their joint development and must mentor all officers toward the JOD objective of developing joint leaders who are skilled joint warfighters, strategically minded, critical thinkers. According to Secretary of Defense, Robert Gates, “...leadership needs to be diverse in experience; with diplomatic and interagency experiences away from their Service.”²⁷ The next chapter will outline the requirements for “becoming” joint in today’s strategic environment.

Notes

¹ Archer, Colonel Stu, *The Next Horizon: Air Force leadership of Geographic Combatant Commands* (Maxwell AFB, AL: Air War College, Air University, 2008), pg 1.

² United States Congress, *Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986* (Washington, D.C.: Public Law 99-433, 99th Congress, October 1, 1986, 100 Stat. 92) Washington GPO

³ James R. Locher III, “Goldwater-Nichols Act – 10 Years Later” *JFQ* (Autumn 1996), pg 11.

⁴ *ibid*, pg 14.

⁵ *ibid*, pg 15.

⁶ *ibid*, pg 15.

⁷ *ibid*, pg 15.

⁸ *ibid*, pg 15.

⁹ Phone interview conducted with Air Force Lieutenant General Paul J. Selva, 18 February 2010.

¹⁰ United States Congress, *Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986* (Washington, D.C.: Public Law 99-433, 99th Congress, October 1, 1986, 100 Stat. 92) Washington GPO

¹¹ Department of Defense, DODI 1300.19, *DOD Joint Officer Management Program*, 21 August 2008, pg 12.

¹² Department of Defense, *National Defense Strategy*, June 2008, pg 6.

Notes

¹³ Department of Defense, *Strategic Plan for Joint Officer Management and Joint Professional Military Education*, 3 April 2006, pg 3.

¹⁴ *ibid*, pg 3.

¹⁵ *ibid*, pg 8.

¹⁶ Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, *CJCS Vision for Joint Officer Development*, November 2005, pg 3.

¹⁷ A natural evolution of the original objective of the Goldwater-Nichols Act which was to ensure that general and flag officers are well-rounded in joint matters.

¹⁸ Department of Defense, *Capstone Concept for Joint Operations, Version 3.0*, 15 January 2009, pg iii.

¹⁹ Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, *CJCS Vision for Joint Officer Development*, November 2005, pg iv.

²⁰ Note: The CJCS Vision for Joint Officer Development was released in November 2005, and was written in conjunction with the Capstone Concept for Joint Operations (CCJO), August 2005. The CCJO was updated 15 January 2009.

²¹ Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, *CJCS Vision for Joint Officer Development*, November 2005, pg 2.

²² *ibid*, pg 3.

²³ *ibid*, pg 5.

²⁴ Department of Defense, *Capstone Concept for Joint Operations, Version 3.0*, 15 January 2009, pg iii.

²⁵ *ibid*, pg 28.

²⁶ Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, *CJCS Vision for Joint Officer Development*, November 2005, pg 9.

²⁷ Interview conducted with the Honorable Robert Gates, Secretary of Defense, 17 February 2010.

Chapter 4

Becoming Joint

“The future will always be joint, we will never return to a service dominated system”¹

—The Honorable Gordon R. England
Former Deputy Secretary of Defense

The Joint Officer Personnel Policy outlined in Title IV of the Act can be broken down into three categories: the establishment of joint positions, the creation of a cadre of officers with joint education and experience, and the links between promotion and joint experience.

Establishing Joint Positions

Title IV required the Secretary of Defense to define the term Joint Duty Assignment (JDA), and to publish a list of permanent joint positions in which an officer gains “significant experience in joint matters as defined by 10 U.S.C. 668 (JDA).”² Currently, there are two types of JDAs: Standard JDA (S-JDA) and Experience-based JDA (E-JDA). Additionally, the list of permanent joint positions is known as the Joint Duty Assignment List (JDAL) and is a consolidated list of S-JDAs. Over the years, the JDAL has been modified as new requirements have been identified and others eliminated. The current JDAL contains 11,218 joint billets divided among the services, with the Air Force holding 3,600 of the positions. Unfortunately, of these 3,600 billets, the Air Force is only filling approximately 70% of their total requirements.³

So the question then becomes, if your focus is on developing joint leaders, why are you only filling about 70% of your joint quotes? The answer, unfortunately, is that operational requirements have dictated that all of the services fill staff billets at the 70% level.

Today's Joint Qualification System (JQS)

The second category outlined in the Joint Officer Personnel Policy is the creation of a cadre of officers with joint education and experience. In response, the DoD created the JQS. This is a multi-level system, open to all officers of the active and reserve components, which recognizes joint experiences, (S-JDA or E-JDA) and the requisite Joint Professional Military Education (JPME). The S-JDA is an assignment listed on the JDAL and meets the tour length requirement prescribed in 10 U.S.C. 664(a), which is not less than two years for a general/flag officer, and not less than three years for all other officers. An E-JDA is a non-JDAL assignment and experience that demonstrates an officer's mastery of knowledge, skills, and abilities in joint matters. The E-JDA is typically shorter in duration; therefore, they may be aggregated to achieve the equivalent of a full tour of duty in an S-JDA.⁴ The JQS consists of four different levels of joint qualification, each highlighted by a minimum number of accumulated joint points and the requisite JPME. The four levels of joint qualification criteria are depicted in Figure 2 below.

Joint qualification can be obtained through two paths: The traditional method through which the majority of officers will complete an S-JDA; and the joint experience path by which an officer accumulates an equivalent level of joint experience through an E-JDA. Discretionary points, to include joint experiences, joint training, and other education, contributes to an officer's expertise in joint matters and may be combined with E-JDA points to achieve the minimum points required for each qualification level.

LEVEL	CRITERIA Source: DoDI 1300.19, Enclosure 3
I	a. Awarded upon joint certification of pre-commissioning <u>and</u> basic officer course completion. -- These courses provide learning objectives dealing with "Joint Introduction and Awareness." b. Junior Officers are focused on Service competencies. c. Qualification points begin to accrue following commissioning via opportune joint experiences, joint training, joint exercises, and other education.
II	a. Awarded upon completion of JPME Phase I and accrual of 18 points and certification by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. b. A minimum of 12 points must come from "Joint Experience." c. Discretionary points may be derived from joint training, joint exercises, and other education. NOTE: Officers who have Full Joint Tour Credit and have completed JPME Phase I are automatically designated as Level II
III	a. Awarded upon completion of JPME Phase II or AJPME (Reserve Component officers) and accrual of a minimum of 36 total points (based on Level II point requirements, normally 18 more points since Level II) or Full Joint Duty Credit, and certification by the Secretary of Defense or his designee. b. Recency requirement: a minimum of 12 points must come from "Joint Experience" since Level II designation. c. Discretionary points may be derived from joint training, joint exercises, and other education. d. Formal designation: Joint Qualified Officer (JQO). e. Effective 1 Oct 2008, JQO required for appointment as an O-7 (AC Only).
IV	a. Awarded upon completion of CAPSTONE (AC only) and accrual of 24 joint experience points or full Joint G/FO credit from an assignment in a G/FO joint billet in OSD/JS/COCOM HQs/JTF HQs, Defense Agency HQs, hold designation as a JQO, and certification by the Secretary of Defense or his designee. b. Officers must be a G/FO (for pay purposes) for at least one day while filling the G/FO S-JDA or during the period for which joint experience points are earned.

Figure 2 Joint Qualification Levels

Approved joint experience points are derived from the duration and intensity of a joint experience and equal the number of approved joint experience days divided by 30.4, with the result multiplied by an approved intensity factor. The intensity factor (IF) is determined by the environment (combat – IF of 3; non-combat – IF of 2; steady state – IF of 1) in which the joint experience is gained.⁵ As an example, a 179-day approved combat joint experience would yield 17.66 joint experience points. Of note, a full JDA is 36 joint experience points.

Becoming a Joint Qualified Officer (JQO)

According to CJCSI 1330.05, an officer “designated by the Secretary of Defense, with the advice and assistance of the CJCS, who is educated (JPME) and trained (S-JDA/E-JDA) in joint matters and has completed the Level III requirements for JQO designation” will be certified as a JQO.⁶ The JPME requirement for achieving a Level III qualification is the completion of JPME-I and JPME-II. JPME-I is awarded upon completion of a pre-commissioning program; while JPME-II is awarded upon completion of a Senior Developmental Education program or

attendance at the Joint Forces Staff College. Level IV JPME consists of CAPSTONE and is reserved for general/flag officers.

Although a full JDA is three years long, an exception to policy exists for officers in Critical Occupational Specialties (COS), i.e. the warfighters, to receive full joint credit in 22 months.

Critical Occupational Specialties (COS)

Title 10 U.S.C., Section 664(d) recognized that certain combat specialties have to be maintained within the services and that the completion of a full joint tour (three years) could potentially result in a degradation of individual warfighting skills or a shortage of combat skills within the services. By authority of Title 10 U.S.C., Section 664(d), the Principal Deputy Undersecretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness designated those “military occupational specialties as COS if the skill is in the combat arms for the Army and equivalent career areas for the other military services, and a severe shortage of trained officers in that skill exists.”⁷ Officers who possess a COS may be released early from an S-JDA with the concurrence of the joint functional if they meet all of the following criteria below. COS officers released after completion of at least 22 months will be awarded full joint duty credit, provided:⁸

- Reassignment must be to the COS specific skill held by the officer being released from the S-JDA.
- Officer must be serving in his/her initial S-JDA.
- Officer must serve at least 2 years in that S-JDA. Up to 60-days of constructive credit may be applied toward this assignment. If maximum constructive credit is authorized, the officer may be released early after completion of 22 months in the assignment.

The COS provision is critical to the development of rated officers in the U.S. Air Force.

Promotion Requirements for Joint Qualified Officers

The final category outlined in Title IV is promotion parity for officers in joint billets. To guarantee the services would improve the quality of officers assigned to joint positions, Congress established direct links between joint duty and the officer promotion system. From a Congressional point-of-view, these links provided teeth to the requirements contained in Title IV. These links were incorporated as Sections 619 and 662 of Title 10, U.S.C.

Title 10, U.S.C., Section 619a states that, “an officer on the active-duty list of the Army, Navy, Air Force, or Marine Corps may not be appointed to the grade of brigadier or rear admiral (lower half) unless the officer has been designated as a joint qualified officer.”⁹ As a result of this requirement, an O-7 candidate must complete a JDA while serving as a field grade officer. This significantly complicates the executive development process as will be demonstrated in subsequent chapters.

Title 10, U.S.C., Section 662, established direct comparisons between promotion rates of officers with and those without joint experience. In other words, Congress elected to use promotion rates as a measure of quality.

These promotion comparisons force the services to track, compare, and report promotion rates for officers selected for O-4 through O-6. Comparisons are drawn for each promotion zone: below-the-promotion zone (BPZ), in-the-promotion zone (IPZ), and above-the-promotion zone (APZ). In plain language, the law sets the promotion policy objectives for joint officers to ensure that the qualifications of officers assigned to joint duty assignments are such that:¹⁰

1. Officers who are serving on, or have served on, the Joint Staff are expected, as a group, to be promoted to the next higher grade at a rate not less than the rate for officers of the same armed force in the same grade and competitive category who are serving on, or have served on, the HQ staff of their armed force; and

2. Officers in the grade of major/lieutenant commander or above who have been designated as a JQO are expected, as a group, to be promoted to the next higher grade at a rate not less than the rate for all officers of the same armed force in the same grade and competitive category.

Understanding “joint” and “joint qualifications” is paramount, and doing so ensures that the services put their most qualified officers in these critical billets. The next chapter will discuss the Air Force officer development model and how they, as a service, groom officers to fill critical joint positions.

Notes

¹ James R. Locher III, “Goldwater-Nichols Act – 10 Years Later” *JFQ* (Autumn 1996), pg 10.

² Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, CJCSI 1330.05, *Joint Officer Management Program Procedures*, 1 May 2008, pg GL-II-5.

³ Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Staff, J-1 Division.

⁴ Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, CJCSI 1330.05, *Joint Officer Management Program Procedures*, 1 May 2008, pg GL-II-3.

⁵ *ibid*, pg B-5.

⁶ *ibid*, pg GL-II-7.

⁷ *ibid*, pg K-1.

⁸ Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, CJCSI 1330.05, *Joint Officer Management Program Procedures*, 1 May 2008, pg K-1.

⁹ United States Code, *Title 10 – Armed Forces*, (Washington DC: United States Government Printing Office, 5 January 2009) Section 619a.

¹⁰ *ibid*, Section 662.

Chapter 5

U.S. Air Force Officer Development

“The Chief [General Norton Schwartz] and I are committed to developing senior Air Force leaders who are competitive in the joint arena, and in order to do that, we have to build a deeper bench of joint leaders to choose from...”¹

—The Honorable Michael B. Donley
Secretary of the Air Force

This chapter examines the professional development process used in the U.S. Air Force. Although there are numerous specialty career paths in the Air Force, for the purpose of this paper, the discussion will be limited to an examination of force development of the rated community. Additionally, throughout this chapter the term “develop” will be used extensively to indicate grooming an officer for senior leadership opportunities through professional military education, service-specific job experiences, special duty assignments, joint assignments and deployments.

The traditional leadership model in the U.S. Air Force is spelled out in a variety of Air Force publications, most notably Air Force Doctrine Document (AFDD) 1-1, *Leadership and Force Development*; Air Force Policy Directive (AFPD) 36-26, *Total Force Development*; Air Force Instruction (AFI) 36-2640, *Executing Total Force Development*; and AFI 36-2611, *Officer Professional Development*.

Total Force Development

The Air Force’s current force development (FD) vision is described in Air Force Policy Directive (AFPD) 36-26, *Total Force Development*. This FD Program guides the development of the total force through the tactical, operational, and strategic levels of leadership (as described later), and produces a total force – active duty, Air Reserve Component (ARC), and Department of Air Force Civilian – successfully prepared to accomplish the Air Force mission and to lead in a rapidly evolving global environment with a vast range of missions, balancing individual needs - personal and professional - to the greatest extent possible consistent with mission accomplishment. Specifically, the program:²

- Develops all Airmen through a deliberate, career-long process of individual development.
- Carefully synchronizes the key components of deliberate development – education, training and experience – to deliver the right people, with the right competencies, at the right time to support and accomplish current and future Air Force missions.
- Utilizes a common language that identifies important competencies that apply to all airmen.³

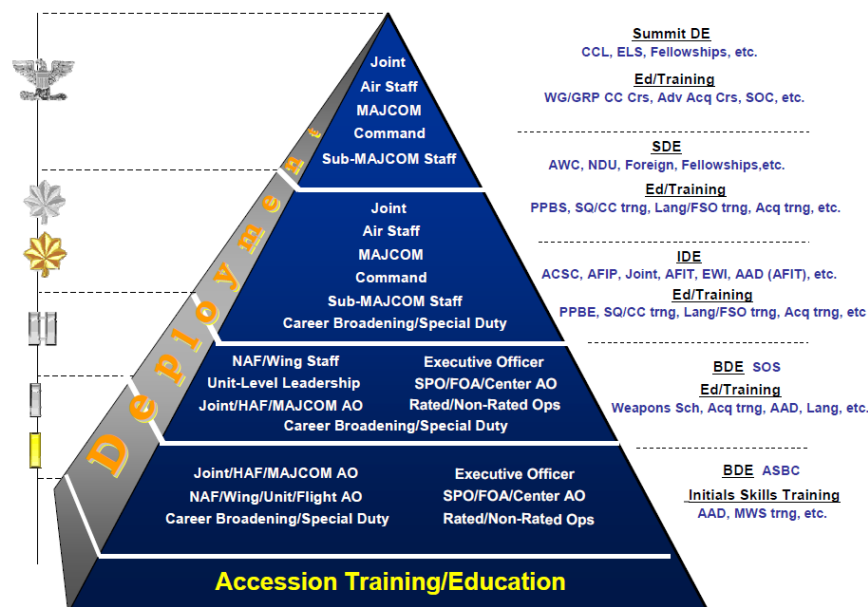
Institutional Competency	Institutional Subcompetency
Employing Military Capabilities	Operational and Strategic Art
	Unit, Air Force, Joint and Coalition Capabilities
	Non-Adversarial Crisis Response
Enterprise Perspective	Enterprise Structure and Relationships
	Government Organization and Processes
	Global, Regional and Cultural Awareness
	Strategic Communication
Embodying Air Force Culture	Ethical Leadership
	Warrior Ethos
	Develop Self
	Followership
Leading People	Developing and Inspiring Others
	Taking Care of People
	Diversity
Managing Organizations and Resources	Resource Stewardship
	Change Management
	Continuous Improvement
Strategic Thinking	Vision
	Decision-Making
	Adaptability
Fostering Collaborative Relationships	Build Teams and Coalitions
	Negotiating
Communicating	Speaking and Writing
	Active Listening

Figure 3 Air Force Institutional Competency List (ICL)

The three leadership levels within the Air Force as defined by *Air Force Doctrine Document I-1* are tactical, operational, and strategic. Each level requires a different mix of competencies and experience, and is described below.⁴

- Tactical Level. Education and training at the tactical level includes training in a primary skill and education in the fundamentals of leadership.
- Operational Level. Education and training at the operational level broaden understanding of integrating expertise to produce operational effects for Air Force missions and continue to build skills.
- Strategic Level. Education and training at the strategic level assists in developing the skills to form accurate frames of reference, make sound decisions, uncover underlying connections to deal with more general issues, and engage in creative, innovative thinking that recognizes new solutions and new options.

While AFPD 36-26 outlines the vision for total force development in the Air Force, Air Force Instruction (AFI) 36-2640, implements that vision and it applies to all airmen in the total force. According to AFI 36-2640, the typical officer career path looks like this:⁵



Officer Career Path Guide

Figure 4 Officer Career Path

So how does the Air Force plan to get there? By developing the institutional and occupational competencies in all airmen through education, training, and experience opportunities that satisfy current and future Air Force mission requirements. Force development leverages the continuum of learning (CoL) described earlier to deliberately integrate developmental opportunities through the ICL (Figure 3) to produce adaptable, knowledge-enabled Airmen. Thus, by executing force development will (among other things):⁶

- Provide the framework for foundational, occupational, and institutional competency development and identification (Figure 5)
- Maximize capabilities of all airmen to ensure the USAF can provide air, space and cyberspace power in support of our nation’s security
- Develop a broad, deep pool of qualified candidates for key positions within the USAF
- Deliberately connect all training and education opportunities to assignment and deployment experiences to best leverage the CoL to build and enhance institutional and occupational competencies in individual airmen



Figure 5 Force Development Construct

It is important to note that the force development model described by AFI 36-2640 seems very parochial in its approach to development and should be broadened to include opportunities outside the Air Force. Admiral William J. Fallon, former Central Command Commander, summed it up this way, “...the Air Force insists on having its officers be the Air Component Commanders on joint staffs...other joint experience seems to be an afterthought”.⁷ Changing how the rated community is developed could help this problem.

Force Development in the Rated Community

The development of the rated community in the Air Force is a bit unusual when compared to remainder of the line Air Force. In order to properly develop the rated force, there are a few things that must be taken into consideration as an officer progresses through his/her career; flying gates, major weapons system (MWS) proficiency, and professional development.

An aviator’s career is heavily weighted with operational tours, and is done so for a couple of reasons. The first is the management of an aviator’s time in his/her major weapons system, known as the “gate” system, which is directly tied to monthly flight pay; and the second is the amount of time necessary to master the critical skills required to fly today’s sophisticated aircraft. These two factors, combined with an emphasis on command opportunities at all three levels of leadership, leaves very little room for professional development outside the cockpit. A brief discussion of both Aviation Career Incentive Pay (ACIP) and MWS proficiency skills training will follow.

Aviation Career Incentive Pay

The pattern of rated officer development was driven in large part by a rated management system known as the “gate” concept. The Aviation Career Incentive Act of 1974 established a direct link between flight pay and the number of years a crewmember spent in the aircraft. This

law recognized the need for rated officers to achieve a balance of experience in the aircraft, while also permitting time out of the jet in order to receive the appropriate amount of professional development. If a rated officer was not managed properly, and he was unable to meet the minimum number of flying gates, his flight pay would cease. Simply put, the “gate” structure entitles rated crew members to flight pay for a specific number of years of aviation service (AS) completed. Since the original Aviation Career Incentive Act of 1974 was enacted, the legislation has modified a couple of times, once as part of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) of 1989, and then again with the NDAA of 1996.⁸ As part of the NDAA of 1989, Senator John Glenn introduced legislation to increase the Aviation Career Incentive Pay (ACIP), also known as monthly flight pay, for all rated officers. The current “gate” system as established by the NDAA of 1996 is described below.⁹

- First Gate: In order to continue receiving ACIP until the 18th year of AS, a rated officer must complete 96 months (eight years) of AS during the first 12 years of AS.
- Second Gate: In order to continue receiving ACIP until 22 years from ASD/OSD, a rated officer must complete 120 months (10 years) of AS during the first 18 years of AS.
- Third Gate: In order to continue receiving ACIP until 25 years from ASD/OSD, a rated officer must complete 144 months (12 years) of AS during the first 18 years of AS.

Personnel officers typically manage the rated force to ensure the completion of the second gate; or in other words, 10 of the first 18 years of AS are spent in the aircraft. A brief discussion of MWS proficiency will follow, but it goes without saying that, if a crew member’s “gates” are managed correctly, then the proficiency takes care of itself.

Major Weapons System (MWS) Proficiency

Probably the most critical, and arguably the most demanding, aspect of a rated professional’s development occurs at the tactical level of leadership. This is where rated crew

members hone their critical aviator skills in an MWS. These skills are developed early in a rated professional's career and typically spans the first nine to 11 years of an officer's aviation career. General John Jumper, former Chief of Staff of the Air Force, believed that, due to the technical sophistication of our modern aircraft, rated officers should receive PhD level tactical training in their MWS.¹⁰ For simplicity's sake, the early years of a rated officer's career are highlighted by his/her initial flight training (specialized undergraduate pilot/navigator training), an operational tour of duty, a possible one-year remote, and then either another operational tour, a school house tour, or selection to weapons school. For most major weapons systems, it takes on the average two operational tours to reach the level of aircraft commander, instructor, and/or evaluator pilot. This aggressive timeline depends heavily on the capabilities of the aviator, the operational tempo of the squadron, and pure timing.

Tactical Level of Leadership

As discussed earlier, the tactical level of leadership is characterized by the requirement to receive "training in a primary skill." Additionally, airmen at this level receive education and training in the fundamentals of leadership to: (1) build Air Force cultural awareness; (2) bond airmen to the core values of integrity, service before self, and excellence in all we do; (3) build expeditionary expertise; (4) build joint and coalition knowledge; and (5) most importantly, build skill competence.¹¹ For the rated professional, "building skill competence" occurs in their major weapons system and typically spans the first nine to 11 years of an aviator's career. At this point, a select few promoted majors will have the opportunity to attend an intermediate developmental education (IDE) school, and the transition to the operational level of leadership will occur.

Operational Level of Leadership

Education and training at the operational level of leadership broaden understanding of integrating expertise to produce operational effects for Air Force missions, and consists of: (1) developmental education; (2) professional continuing education programs, (3) advanced academic degree programs, (4) education with industry, (5) fellowships, and (6) specialty schools/advanced training.¹² The operational level of leadership is targeted at the young field grade officer at the rank of major. For example, in the rated community, majors are expected to perform duties as flight commanders or operations officers to gain skills at a higher level in the squadron and complete IDE or a selected graduate-level degree program to further educational needs as a maturing professional.

In-Residence Professional Military Education (PME)

Since in-residence PME occurs at the major and lieutenant colonel/colonel ranks, a brief description of both IDE and Senior Developmental Education (SDE) will follow. Officer PME at the IDE or SDE is an integral part of an officer's professional development. While seminar and correspondence courses provide a means of completing PME, the optimum method is to attend an in-residence course. Such programs allow officers to focus solely on PME for a year without the distractions of the operational environment. They also provide the opportunity to exchange ideas and foster relationships ("battle buddies" as the author likes to call them) with officers from our sister services, allied nations, and civilian agencies. These "battle buddies" may be critically important when supporting future joint operations. Additionally, they allow the member to reconnect with their family after what was probably a heavy deployment schedule.

The Air Force Personnel Plan states that "ideally, all officers will attend PME in residence". Limited resources, however, restrict residence IDE and SDE attendance to the "best qualified" candidates. Nonresident programs are available to all eligible officers and civilians.¹³

The process by which officers are selected for in-residence PME (IDE/SDE) is extremely competitive. Many officers are chosen as candidates in conjunction with officer promotion boards. Majors (and selects) and lieutenant colonels (and selects) are chosen as IDE/SDE candidates or are nominated by their management level (ML) as non-candidates to compete at the annual Air Force Personnel Center (AFPC) IDE/SDE Central Board, which selects officers to attend the various schools. Colonels (and selects) are eligible to attend SDE in residence, but must be selected as an SDE candidate. If an officer is selected for promotion to colonel below-the-zone and has not attended SDE in residence, the officer will automatically become a candidate. An officer promoted to colonel IPZ, who has at least one BPZ promotion, or who is in the top 30% of those selected and has not attended SDE in-residence, is also selected as a SDE candidate.¹⁴

According to the Air Force Personnel Center, approximately 30% of the officers selected for major will attend IDE in-residence. For SDE, the opportunity drops to about 10% of any particular year group.¹⁵ Because of the selectivity of the process and the breadth of experience gained, attendance at IDE and/or SDE is a significant quality indicator for identifying future Air Force/joint leaders.

Another quality indicator for identifying future leaders are those officers selected to attend, for another year after IDE, one of the service-sponsored advanced academic studies programs. The Air Force has the School of Advanced Air and Space Studies (SAASS), the Army the School of Advanced Military Studies (SAMS), and the Marine Corps the School of Advanced

Warfighting (SAW). These programs concentrate on the military arts and sciences focused at the operational level. These specially educated officers will then go on to command and general staff positions at tactical and operational echelons. Again, the selection process is extremely competitive, with approximately one in four eligible officers who attend IDE in-residence each year selected to attend SAASS. The long-term benefit for the officer is that approximately 98% of SAASS graduates are promoted to colonel, and 30% are promoted to brigadier general.¹⁶ For the Air Force the obvious benefit is the development of a strategically minded, tactically astute, future leader.

Strategic Level of Leadership

Finally, education and training at the strategic level of leadership assist in developing the skills necessary to form accurate frames of reference, make sound decisions, and engage in creative, innovative thinking that recognizes new solutions and new options. Education emphasizes understanding of broad concepts and offers insights into complex issues not commonly available in operational environments. It focuses on the institutional Air Force and joint, interagency, business, and international views. Strategic development is commonly presented through: operational assignments, institutional education, self-development, mentoring, exercises, and wargames.¹⁷

At this level, assignments to senior command (SQ/CC, OG/CC, WG/CV, WG/CC, etc) or staff duties at the Joint, HAF, MAJCOM, or NAF level will round out an officer's skills, and attendance at an SDE program will improve the breadth of professional development. Finally, three strategic guiding principles apply when developing senior officers at the strategic level:¹⁸

- *Leverage experience to further education.* Senior leader education should recognize and be adapted to the experience and competence of the individual. For example, a general officer anticipating an NAF commander's job should attend a formal course

to learn the detailed responsibilities and intricacies of the joint force air and space component commander (JFACC).

- *Leverage the senior leader's time:* Focus on issues that most contribute to meeting mission requirements or objectives.
- *Focus on senior leader skills.* Education and training should hone the officer's ability to express Air Force views within joint, interagency, and international foray.

At the strategic level of leadership, command is paramount, but extremely difficult to attain.

The Command Screening Board (CSB) is an extremely competitive selection board utilized to select the “best and brightest” to command at the group, vice, and wing command level.

The Command Screening Board (CSB)

The most sweeping change to the CSB since former CSAF General Merrill McPeak created it occurred at CORONA Fall 2008 when current CSAF General Norton Schwartz, instituted the “all in” policy. Concerned about the increasing number of colonels who were declining consideration for command (41% of CY08 eligible colonels declined to compete for command opportunities), General Schwartz decided that eligible colonels were no longer allowed the opportunity to decline command consideration from the CSB.¹⁹ By creating the “all in” policy for CY09, the CSB results yielded a higher quality of eligible officers to choose from, the group candidates were younger, and the wing candidates had more joint experience. Bottom line, the CSB was able to select the best talent available and not limited to the best of the volunteers.²⁰

The stated objective of the CSB is to provide eligible officers the opportunity to compete for command, and ultimately the process is designed to ensure that the Air Force has selected the best possible commanders. The CSB consists of general officers, including a four-star board president and each of the MAJCOM vice commanders. They screen an officer's records to select candidates to fill command requirements at a ratio of 1.5 to 1 of projected command requirements.²¹

The CSB process arguably provides a much larger pool of officers from which to choose the key leaders. In practice, however, only those officers who have been promoted BPZ have a realistic chance of being selected for rated Wg/CC, Wg/CV, or OG/CC billets.

The selection criteria for group, vice, and wing command billets can be viewed from two different points of view that are not necessarily mutually exclusive. From the warfighters point of view, commanders must possess the depth of operational experience to lead troops in combat and upon which to base decisions regarding the employment of those forces under his/her command. Alternatively, the current shortage of command billets driving the decision to use group, vice, and wing commander positions as a key leadership test for promotion to brigadier general can lead to a different point of view. When strictly examined from this perspective, only those officers who are viable contenders for brigadier general should be selected for group, vice, and wing command.

The selection criteria established for the CSB are very broad and inclusive. Group and vice commander candidates must be colonels or colonel-selects with less than 24 years of TAFCS. Wing commander candidates must be colonels with less than 26 years of TAFCS. Rated officers must have flown a minimum of 50 hours within the last seven years.²²

The intense competition reflects an increased emphasis on building a pool of officers who are competitive for promotion to brigadier general, possibly at the expense of operational experience. The current path of progression defined by today's Air Force – group/vice-command, SDE, joint/headquarters, wing command – sets the stage for selecting group/vice-commanders as early as possible.

Based on an analysis of CSB results, the CSB process appears to have institutionalized an increased emphasis on early promotion as an unwritten criterion for selection of group, vice, and

wing commander candidates. Many would argue early promotion has become the most important factor in the selection of group, vice, and wing commanders. With that, the CY09 CSB yielded the following results – 100% of the rated Wg/CC candidates, and 87% of the OG/CC and Wg/CV candidates had been promoted early at least once.²³

Because of the competitiveness of the BPZ process, early promotion also serves as a key discriminator for identifying future Air Force leaders. The next chapter will describe the six discriminators used to identify future senior leaders in the Air Force.

Notes

¹ Interview conducted with the Honorable Michael B. Donley, Secretary of the Air Force, 22 January 2010.

² Department of the Air Force, Air Force Policy Directive 36-26, *Total Force Development*, 27 August 2008, pg 2.

³ *ibid*, pg 9.

⁴ Department of the Air Force, Air Force Doctrine Document 1-1, *Leadership and Force Development*, 18 February 2006, pg 29-33.

⁵ Department of the Air Force, AFI 36-2640, *Executing Total Force Development*, 16 December 2008, pg 38.

⁶ *ibid*, pg 4.

⁷ Phone interview conducted with Admiral William J. Fallon, 15 January 2010.

⁸ Department of the Air Force, AFI 11-401, *Aviation Management*, 18 May 2009, pg 38.

⁹ *ibid*, pg 47.

¹⁰ Note: As a young lieutenant in a fighter squadron, the message delivered by the wing leadership at the time was that the CSAF wanted vast tactical expertise throughout the combat Air Force.

¹¹ Department of the Air Force, Air Force Doctrine Document 1-1, *Leadership and Force Development*, 18 February 2006, pg 30.

¹² Department of the Air Force, Air Force Doctrine Document 1-1, *Leadership and Force Development*, 18 February 2006, pg 29.

¹³ Department of the Air Force, AFI 36-2301, *Professional Military Education*, 27 June 2002, Incorporating Change 2, 26 September 2007, pg 10

¹⁴ *ibid*, pg 10.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, pg 10.

¹⁶ Interview with Dr. Stephen D. Chiabotti, Vice Commandant of the School of Advanced Air and Space Studies.

Notes

¹⁷ Department of the Air Force, Air Force Doctrine Document 1-1, *Leadership and Force Development*, 18 February 2006, pg 34-35.

¹⁸ *ibid*, pg 34.

¹⁹ Department of the Air Force, AF/DPO, Colonels Group, “Spread the Word Briefing 2009”, May 2009.

²⁰ Department of the Air Force, AF/DPO, Colonels Group staff interview, 21 January 2010.

²¹ Department of the Air Force, AF/DPO, Colonels Group, 2009 Command Screening Board Information Sheet, pg 1.

²² *ibid*, pg 1.

²³ Department of the Air Force, AF/DPO, Colonels Management Office staff interview, 21 January 2010.

Chapter 6

Discriminator's for Identifying Future Leaders

Make the bias “who is the best, most qualified officer” – the uniform ought to be secondary. Still young Air Force officers should ask, “how can I maximize my chances [for joint command]?”¹

—General John M. D. Shalikashvili
Former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff

The officer development model discussed in Chapter 5 sets the foundation for creating airmen for the 21st century and pertains to the majority of the line officers in the U.S. Air Force. This development model stresses the need for rated officers to build a solid flying background combined with a mixture of high-level staff jobs (MAJCOM, Air and/or Joint Staff). The reality, however, is that, in order to reach the pinnacle of the military rank structure, you have to accomplish a few things along the way. From an analysis of the data found in promotion board statistics, CSB results, and colonel/general officer demographic data, it is apparent there are six discriminators used to identify, develop and track future Air Force leaders. Some would also describe these discriminators as prerequisites for promotion to brigadier general. The six discriminators are (in no particular order):

1. Command experience
2. Joint duty assignment
3. In-residence PME

4. Operational credibility
5. Pentagon assignment
6. BPZ promotion to major, lieutenant colonel, and colonel

Before discussing these discriminators or quality indicators, however, it is important to understand that the “ideal” leadership model typically followed by rated officers seeks opportunities for professional development while remaining competitive for becoming OG/CCs, Wg/CVs, Wg/CCs, and/or general officers.

Leadership Development Model in the Rated Community

The “ideal” career path for the rated community is depicted below. This career path combines operational expertise with leadership opportunities, professional development, and staff experiences to meet the objective(s) of force development, while also fulfilling the chairman’s vision of developing strategically minded, critical thinking, joint warfighters who are competitive for general officer.

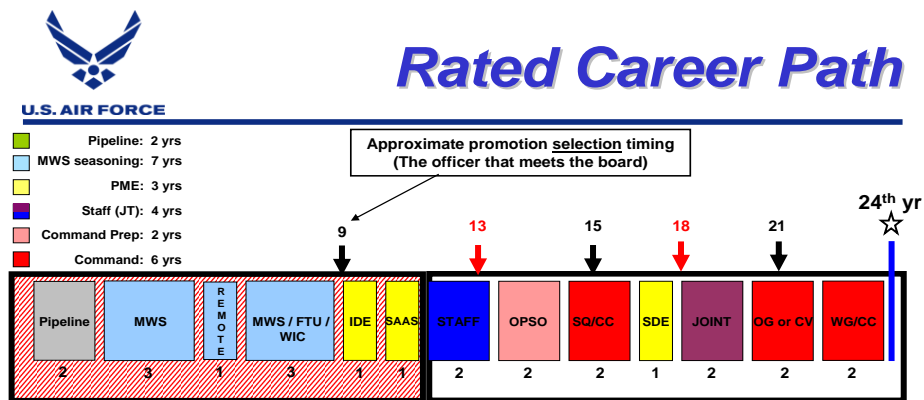


Figure 6 “Ideal” Rated Community Career Path

Assuming the career path depicted above is a prerequisite for promotion to general officer, the most important take-away then is the factor of time. For example, in the rated community, operations officers (OPSO) and SQ/CCs are lieutenant colonels, while OG/CCs, Wg/CVs and Wg/CCs are colonels. The rank associated with these positions is important because, in order to be competitive for these billets, one first has to be promoted. The chart indicates that an officer promoted on time throughout his/her career would become a major at the nine-year time-in-service (TIS) point, lieutenant colonel at the 15-year TIS point, and colonel at the TIS 21-year point.² Given all of the requirements necessary to be competitive for brigadier general at the 24-year TIS point (the primary “push” year for promotion to brigadier general in the Air Force), one has to either; (a) be promoted BPZ, or (b) sacrifice operational credibility; (c) curtail PME; (d) shorten/eliminate command opportunities; or (e) shorten/eliminate staff opportunities that may lesson an officer’s competitive edge for future promotion.

In the Air Force, command opportunities come later in an officer’s career. For example, the first true test of leadership occurs as a squadron commander at the rank of lieutenant colonel. Following that, competitive colonels will command at both the group or vice and wing level. One of the objectives of force development is to build a pool of officers who are competitive for senior leadership. In order to accomplish this, sacrifices have to be made somewhere to maintain the timeline described above. The bottom line is that, in order to meet the prescribed timeline and be competitive for brigadier general at the 24-year “push” point, one must be selected BPZ in at least a couple of years or a couple of ranks. The recent brigadier general promotion results for CY08 validates the fact that 86% of the officers selected to brigadier general were BPZ to at least two ranks and 100% were promoted BTZ.³ So what gets an officer promoted? Analysis reveals that career success in the following six areas outlined below (and listed above) have

become the de facto discriminators that the Air Force uses to promote the “best and brightest” to be senior officers.

Command Experience

Command experience has long been viewed as a key criterion for selecting future Air Force leaders. The importance of command experience, both to the Air Force and the officer, cannot be overemphasized. Command duty gives the Air Force an opportunity to evaluate an officer’s capabilities in leadership positions, and to give each officer the chance to acquire managerial techniques required for higher-level responsibilities.

The opportunity to command is extremely limited, especially for rated officers. The first opportunity for command normally occurs at the squadron level as a lieutenant colonel. Each MAJCOM has established a central board process for selecting squadron commanders and is extremely competitive. As discussed in the preceding chapter, a centralized Command Screening Board conducted annually at AFPC chooses group/vice and wing commanders. Statistically, 100% of the rated officers selected to brigadier general have commanded at the squadron, group or vice and wing command.⁴ Thus, command performance, particularly as a Wg/CC, is a discriminator for selection to brigadier general.

Completion of a Joint Duty Assignment

From a force development point of view, joint duty also serves to broaden an officer’s experience base by learning how the other services operate. The Air Force, more than any other service, has embraced the intent of Goldwater-Nichols by assigning its top officers to the joint arena. Due to the heavy operational tempo driving all of the services, releasing officers to fill

these key critical joint billets has been a challenge. For example, only 70% of the Air Force's allocated JDAL billets are currently being filled.⁵

Goldwater-Nichols has gone a long way toward improving the quality of officers who are serving or have served in the joint arena. In the force development equation, completion of a JDA is the only discriminator that is a statutory requirement. In fact, Title 10, U.S.C., Section 619a, states that an officer may not be appointed to the grade of O-7 unless the officer has been designated as a JQO.⁶ An exception to policy may be made on a case-by-case basis, whereby the Secretary of Defense may waive the JQO requirement for the "good of the service," but the officer would be required to fill a JDA as his/her first general officer assignment.⁷ Although, this exception exists, it is rarely utilized. The competition for a JDA is intense because of the Title 10 links to the officer promotion system. Although not a board process, the formal joint duty assessment culminating with approval by the AFPC ensures high quality officers are nominated for JDAs. In fact, due to operational constraints, current AFPC policy is to release only those officers who have completed IDE/SDE in-residence to Joint Staff billets.⁸ Consequently, completion of a JDA has become a discriminator for future Air Force leaders.

Some would argue that the services, especially the Air Force, are reluctant to release their high potential officers to career broadening opportunities because of service parochialism rather than doing it for the good of the joint team. General (ret) John P. Abizaid, former Centcom Commander, argues that "...the first thing the Services need to do is give up good officers to joint duty at the colonel and general officer level...and next they need to develop strategic leaders by attending tier-one academic institutions."⁹ Lieutenant General Paul Selva view's the issue in a similar manner stating that, "...the Air Force has to build a pool of expertise that represents, across all of the officers available in the Air Force, the best critical thinkers, agnostic

to operational expertise or weapons systems, who have been given the experience to understand the joint world, understand the broad strategy, and articulate their Service core expertise while they are in the joint environment.”¹⁰ While both General Abizaid and Lieutenant General Selva are correct in their assessments. The Air Force can overcome this apparent weakness by allocating the time for high potential officers to broaden their careers outside Air Force channels.

In-Residence Professional Military Education

Officer PME is a key part of force development. While seminar and correspondence courses provide a means of completing PME, the optimum method is to attend an in-residence course. As discussed, PME allows officers to focus without distractions. It also provides the opportunity to exchange ideas with officers from other U.S. military services, allied nations, and civilian agencies. Because of the extremely competitive selection process and the breadth of experience gained, attendance at IDE and/or SDE is a significant discriminator for identifying future leaders. In fact, the CY08 brigadier general promotion board results revealed that 100% of the rated selects completed SDE in-residence.¹¹

Operational Credibility

Operational credibility is not defined or specifically discussed in AFDD 1-1, *Leadership and Force Development*, but it is certainly implied by many of the statements contained in the document.

Competence and credibility require depth of experience that provides a foundation of effective leadership. Depth is not gained overnight, but is an expertise honed over time. Skills and leadership development programs should provide the fundamentals that will be re-enforced at all levels of tactical, operational and strategic development by on-the-job training and expeditionary field expertise.¹²

In addition to building an early base of technical experience, rated officers must also periodically update their operational credentials. Otherwise, their technical skills will evaporate. Operational credibility is defined as building and maintaining a sufficient depth and breadth of operational experience to be a credible leader of a flying organization. While this is a subjective assessment, there are certain indicators that can help in assessing an officer's operational credentials. These include the record of evaluations contained in an officer's flight evaluation folder, levels of qualification obtained (such as flight lead, aircraft commander, instructor, or evaluator), operational experience, and combat deployments. Officer Performance Reports, although sometimes inflated, also help to document performance in the operational environment.

Pentagon Tour

Although many officers may want to avoid the Washington D.C. area, a Pentagon tour remains an important step in force development. The perspective obtained from service at the highest levels in the DoD, the Joint Staff, and the Air Staff undoubtedly broadens an officer's background and lays a solid foundation for those who move into more senior positions.

A Pentagon tour also offers an opportunity to kill two birds with one stone. Some officers may gain the Pentagon experience while completing a joint tour on the Joint Staff or in the Office of the Secretary of Defense. Many senior colonels and generals serve multiple tours in the Pentagon, so a tour as a field grade officer is generally viewed as a discriminator for identifying future leaders.

Early Promotion

BPZ promotion provides a means of identifying exceptional officers and accelerating their promotion to lieutenant colonel and/or colonel. Current Air Force policy permits BPZ

promotions up to two years early for lieutenant colonel and colonel. Although the Air Force did away with the two years early promotion to major in 1998, there are senior leaders in the Air Force today who have been promoted early to the ranks of major, lieutenant colonel, and colonel, for a total aggregate of six years BPZ. The maximum BPZ selection quota currently used in the Air Force is 7.5% for lieutenant colonel, and 15% for colonel.¹³ Historically, in the rated community, the percentage of majors promoted BPZ in a given year group ranges from 1.5 to 4.2%, lieutenant colonels from 1.7 to 8.2%, and colonel's from 2.1 to 6.6%.¹⁴

The six discriminators just described have become de facto indicators for officers who have been selected as senior leaders. And, although these indicators are extremely important, the most significant discriminator has become an early promotion. But why? Why is it so important to be selected BPZ in order to be considered for senior leadership opportunities? The answer lies within the mandatory retirement dates (MRD) for general/flag officers, and will be discussed at length in the next chapter.

Having the opportunity to command at the wing or group level is one of the most rewarding experiences in the Air Force and reserved for only a small percentage of senior officers. But an even smaller percentage of senior officers will ascend to the rank of brigadier general. The next chapter will outline the management of general officers in today's Air Force.

Notes

¹ Belote, Major Howard D., *Once in a Blue Moon: Airman in Theater Command* (Maxwell AFB, AL: School of Advanced Airpower Studies, Air University, 1999), pg 79.

² Note: The years depicted for promotion are the years an officer would pin-on the rank. It assumes a 9-12 month wait period from the release of the promotion results and the pin-on date.

³ Department of the Air Force, AF/DPO Colonel Management Office, *Spread the Word Briefing*, April 2009.

Notes

⁴ Department of the Air Force, HQ Air Force Personnel Center, Demographics and Statistics.

⁵ Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Staff, J-1 Division.

⁶ United States Code, *Title 10 – Armed Forces*, (Washington DC: United States Government Printing Office, 5 January 2009), Section 619a.

⁷ *ibid*, Section 619a.

⁸ Department of the Air Force, HQ Air Force Personnel Center, A-1 Manpower Division.

⁹ Phone interview conducted with General (ret) John P. Abizaid, 5 January 2010.

¹⁰ Phone interview conducted with Lt. General Paul J. Selva, 18 February 2010.

¹¹ Department of the Air Force, AF/DPO Colonel Management Office, *Spread the Word Briefing*, April 2009.

¹² Department of the Air Force, Air Force Doctrine Document 1-1, *Leadership and Force Development*, 18 February 2006, pg 27.

¹³ Department of the Air Force, HQ Air Force Personnel Center, Demographics and Statistics.

¹⁴ Department of the Air Force, HQ Air Force Personnel Center, Demographics and Statistics.

Chapter 7

Management of General Officers

“Modern leaders know that survival requires adaptability. They are not afraid to mold their organizations in creative and innovative ways to meet emerging challenges. They are not averse to change; and they can lead their teams through disruptions and discomforts that come with it. They can convince teammates that the excitement and potential success far outweigh the downsides.”¹

—General Tony Zinni (ret)
Former CENTCOM Commander

Only a select few officers will eventually be promoted beyond the rank of colonel. According to the Air Force Colonel’s Management Office (AF/DPO) *2009 Spread the Word Briefing*, only one out of every 86 line colonels will attain the rank of Brigadier general.² Although the number of promotions to the general officer ranks is extremely low, the dynamics of the general officer force play a major role in the force development priorities for company and field grade officers.

When an officer is promoted to the grade of colonel, a new factor enters the equation that plays a major role in future promotion potential, the factor of time. The general officer force is constrained by a different set of dynamics detailed in public law that limits both the makeup and tenure of the general officer force. Tenure is controlled through legally constrained mandatory retirement dates (MRDs) spelled out in Title 10, of the U.S. Code (Title 10, U.S.C.).

Although all four branches of service are constrained by the same laws, how each individual service deals with these constraints is a matter of individual service policy. The later an officer is promoted to brigadier general, the less amount of time that officer has before reaching the MRD. Time also affects the number of years an officer will be able to spend in the general/flag officer force and influences the ultimate promotion potential of the officer. An officer who is selected for brigadier general later in his/her career will simply run out of time to compete for the most senior general/flag officer promotions.

Title 10, U.S.C., Section 619, sets the minimum time in grade (TIG) requirements before an officer is eligible for promotion to the next grade. In order to be eligible for promotion to major, lieutenant colonel, or colonel, an officer must have a minimum of three years TIG at the preceding rank.³ The Secretary of the Force may waive this requirement to permit at least two opportunities for BPZ.⁴ For promotion to brigadier general or major general, Title 10, U.S.C., Section 619, requires that all officers have at least one year TIG to be considered for promotion. Air Force policy, however, requires that to be considered for promotion to brigadier general, an officer must have at least two years TIG as of the board convening date.⁵

One way of dealing with the factor of time is to accelerate the promotion of some officers. Under the provisions of DoD Instruction (DoDI) 1320.12, the services may also accelerate the promotions of some majors, lieutenant colonels and colonels subject to the maximum restrictions indicated below:

...the number of officers on the Active Duty List who may be recommended for promotion to the grades of O-4 through O-6, from among those being considered from below the promotion zone in any competitive category, may not exceed 10 percent of the maximum number of officers to be recommended for promotion in such competitive category. If the Secretary of the Military Department concerned determines the needs of the Military Service concerned require additional recommendations from below the promotion zone, he or she may, with the

approval of the Secretary of Defense, provide for the recommendation of a greater number. In that case, the number of officers selected may not exceed 15 percent of the total number of the officers that the selection board is authorized to recommend for promotion.⁶

How each Service applies this provision within the constraints of the law is a matter of choice. Air Force policy currently permits officers to be promoted up to two years early to lieutenant colonel and colonel, for an aggregate total of four years.⁷

Early promotion reallocates time; it borrows time from the earlier phases of one's career thereby lengthening the time available in the latter phases. Strictly from the standpoint of time, earlier is better. In theory, this could allow up to four more years in the general officer ranks. From a force development perspective, however, if an officer is promoted too early, he/she may be deprived of the professional development necessary to groom a future senior leader.

To better understand the emphasis placed on early promotion, it is necessary to examine the dynamics driving the management of the Air Force general officer force. The general officer force is governed by two primary constraints – authorizations and MRDs. These constraints play a key role in promotion timing for brigadier general selection, which, in turn, affects the management of the entire officer force.

General Officer Authorizations

The size and makeup of the general officer population is strictly governed by Title 10, U.S.C. The Air Force is currently authorized a baseline of 279 general officers. Title 10, U.S.C., also provides an additional 65 general/flag officer positions above and beyond the individual service authorizations for utilization in meeting joint requirements. Additionally, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff may designate up to 15 general/flag officer positions in the unified

and specified combatant commands.⁸ At present, the USAF is authorized a total of 304 general officers.⁹

In addition to specifying the total number of general officers authorized by service, Title 10, U.S.C., also delineates the exact breakdown of the general officer force by grade authorizations. Grade distribution is determined by the following three requirements:¹⁰

1. Half of the general officer force must serve in the grade of brigadier general (O-7).
2. No more than 16.4% of the general officer force may serve in the grades of lieutenant general (O-9) and general (O-10).
3. Of the 16.4% of general officers in the grades of O-9 and O-10, no more than 25% may serve in the grade of O-10.

Applying the grade limitations specified above, the current USAF distribution by grade is shown below:



Figure 7 General Officer Grade Distribution (304 Total)

Title 10, U.S.C., also defines MRDs for all officers. These dates are generally based on years of total active federal commissioned service (TAFCS). Colonels are limited to a maximum of 30 years of TAFCS, while general officer (GO) retirements are based on a combination of TIG, TAFCS, age, and specific grade.

The MRD for brigadier generals is five years TIG or 30 years of TAFCS, whichever is later.¹¹ Major generals are required to retire upon reaching five years TIG or 35 years of

TAFCS, whichever is later. The MRD’s for lieutenant general/vice admiral (O-9) and general/admiral (O-10) are based upon 38 and 40 years TAFCS respectively.¹² All general officers are required to retire at the age of 64 unless a waiver is obtained for officers serving in the grade of O-9 or O-10. With this, the Secretary of Defense can waive the age requirement to 66, while the President of the United States can waive it to 68.¹³ The figure below reflects the current MRD construct.

GENERAL (O-10)	40 Years TAFSC
LT GENERAL (O-9)	38 Years TAFSC
MAJ GENERAL (O-8)	LATER of 35 Yrs TAFSC or 5 Yrs TIG
BRIGADIER	LATER of 30 Yrs TAFSC or 5 Yrs TIG

Figure 8 General Officer Mandatory Retirement Dates (Post-2007 NDAA)

The above MRDs became effective with the NDAA of 2007 and were a significant change from the previous legislation that governed MRDs. The following depicts the MRDs prior to the NDAA of 2007.

GENERAL (O-10)	35 Years TAFSC
LT GENERAL (O-9)	35 Years TAFSC
MAJ GENERAL (O-8)	LATER of 35 Yrs TAFSC or 5 Yrs TIG
BRIGADIER	LATER of 30 Yrs TAFSC or 5 Yrs TIG

Figure 9 General Officer Mandatory Retirement Dates (Pre-2007 NDAA)

The most significant take-away from the above the figure is the MRD for O-9s and O-10s. By allowing the MRD for O-9s and O-10s to extend to 38 and 40 years of TAFSC, respectively, general/flag officers in the ranks of O-7 and O-8 are afforded the opportunity to be promoted later, and still be competitive for three- and four-star ranks. This will be discussed at length later, but this change could, if addressed correctly, significantly affect the way the Air Force develops their officers.

The last promotion board an officer meets is for major general. For progression above the grade of major general, the president may appoint officers to specific lieutenant general/vice admiral and general/admiral vacancies on a temporary basis. Title 10, U.S.C., Section 601, authorizes the president to “designate positions of importance and responsibility to carry the grade of general or admiral or lieutenant general or vice admiral”¹⁴ and to appoint officers to those vacancies. Three- and four-star generals are, therefore, permanent major generals with temporary appointments to higher grades. Upon retirement, the president must nominate, and Congress approves, three- and four-star generals for retirement in a grade above major general.

Sustaining the Force

As discussed above, general officers are promoted and assigned to vacancies. Vacancies at the four-star level are generated by retirements. Three-star, two-star, and one-star vacancies are generated by a combination of retirements and promotions. Retirements and promotions generate turnover in the general officer force and ultimately result in the opportunity for colonels to be promoted to brigadier general. Without MRDs, promotion opportunity could potentially stagnate.

Promotion Timing for Brigadier general

The timing for promotion to brigadier general is determined by Air Force policy. Title 10, U.S.C., Section 619, requires officers to have a minimum of one year TIG as a colonel before being eligible for promotion to brigadier general; service policies, however, may be more restrictive. Air Force policy requires that, to be considered for promotion to brigadier general, an officer must have at least two years of TIG as of the board convening date.¹⁵

As mentioned earlier, the MRD for brigadier generals occurs at five-years of TIG or 30 years TAFCS, whichever is later. When colonels are promoted to brigadier general later than the 25th year of TAFCS, five-years of TIG will become the driver for MRD resulting in tenure beyond 30 years of TAFCS. With the change in MRDs, however, promoting an officer later than the 25th year does not have as large an impact on three-star potential as it once did.

It goes without saying, but the later an officer is promoted to brigadier general, the less likely he/she is to be able to attain the rank of O-9 or O-10 due to the MRD limitation of 38 or 40, years respectively. Conversely, the earlier an officer is promoted to brigadier general, the more time he/she will have to advance to the more senior general/flag officer ranks before reaching the 40-year TAFCS constraint. But the question becomes, why do we have to promote the lion's share of our general officers at the 24-year TIS point? The answer used to lie in the MRD, because, in order to make a fourth star by the 35-year TIS point, an officer had to be promoted early. Today, that is no longer the case.

According to the Air Force Colonels Management Office (AF/DPO), the average brigadier general is selected for promotion with 24-years of TIS and 4.7 years of TIG as a colonel.¹⁶ A careful review of the CY08 brigadier general promotion board showed that 83% of the selects are chosen for promotion between 23 and 25 years of TAFCS. Additionally, 98% of the selected officers completed SDE in-residence, and 86% of those selected were 2+ grades BPZ.¹⁷ In order to be promoted to brigadier general at 24 years of TIS with five years of TIG as a colonel, an officer would have to pin on colonel during the 19-year TIS point – three years ahead of his/her contemporaries. As stated above, AF/DPO statistics confirm the average brigadier general (sel) is promoted to colonel an aggregate of three years early.

The brigadier general promotion window plays a major role in Air Force's force development philosophy. It drives the need to develop a pool of colonels who have been promoted an average of three years early while also having obtained the necessary operational, staff, educational, and command experience to qualify them for promotion to the general officer ranks.

The Emphasis on Early Promotion

The priority placed on early promotion in the Air Force is directly tied to the policy that the earlier an officer is promoted through the ranks, the larger the pool of talented officers will be later on to choose senior leaders from. The word "policy" is important here and should not be confused with the legal constraints of Title 10, U.S.C. By law, an officer could theoretically be selected for promotion to brigadier general as late as the 29th year of commissioned service. This would result in pinning on the first star around the 30th year and would still allow him/her to serve for five years of TIG prior to the MRD. Even in this extreme scenario, the officer would have sufficient time to earn a second star since the MRD for major general is based on 35-years of TAFCS or five years of TIG (assuming age 64 is not a factor). And in theory, with the MRD for lieutenant general at 38 years of TAFCS, the President of the United States could nominate the officer for his/her third star. The downside to this scenario is that it would reduce the size of potential contenders for a fourth star since their MRD is capped at 40 years TAFCS. But with the limited number of four-star positions available, the Air Force does not need to promote every colonel to general officer with the hope the individual will achieve the four-star level. Simply put, the Air Force's current mind set is to promote the vast majority of colonels to brigadier general at or before the 25-year TIS point to create a larger pool of officers from which to choose their two-, three-, and four-star officers.

In theory, this seems to be a logical approach to building a *bench* of qualified officers to be future senior officers. Unfortunately, it is a *bench* of qualified Air Force officers who are deep in operational expertise, but lacking the joint competencies required of a future geographic/functional combatant commander. In a personal interview with the author, Secretary of Defense, Robert M. Gates said “...the Air Force seems to have had the least success in exposing its members to organizations outside the Air Force.”¹⁸ And the author agrees; the Air Force needs to allocate the proper time in an officer’s career to broaden his/her perspective outside the corporate Air Force, and, as suggested by Secretary Gates, “...allow officers to get joint time early in their careers.”¹⁹ The Air Force can reverse this trend, but to do so will take time.

The Ripple Effect

The current brigadier general promotion window places a high premium on the BPZ promotion. Although a very small pool of officers will ever attain the rank of brigadier general, the emphasis on early promotion influences force development for the entire officer corps.

To produce a sufficiently large pool from which to choose brigadier generals the Air Force must create a larger pool of colonels with the proper experience and who have been promoted an average of two years ahead of their contemporaries. This goal drives a variety of other personnel policies such as selection criteria for squadron commander, IDE/SDE, and joint/HAF staff jobs. It also compresses the time available for obtaining the necessary operational, staff, educational, and command experience, and this frequently requires tradeoffs in some areas.

The next chapter will provide an Army perspective on officer development, along with our sister service’s view on early promotions.

Notes

¹ Zinni, General Tony and Tony Koltz, *Leading the Charge – Leadership Lessons from the Battlefield to the Boardroom* (New York City, NY: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009), pg 150.

² Department of the Air Force, AF/DPO Colonel Management Office, *Spread the Word Briefing*, April 2009.

³ United States Code, *Title 10 – Armed Forces*, (Washington DC: United States Government Printing Office, 5 January 2009) Section 619.

⁴ Department of the Air Force, AFI 36-2501, *Officer Promotions and Selective Continuation*, 16 July 2004, Incorporating Change 2, 13 September 2007 and IC-3, 17 August 2009, pg 91.

⁵ *ibid*, pg 62.

⁶ Department of Defense, DODI 1320.12, *Commissioned Officer Promotion Program*, 27 September 2005, pg 2.

⁷ Department of the Air Force, AFI 36-2501, *Officer Promotions and Selective Continuation*, 16 July 2004, Incorporating Change 2, 13 September 2007 and IC-3, 17 August 2009, pg 20.

⁸ United States Code, *Title 10 – Armed Forces*, (Washington DC: United States Government Printing Office, 5 January 2009) Section 526.

⁹ Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Director of the Joint Staff, J-1 Office of General Officer Matters.

¹⁰ United States Code, *Title 10 – Armed Forces*, (Washington DC: United States Government Printing Office, 5 January 2009) Section 525.

¹¹ *ibid*, Section 635.

¹² *ibid*, Section 636.

¹³ *ibid*, Section 1251.

¹⁴ *ibid*, Section 601.

¹⁵ Department of the Air Force, AFI 36-2501, *Officer Promotions and Selective Continuation*, 16 July 2004, Incorporating Change 2, 13 September 2007 and IC-3, 17 August 2009, pg 62

¹⁶ Department of the Air Force, AF/DPO Colonel Management Office, *Spread the Word Briefing*, April 2009.

¹⁷ *ibid*, briefing.

¹⁸ Interview conducted with the Honorable Robert M. Gates, Secretary of Defense, 17 February 2010.

¹⁹ *ibid*.

Chapter 8

A Different Perspective on Officer Development

*“If the Army continues to resist, organizing training and equipping itself to fight and win the “wars” it is currently being asked to fight, it may no longer have a significantly professional officer corps when the next big war occurs”.*¹

—Major John Nagl, Instructor, West Point Department of Social Sciences
The Fourth Star: Four Generals and the Epic Struggle for the Future of the U.S. Army

All four of the services are constrained by the legislation established by the Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986, and each has embraced the concept of joint development in its own way. Although the author strongly believes the Air Force’s primary issue when it comes to developing its senior officers is the lack of time, the Army model of officer development provides a different perspective and is worth exploring.

Army Vision

The Army has a well-developed officer personnel management system (OPMS) that is clearly laid out in Department of the Army Pamphlet 600-3 (DA PAM 600-3), *Commissioned Officer Professional Development and Career Management*, and Department of the Army Pamphlet 350-58 (DA PAM 350-58). The Army believes the three domains of a leader’s development are institutional training, operational assignments, and self-development.²

- *Institutional training.* The institutional Army (schools and training centers) is the foundation for lifelong learning. During institutional training, leaders learn the

knowledge, skills, and attributes essential to high-quality leadership while training to perform critical tasks. Institutional training provides the solid foundation upon which all future development rests.

- *Operational assignments.* Operational experience provides the opportunity to use, hone, and build on what is learned through the formal education process.
- *Self-development.* Learning is a lifelong process. The profession of arms requires comprehensive self-study and training. Leaders must commit to a lifetime of professional and personal growth to stay at the cutting edge of their profession.

These three domains define a continuous cycle of education, training, selection, experience, assessment, feedback, reinforcement, and evaluation.

The Army's vision for leadership development is straight forward and includes "the overarching concept of creating adaptive leaders, focused on the idea of the pentathlete - multi-skilled with multiple attributes."³ The Army develops their officers to be multi-skilled leaders with the following attributes:⁴

1. Strategic and creative thinkers.
2. Builders of leaders and teams.
3. Competent full spectrum warfighters or accomplished professionals who support the Soldier and the warfighting effort.
4. Effective in managing, leading, and changing organizations.
5. Skilled in governance, statesmanship, and diplomacy.
6. Knowledgeable in cultural context with the ability to work across it.

If you compare the Army and Air Force vision with that of the CJCS *Vision for Joint Officer Development* (discussed earlier), you will see strong similarities. Actions speak louder than words, however, and the Army seems to embrace the action piece better than the Air Force.

Operational Credibility and the Army Model

DA PAM 600-3 provides a detailed career path for officers by branch (infantry, armor, field artillery, etc). It explains in great detail what officers can expect to accomplish at each rank and

establishes prerequisites for command at each level. Only those officers who meet these requirements are considered for command. As an example, the career path for an active duty army infantrymen is depicted below. Of note, in keeping with their vision for joint development, the Army takes more of a “peanut butter spread” approach to career development by encouraging career broadening opportunities across an officer’s entire career.

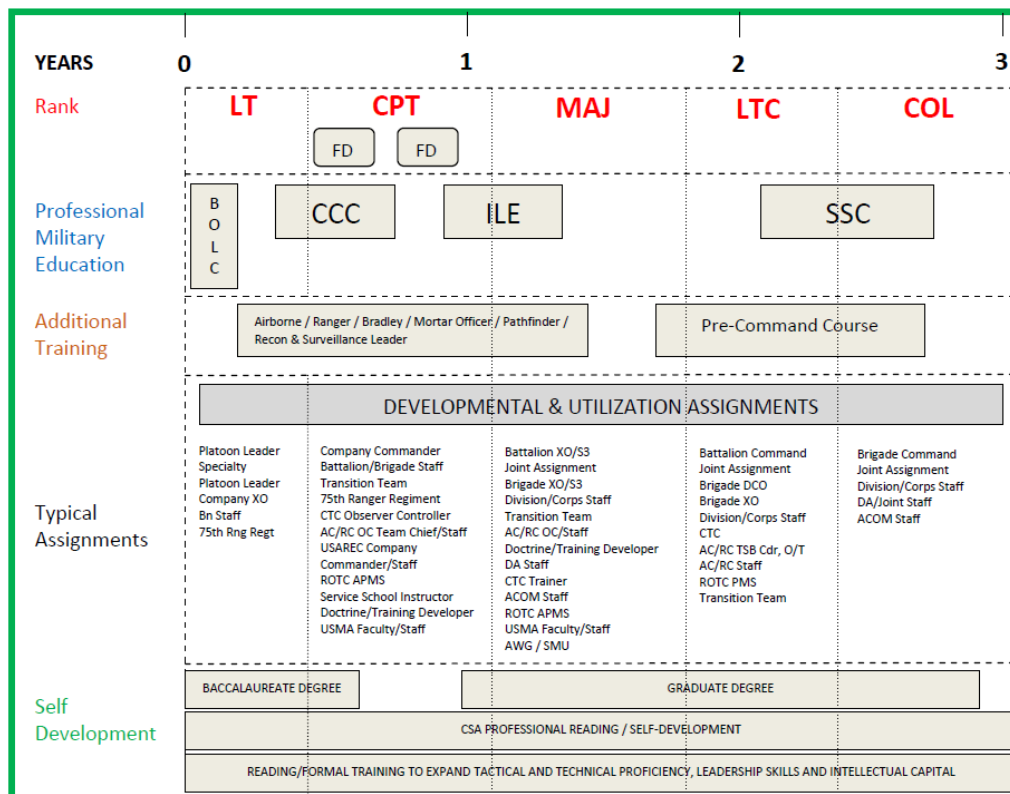


Figure 10 Infantry Active Army Development Model

Branch Qualification and Command Prerequisites

The Army operates on a concept known as “branch qualification.” Company grade officers become branch qualified by serving with troops at the company, battalion, or brigade levels as staff officers. Additionally, most branches require officers to obtain command experience at the company level before being considered a branch-qualified company grade officer.⁵ Using the infantry Branch as an example, the goal is to provide each infantry captain 18 months (+/- six

months) of company command time; the key, however, is the quality of the experience rather than time.⁶ Company command is the capstone event in becoming a branch-qualified company-grade officer.

As an infantry major, the professional development objective is to create a combined arms warrior and leader who have a comprehensive understanding of operations in a joint and expeditionary environment. To become branch qualified as a major and be competitive for tactical battalion command, infantry officers should serve at least one assignment as a battalion or brigade operations officer (S3) or executive officer (XO). Additionally, an infantry officer must hone his/her skills in the planning and execution of combined arms warfare and develop expertise in the Joint Interagency Intergovernmental Multinational (JIIM) operational environment. Typically, this occurs on a Joint Staff, with the general rule being an assignment of 24-36 months.⁷

The critical assignment for an infantry lieutenant colonel is command. It is important to the Army that an officer at this level of his/her career serve in an assignment that further develops his/her joint combined arms skill set to improve their warfighting capabilities. Branch qualification assignments consist of branch-coded billets at the battalion, brigade, division, or echelon above corps levels, culminating in a command opportunity. Those infantry officers selected for command will normally serve two to three years at the battalion level, with the minimum typically being two years. Only battalion commanders will be considered for command at the brigade level as a colonel.⁸

At the colonel level, the critical assignment for an infantrymen is brigade level command. However, in order to become a brigade commander, officers must have served as a battalion commander.

Typically, each level of command serves as a prerequisite for command at the next level. Additionally, operational experience requirements are also defined under the branch qualification concept. Although the Army model is not perfect, it provides clear guidance to line officers and senior commanders with regard to a senior leadership's professional development expectations. The following sections examine how this model could be applied to the Air Force.

Controlled Tour Lengths for Commanders

The Army places very specific requirements on the length of time required for completion of a command tour. DA Pam 600-3 states that the vast majority of battalion and brigade commanders will serve two years in command; due to ongoing operational deployments, unit transitions, and the implementation of life cycle managed units, however, command tours may range from slightly less than 24 months to 36 months. The primary goal for command, however; is two years.⁹

Like command opportunities in the Air Force, branch level command at the battalion and brigade level is extremely competitive. The command selection process for battalion and brigade is centrally controlled by the Army's Human Resource Command (HRC), so they can control the length of command at both the brigade and battalion level.

The Air Force should implement a policy whereby command length is a minimum of two years at all levels of command. In the absence of a written policy, commander tour lengths vary greatly from MAJCOM to MAJCOM. By institutionalizing a command policy for squadron, group/vice, and wing commanders, the Air Force would reinforce a strong commitment to developing leaders. If group, vice and wing command is indeed a critical command test before advancement to brigadier general, then a longer tour would seem to be more appropriate.

Controlled tour lengths help both the individual commander and the organization. Commanders need to stay in place long enough to have an impact on their organizations and for senior commanders to adequately assess their future potential. Changes of command create turmoil within an organization as subordinates adjust to a new leader and new policies. Frequent turnover also creates unnecessary turbulence and may lead subordinates to view their commanders as temporary or as “ticket-punchers.” Air Force leaders, therefore, should establish and enforce standard two-year tour lengths for group/vice, and wing commanders. Squadron commander tour lengths will be discussed in the next chapter.

Professional Military Education (PME)

Of the four services, the Air Force, Army and Marine Corps put a premium on officers who have attended an in-residence PME program at the O-4, O-5 and/or O-6 level. In fact, the selection process for intermediate and senior level PME is so competitive that admission comes only through a selective board process. The Navy, on the other hand, basically selects officers to attend PME as a result of an administrative assignment action rather than a board process. The attitude held by the majority of naval officers is that attendance at a senior service school means risking career progression. Amazingly enough, 50% of all serving Admirals have not attended a war college of any sort – a percentage in stark contrast to the nation’s other services.¹⁰ To further illustrate this point, of the 10 admirals currently serving on active duty, only two (or 20%) have attended a PME program at the O-5 or O-6 level.¹¹

The Marine Corps process is similar to the Air Force, with only the “best and brightest” being selected to attend intermediate and/or senior level PME. The Army on the other hand, makes it mandatory for select branch (typically, the combat arms branches) officers to complete their intermediate level education (ILE) by attending an in-residence 16-week common core

training block of instruction that is taught at the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College (CGSC). Other selected officers will then continue on to the 24-week Advanced Operations and Warfighting Course (AOWC), with a small percentage of those officers going on to a yearlong residence course taught by the SAMS. For the Army, Air Force, and Marine Corps attending a war college is seen as a sign of distinction, coming with it greater responsibility and a potential promotion. Thus, the Air Force needs to maintain its emphasis on PME at every level of officer development to ensure it is developing officers with the competencies required of senior leaders.

Experience Prerequisites

The Air Force should implement experience prerequisites similar to those contained in the Army's branch qualification concept. With the current gate system, some rated officers leave the cockpit after completing their second gate and then return to the cockpit as an operations officer and/or squadron commander. Although there is no prerequisite for serving in a flying billet prior to squadron command, normal career progression in the rated community includes time as an operations officer.

Should an officer be required to complete a field grade tour in the cockpit prior to serving as a squadron commander? Applying the Army's concept of development, an officer would have to serve as an operations officer, wing chief of safety, or in some other field grade flying billet before being considered qualified to command a flying squadron. Therefore, officers who have been out of the cockpit for an extended period of time should not move *directly* into a flying squadron commander position without their operational credential *first* being revalidated. In the author's opinion, hands-on operational credibility is critically important at the squadron commander level. Subordinates expect commanders to be well versed in their unit's mission, as well as to be proficient in their unit's aircraft. Therefore, to send the right message to

subordinates, senior leaders must ensure flying squadron commanders have the necessary operational experience in the aircraft before they take command.

Should command at one level be a prerequisite for command at the next? In the Army, company command is a prerequisite for battalion command and battalion command is a prerequisite for brigade command. Although not an official requirement in the Air Force, the CY09 CSB results indicated a strong emphasis on command experience by senior leaders. One hundred percent of the fighter group candidates had previously commanded a squadron and 100% of the rated fighter wing candidates had previously commanded at either the vice or group level.¹² Air Force senior leadership needs to continue this trend to ensure that commanders of flying organizations at all levels will have sufficient operational depth in their unit's primary aircraft and mission prior to taking command.

Overemphasis on BPZ Promotion

The Air Force promotion system does an exceptional job of identifying top-notch officers who have performed superbly in their career and have demonstrated exceptional potential for advancement. This system also provides the opportunity to accelerate the promotion of a small pool of officers through the BPZ selection process.

It is important, however, to keep BPZ selection in the proper context. The quality of today's officer force is at an all-time high. Although BPZ selection identifies some of the most talented Air Force officers, it does not necessarily follow that officers who are not promoted early are of a lower quality. It is a leap of faith to assume all officers promoted BPZ are of a higher quality than officers who have not.

Although early promotion has always served as an indicator of future potential, historically it has been seen as the primary discriminator for a command opportunity. What has changed

over the past several years is the relative importance of BPZ promotion compared to other quality indicators. For example, the recent CY09 CSB match revealed that 100% of the fighter wing commanders selected to command had a minimum of one-year BPZ, with the majority two-plus years BPZ.¹³ The perception in the rated community is that, unless an individual is a high-potential officer, his/her chances of being selected for a fighter group, vice, or wing command opportunity is slim to none.

High Potential Officers (HPO)

The Air Force Colonels Management Office (AF/DPO) is responsible for managing the careers of 3,255 line colonels.¹⁴ One of their responsibilities is to manage HPO's. HPO's are those officers who have consistently proven themselves throughout their careers. According to AF/DPO leadership, the HPO list is an informal list of officers who, if given the right opportunities, could be senior leaders in the Air Force. The list constantly changes, and it is anything but formal. When asked, AF/DPO leadership indicated that the list varies in size from 250-300 officers at any given time, with the majority of the officers on the list having been BPZ at some point in their career.¹⁵

Other Service Views on Early Promotion

Although the same promotion laws govern all four services, each service has taken a different view with regard to the emphasis placed on early promotion in force development and in the selection for senior leadership positions.

BPZ promotions are extremely rare in the U.S. Marine Corps (USMC). According to the USMC General Officer Management Office, the USMC views early promotion as being somewhat careerist. Colonels are typically promoted in the primary zone at the 21-year TIS

point, and considered for appointment to brigadier general at the four-year TIG point at the earliest. Thus, the majority of the Marine Corps brigadier general (selects) are promoted at the 25- to 26-year TIS point. In fact, the Marine Corps does not have a “push year” to brigadier general like the Air Force does; what is more important to them is the number of assignments an officer has as a colonel. At a minimum, a colonel must have had two colonel assignments prior to being looked at for brigadier general. Additionally, if a colonel was not able to complete a command opportunity within his first two colonel assignments due to the “needs of the service,” he would not be penalized; he would just take his command and be considered for brigadier general later.¹⁶ Senior Marine Corps leaders frequently see early promotion as trading away valuable experience.¹⁷ Bottom line, the Marine Corps values career broadening and diverse assignments over a below the zone promotion.

The U.S. Navy permits officers to be promoted up to two years early to lieutenant commander, commander, and captain. However, the Navy promotes considerably less than their authorized quota of officers early. In fact, according the Department of the Navy, Flag Officer Management Office, the Navy has not promoted a line commander or captain BPZ since 2006.¹⁸ Additionally, early promotion is not strongly emphasized in any aspect of officer professional development because it derails their career timeline.

The U.S. Army limits early promotion in two ways. The Army only allows officers to be promoted one year early to major, lieutenant colonel, and colonel.¹⁹ By law (Title 10, U.S.C.), the number of officers recommended for promotion from below-the-zone may not exceed 10% of the total number recommended, except that the Secretary of Defense may authorize that percentage to be increased to not more than 15%. Army policy, however, sets the below-the-zone capability at 5.0 to 7.5 percent, thereby limiting the number of early promotions.²⁰

Of the four Services, the Air Force places the greatest emphasis on BPZ promotion. The intense competition for command billets combined with a career requiring group/vice/wing command, SDE, and joint/headquarters Air Force opportunities signals a greater emphasis on early promotion in Air Force officer development. In order to complete the requirements in the sequence envisioned by the “ideal” career path (discussed earlier), an officer has to pin on colonel before the 20-year TIS point. Although early promotion has always been an important discriminator, the “ideal” career path places an emphasis on the depth of early promotions, in fact, the earlier the better.

The increased emphasis on early promotion can be seen in many personnel policies. Officers selected for early promotion are automatically placed on the candidate list for in-residence PME. Additionally, the joint duty assessment process uses in-residence PME, early promotion, and command experience as screening criteria for joint assignments.

Early promotion plays an increasingly important role in selection for command as indicated by the results of the CY09B CSB where 100% of all rated Wg/CC candidates had at least one early promotion. The emphasis on depth of early promotion can also be seen in the same CSB statistics; 67% of the Wg/CC candidates had been promoted at least three years early.²¹ These results illustrate the “ripple” effect discussed in the previous chapter on the management of general officers.

Role of BPZ in Selection of General/Flag Officers for Other Services

Another interesting comparison can be made between the services with regard to the role played by BPZ promotion in the selection of their general/flag officers. In the Air Force, virtually every line brigadier general (sel) has received at least one early promotion. The average

Air Force brigadier general (sel) has 24 years of TIS, 4.7 years of TIG as a colonel, and has been promoted an aggregate of three years BPZ to major, lieutenant colonel, and/or colonel.²²

The USMC promoted 12 brigadier generals during its last brigadier general promotion board. Their average brigadier general (sel) had 25.6 years of TIS and 3.3 to 4.0 years of TIG. Most telling, none of the 12 brigadier general (sels) had ever received an early promotion.²³

The average Navy rear-admiral (lower-half) had 27.5 years of TIS and 5.5 years of TIG. Approximately 55% of the officers selected for promotion to O-7 had never received an early promotion, and the remaining 45% were promoted only one-year BPZ.²⁴

Like the Air Force, the Army tends to promote most officers to brigadier general around the 24-year point. In recent years, officers selected for brigadier general had an average from 25.5 to 26.0 years of TIS and an average ranging from 4.3 to 4.6 years of TIG as a colonel.²⁵ The CY08 brigadier general promotion board selected 46 officers for promotion; 16 (35%) had never been promoted early. Another 14 had only been promoted one year early – 11 of those to colonel. Twelve of the 46 officers were two years early and only 4 had been promoted the maximum of 3 years ahead of their contemporaries.²⁶

Given the fact that the other services are faced with the same constraints in terms of MRD, how can they afford to promote on-time officers to O-7? The answer to this question can partially be explained by noting the average TIS and TIG for officers promoted by each of the services.

Air Force and Navy O-7 selects have an average of five or more years of TIG as colonels/captains. This permits promotion boards to evaluate a longer period of performance as an O-6 as a basis for promotion to O-7. Navy policy requires officers to have three years of TIG as a captain before they are eligible for promotion to flag rank. On average, the Navy promotes

officers to O-7 an average of three years later than the Air Force.²⁷ Since the Navy promotion window is later as compared to the Air Force, there is less emphasis on early promotion. This allows room for balance between BPZ and on-time officers in their flag ranks.

The Army, on the other hand, uses a 24 to 25 year TIS promotion window for promotion to brigadier general. The Army, however, allows officers to be promoted to brigadier general with less TIG than the Air Force. Army policy allows colonels to become eligible for promotion as soon as they have one year of TIG as a colonel.²⁸ Although this policy exists, the Army rarely promotes officers to brigadier general with less than four years of TIG as a colonel.

The chart below summarizes the average TIS and TIG (as an O-6) of brigadier general/rear admiral (lower half) in each of the services.

Average	Air Force	Army	Navy	Marine Corps
Time-in-Service	24.8	25.7	27.5	26.1
Time in Grade	4.7	4.4	5.5	3.8

Source: Service Specific General/Flag Officer Management Office

Table 2 Average TIS & TIG of O-7 Selects within each Service

Is the Air Force overemphasizing early promotion? Is the Air Force identifying its future leaders too early? Without a doubt, the Air Force places more emphasis on early promotion than any of the other Services.

The perception, unfortunately, is that the Air Force would rather develop a pool of BPZ colonels who have the breadth and depth of tactical and operational Air Force expertise to become Air Force general officers, rather than a pool of on-time and BPZ officers with the breadth and depth of Air Force, joint and interagency experiences to become senior leaders in the DoD. Admiral (ret) William J. Fallon, former Centcom Commander, simply stated “...most Air Force officers just don’t have the breadth and depth of joint experience necessary to seriously be

considered for senior level jobs.”²⁹ By maintaining its current promotion practice, the Air Force has created an officer corps of have and have not’s...those promoted BPZ and those who have not.

BPZ promotion has become more than a discriminator; it has become a de facto prerequisite for advancement to OG/CC, Wg/CV, Wg/CC, and promotion to brigadier general. The next chapter will discuss how each of these factors can be modified to provide an alternative approach to developing rated senior officers.

Notes

¹ Cloud, David and Greg Jaffe, *The Fourth Star* (New York City, NY: Random House, 2009), pg 84.

² Department of the Army, PAM 350-58, *Leader Development for America’s Army*, October 1994, pg 8.

³ Department of the Army, PAM 600-3, *Commissioned Officer Professional Development and Career Management*, December 2007, pg 10.

⁴ *ibid*, pg 10.

⁵ *ibid*, pg 49.

⁶ *ibid*, pg 53.

⁷ *ibid*, pg 54.

⁸ *ibid*, pg 55.

⁹ *ibid*, pg 58.

¹⁰ Department of the Navy, Flag Officer Matters interview, 21 January 2010.

¹¹ Department of the Navy, Flag Officer Matters, Flag Officer Biographies.

¹² Department of the Air Force, AF/DPO Colonel Management Office, *Spread the Word Briefing*, April 2009.

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¹⁶ Department of the Navy, HQ U.S. Marine Corps, General Officer Matters, phone interview, 25 January 2010.

¹⁷ *ibid*.

¹⁸ Department of the Navy, Flag Officer Matters, interview 21 January 2010.

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¹⁹ Department of the Army, PAM 600-3, *Commissioned Officer Professional Development and Career Management*, December 2007, pg 32.

²⁰ *ibid*, pg 32.

²¹ Department of the Air Force, AF/DPO Colonel Management Office, interview with AF/DPO leadership, 21 January 2010.

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²⁴ Department of the Navy, Flag Officer Matters, interview 21 January 2010.

²⁵ Department of the Army, *Army Knowledge on Line*, Statistics and Demographics.

²⁶ *ibid*.

²⁷ Department of the Navy, Flag Officer Matters, interview 21 January 2010.

²⁸ Department of the Army, Human Resources Branch, General Management Office, interview 20 January 2010.

²⁹ Phone interview conducted with Admiral (ret) William J. Fallon, 15 January 2010.

Chapter 9

The Way Ahead for the Air Force

“...Without sufficient broadening of perspective through educational, staff, and operational experiences, air leaders risk falling short of the necessary competencies for geographic combatant command”.¹

—Colonel Roderick C. Zastrow, U.S. Air Force
Center for a New American Security

The Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986 set the stage for joint officer development in the DoD. At the time the Act was being debated on Capitol Hill, many believed that the rhetoric referencing sweeping changes in the DoD was nothing more than political overstatement.² The Pentagon agreed. In fact, Secretary of Defense Casper Weinberger and the service chiefs resisted reorganization legislation throughout a bitter, five year battle with Congress.³ Congress won, and Goldwater-Nichols became law. Since then, the services have overcome institutional resistance to change and embraced the objectives of the Act, each doing so in its own way, and at its own pace.

Today’s new security environment poses a different sort of test because irregular warfare, with its idiosyncratic social, cultural, and time span dimensions, challenges military applications across technological-social-cultural divides. This complexity dictates the need for senior leaders who have mastered their service-related functional area and who can also adroitly operate in unstructured, dynamic environments with multiple actors and across varied physical and

cognitive domains.⁴ This statement strongly suggests that the Air Force should again adapt by implementing institutional policy and institutional changes to develop the senior leaders of tomorrow – the lieutenants and captains of today who will lead the air and joint forces within the next two decades.⁵ The author could not agree more, but the question becomes how? How does one go about instituting sweeping change in an organization that has become entrenched in service doctrine and an expert in developing the finest functional general officers in the DoD?

While the author was conducting research for this paper, it became evident that a number of experts are aware of the issues facing the DoD when it comes to developing tomorrow's joint leaders. Colonel Roderick C. Zastrow, USAF, a force planner in the Office of the Secretary of Defense for Policy, recently wrote an article for the Center for a New American Security (CNAS), titled *Strategic Leader Development from an Air Force Perspective*, where he opined that "effective strategic leaders must be cultivated through more rigorous officer education and joint assignment processes to develop broader perspectives regarding the use of force to achieve national objectives...success should not be defined simply as achievements in a single service, but rather the attainment of broader strategic competencies that permit fuller coordination across the services and agencies."⁶ Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates also agrees, commenting recently in an interview: "...all of the services have had issues pushing joint/interagency experience for their officers...adding, they tend to operate on a service-first mentality."⁷ General David Petraeus, CENTCOM Commander, echoed these sentiments, adding, "...that every Geographic Combatant Commander has had a fairly unique, often *nonstandard*, and pretty broad background of joint, interagency, and academic opportunities."⁸ The author also agrees, but again, how does the Air Force overcome the parochialism of keeping its "best and brightest" stove piped into Air Force specific jobs?

In 2007, RAND, Project Air Force completed an extensive research study on Advancing the Air Force's Force-Development Initiative.⁹ The study, conducted on behalf of the Air Force, determined there was a mismatch between the qualifications needed for key general officer positions and the available candidates' backgrounds. This mismatch stimulated an extensive Air Force effort to improve the development of senior leaders. RAND concluded that the Air Force needed to develop cohorts of senior officers – colonels and generals – who have sufficient breadth of experience for their current jobs and for the positions they may need to fill in the future.¹⁰ In order to do that, the Air Force needs to develop officers who have skills beyond their occupational specialties (primary skills), ideally a secondary set of occupational skills with the corresponding education or training. For example, a bomber pilot with a paired skill in international political military affairs would be regarded as properly qualified for twice as many general officer positions as one lacking a paired skill.¹¹ Again, the author agrees. To do this, the Air Force must consider the following: (a) re-vamping the officer development policy; (b) adjusting the promotion timing for brigadier general; (c) mandating a joint tour at the colonel level; (d) increasing advanced educational opportunities at first-rate institutions; and (e) utilizing the vice-wing commander billet as a stepping stone for wing command.

Career Progression

A constellation of new and uncertain factors are placing increasing demands on the military profession; a broadening defense mission set, the challenges of complex warfare, increasing emphasis on preventive approaches to warfare, and expanding operations into space and cyberspace domains. Simply put, a fighter pilot can no longer be just a fighter pilot...he must be receptive to a wide range of educational opportunities that broaden an officer's perspectives, and

that incorporate deliberate policy and interagency/international experiences to build mature, intellectually keen, senior leaders.¹²

Today's Air Force leader development policy is geared toward achieving a general officer timeline. Additionally, it crowds a three-command ladder of progression at the lieutenant colonel to senior colonel level typically into a six- to seven-year timeframe. This compressed command timeline, plus SDE timing, squeezes out policy development and other opportunities at the colonel level. A shift in Air Force developmental policy towards one that prioritizes the value of experience, whether in organizational or operational environments, over the focus on the position would allow greater flexibility in achieving command at the squadron, group, and wing levels.¹³ Widening the timeframe to obtain these command experiences might also introduce opportunities for colonel-level officers to obtain quality joint expertise or other necessary broadening experiences. In some officers' opinion, Air Force officers are viewed as far too technical, that we reward folks for being good operators and excellent pilots, yet we don't reward them for being radical thinkers, strategists or idea people.¹⁴

As discussed earlier, the traditional leadership model in the Air Force is spelled out in a variety of publications. In fact, it is spelled out in too many publications. Between Air Force instructions, doctrine documents, and policy directives, one has to look through a minimum of eight different publications to understand the Air Force's roadmap for officer development. The Air Force could learn a lesson from the Army and combine officer development documentation into one publication. Army Pamphlet 600-3, *Commissioned Officer Professional Development and Career Management*, may be over 450 pages in length, but at least it is the single source document for understanding officer development in the Army.

Recommendation 1: Institute a sweeping change to Air Force Officer Development Doctrine to include specific career broadening opportunities at all levels of government. Specifically, joint, interagency, and career broadening opportunities outside the Air Force, as suggested by Secretary Gates, “leadership needs to be diverse in experience.”¹⁵

Brigadier General Promotion

As stated in the introduction, the author argues that time is the most critical factor when it comes to developing senior officers. Given enough time, the Air Force can develop the “deep bench of highly skilled officers” envisioned by the Secretary of the Air Force.¹⁶ The 2007 NDAA provided the Air Force exactly what it needed when they adjusted the age requirement and MRDs for general/flag officers. Currently, the Air Force uses the 23- to 25-year TIS window for promotion to brigadier general – the 24-year point being the “heart of the envelope.” Figure 11 shows the career timeline for an officer in the rated community. On the left, an “on-time” promoted officer, and on the right, an officer who has been promoted twice-BPZ, once to lieutenant colonel and once to colonel for an aggregate of two years total BPZ.¹⁷ In order for an “on-time” officer to hit all of the “windows” – command, staff, PME – and be competitive for general officer, he/she needs 26 years of TIS. Assuming the depicted career path affords the Air Force the best opportunity to develop, educate, and train senior colonels for promotion to general officer, an officer has to be promoted a minimum of two-years BPZ to meet the 24-year promotion window.¹⁸

If the Air Force wants to build a bench of officers who are the best trained, best educated, and the most adaptive leaders in the DoD, they need to slide the “heart of the envelope” promotion window to the 26-year TIS point. Doing so, allows the Air Force to:

1. Broaden the pool of eligible officers for command at the group and/or wing level.

2. Build a pool of officers with the proper skill sets necessary to lead our Air Force into the 21st century, and not just officers who “fill squares” to get promoted BPZ.
3. Expand the eligible pool of competitive officers who can become general officers.
4. Develop a pool of officers who will be competitive for key joint billets up to the four star level.

So how can the Air Force accomplish this? The following chart depicts the average TIG and TIS (at rank pin-on) for the current core of general officers in the U.S. Air Force.

	Brigadier General (O-7)	Major General (O-8)	Lieutenant General (O-9)	General (O-10)
Time-in-Grade	3.2	2.8	3.2	2.1
Time-in-Service	24.5	27.7	30.5	33.8

Source: AF/DPG – Air Force General Officer Biographies

Table 3 Average TIG & TIS for Current USAF 4-Star General Officers

Using the average TIG chart and the current MRDs depicted in Figure 7 and applying these to an officer who is promoted to brigadier general at the 26-year TIS (assumes officer pins on his/her first-star at 26.5-years TIS) point yields the following results:

	Brigadier General (O-7)	Major General (O-8)	Lieutenant General (O-9)	General (O-10)
Time-in-Service	26.5	29.7	32.5	35.7

Source: AF/DPG – Air Force General Officer Biographies

Table 4 Average TIS for Future Air Force General Officers

In theory, it can be seen that an officer who is selected for brigadier general at the 26-year TIS point will still make a fourth star prior to the MRD of 40 years. Remember, the President of the United States can waive the retirement age of three and four-star general/flag officers, so even if an officer is promoted to a fourth star at the 36-year TIS point, a full four year tour of duty can be possible without needing a presidential waiver. Precedence has been set for the use of this waiver; in fact the Marine Corps has exercised this option twice in the past eight years.¹⁹ In reality, however, four star general officers are identified and postured for four star billets

much earlier than the 35-year TIS point. Additionally, since the majority of four star general officers serve in two four-star jobs prior to retirement, it goes without saying that, if an officer is going to “have the legs” to do this, he/she will need to race through the general officer ranks. In other words, the majority of the future four star general officers, and potential combatant commanders, will likely be promoted BPZ. But this is an acceptable practice because not all of the officers promoted to flag rank need to be promoted with the hope they will make a fourth star.

Recommendation 2: Move the push year for brigadier general from the 24-year TIS point to the 26-year TIS point. What the author does not advocate for is doing away with below-the-promotion-zone opportunities. It is a key discriminator for identifying future senior leaders, so the Air Force needs to use BPZ promotions as a way to continue promoting the “best and brightest” officers.

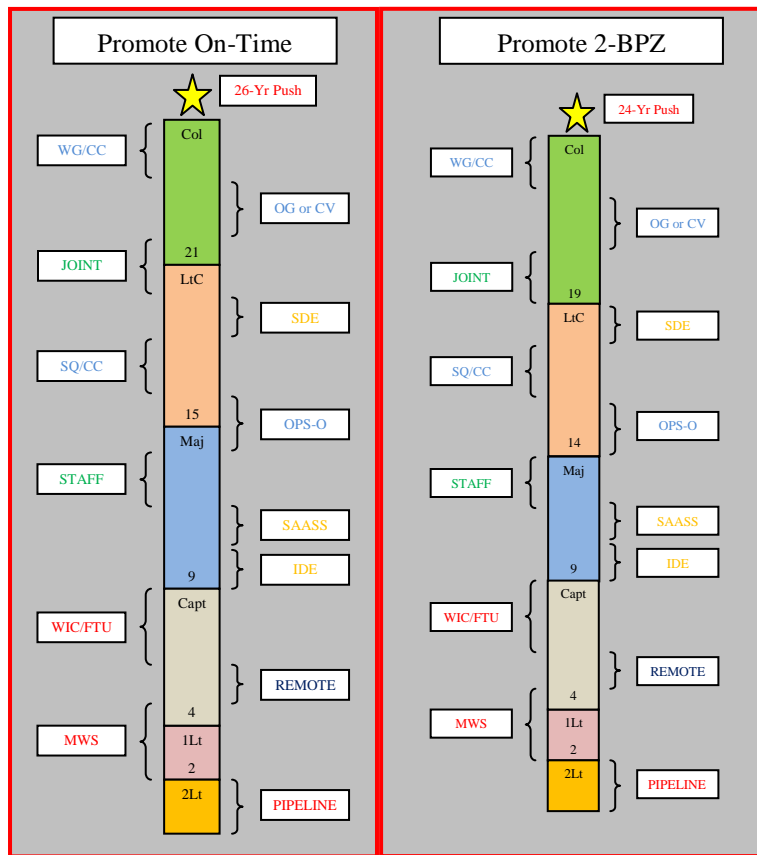


Figure 11 Promotion Timelines

Joint Duty as a Colonel

Statistically, the majority of rated senior officers complete their initial joint duty assignment while they are lieutenant colonels or even majors.²⁰ Due to the current requirement for colonels to command at both the group/vice and wing command levels, there is very little time remaining for officers to complete a joint duty assignment as a colonel. In the current construct of rated officer development, HPOs are forced to be creative when completing their joint requirement by seeking joint credit for deployments, previous operational experiences, or by only completing the minimum time requirement for a JDA.

If the Air Force wants to be serious about developing senior officers with the right skills they have to create opportunities for colonels to do a complete JDA. As Col Zastrow put it,

“...Air Force culture must evolve from one that too often treats joint assignments as experiences to be endured to one that embraces them as part of a coherent investment to broaden perspective and skills.”²¹ Col Zastrow is exactly right; one needs to get that broader perspective at the O-6 level and not the O-4 level. During a personal interview, Lieutenant General Paul J. Selva, Assistant to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, described the issue as “...a lack of building relationships with their sister counterparts at the senior level.”²² In simple terms, the Air Force just is not at the table most of the time developing the working relationships with their sister service counterparts. The Air Force needs to create officers across a wide spectrum of experiences, such as policy development, international and interagency experiences, and campaign design and planning expertise. To do this, time, especially at the colonel level, is needed.

Recommendation 3: Mandate a three-year controlled JDA or career broadening assignment for colonels.

Educational Opportunities

In the current construct of the rated community, aviators have a demanding development path that discourages any diversions from flying assignments. Attending a graduate-level civilian program would, in many cases, interrupt the current warrior-to-commander career progression.²³ Instead, the rated community opts to obtain an advanced academic degree through correspondence, and to simply fill a “square” to get promoted. In fact, the majority of rated officers receive master’s degrees in subject areas that are of little or no benefit to the Air Force. Another deterrent for some officers seeking an advanced academic degree is the Air Force’s policy on masking advanced degrees on promotion boards. Over the past decade, the Air Force has reversed its policy of masking advanced academic degrees on promotion boards (primarily

the major's board) a couple of times. So is an advanced academic degree important or not? The author would argue that it absolutely is. It is important for both the good of the officer and the Air Force. These policy reversals, unfortunately, only highlight the Air Force's unwillingness to put the necessary importance on receiving an advanced academic degree.

To highlight this fact, a biographical review of the three- and four-star Air Force officers reveals that none hold degrees from tier-one educational institutions.²⁴ As a result, the long-term benefit of obtaining advanced academic degrees at tier-one civilian institutions like Harvard, Georgetown, or Princeton will require a substantial change to the rated career track. According to Dr. Thomas P. Ehrhard, Special Assistant to the Chief of Staff of the Air Force, "the Air Force should consider an increased emphasis on graduate education among its general officers...very few hold advanced degrees in science and engineering, business administration, or international relations – all keys to integrating the major strategic aspects of air and space power."²⁵

On a positive note, the Air Force Fellows program provides an outstanding SDE opportunity for field grade officers to study at tier-one institutions. The Fellows program, an extremely selective academic program, selects highly qualified officers to study the art of national strategy and policy at tier-one academic institutions as a National Defense, National Security or Secretary of Defense Fellow. And because of the selectivity of program, many of the officers who have served as Fellows have gone on to become senior leaders. To illustrate this point, eight of the 23 Air Force brigadier general's recently nominated for promotion to major general (FY09 promotion board) were alumni of the Air Force Fellow's program.²⁶ Although the Fellows program is a great opportunity for officers to get exposure to tier-one institutions, it does not provide an advanced academic degree.

As an example of what can be done, General David H. Petraeus, CENTCOM Commander, and arguably the brightest military officer of modern times, has an extensive academic background. He has a bachelor of science degree from the U.S. Military Academy; an M.P.A. degree and a Ph.D. degree in International Relations from the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs at Princeton University; he completed a fellowship at Georgetown University; was the General George C. Marshall Award winner as the top graduate of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College; and served as Assistant Professor of International Relations at the U.S. Military Academy. And he accomplished it all before he pinned on his first-star at the 26-and-a-half year point.²⁷

The Air Force has to invest in alternative educational opportunities to strengthen strategic leader perspective, and get away from the “pay your fee, get your degree” mentality while filling a “square” along the way. In the rated community, this is a significant challenge, but it can be done, and it has to be done.

Recommendation 4: Send selected rated officers to tier-one civilian academic institutions after completing IDE. Additionally, do not mask advanced academic degrees of any kind, on any promotion board.

Command Opportunities

The current command construct for officers in the rated community is heavily weighted at the lieutenant colonel and colonel ranks. For the majority of rated aviators, command at any level is a highlight in their career. Unfortunately, not everyone will command a squadron, group or wing, and, with a limited number of command billets available, the competition for these opportunities is extremely intense. For example, less than 6% of the command opportunities in the Air Force are at the wing level.²⁸ Given the small number of command opportunities, the Air

Force needs to ensure that command tours for O-5s and O-6s at the squadron, group, and wing level are 18-24 months (plus or minus two-months). Currently, the Air Force policy is along this line, but exceptions can be made for the good of the Air Force or the officer.²⁹

One of the most significant changes made to the CSB in recent years has been adding the Wg/CV billet to the board process. The Wg/CV position is a key leadership billet for developing future leaders. Whereas in the past a Wg/CV assignment was seen as a signal that an officer was no longer competitive for further advancement, today the Wg/CV billet is seen as a stepping stone for wing command. Since wing commanders spend a significant portion of their time away from their wings attending conferences, management level review boards, promotion boards, etc., the vice-wing commander spends a large portion of his/her time running the wing. The challenge however, is that the vice-wing commander billet is not a controlled tour. It is typically seen by AF/DPO as an opportunity to “fill a command billet” for an HPO who can accomplish a 12-month Wg/CV tour and then move on to a wing command or other high-value opportunity. Some may see this as less than optimal, but it does give a future senior leader the opportunity to understand how a wing operates prior to taking a command.

The issue of command timing really arises at the squadron level. The current career path in the rated community suggests that an officer spends two years as a squadron operations officer and another two years as a squadron commander. Since time is precious in an aviator’s career, the author suggests we take the Navy “fleet up” approach for squadron command. The Navy hires flying squadron commanders directly into operations officer billets with the understanding that they will spend one year as an operations officer and then “fleet up” to squadron command a year later to complete a one-year command tour. Although there are benefits to the concept, mainly time and command opportunity, the turmoil of constant turnover outweigh those benefits.

There is a compromise, however, and that compromise is to “fleet up” to an 18-month command tour after serving 18 months as an operations officer. At the colonel (O-6) level, command is paramount. The current system advocates a two-year tour as a group commander and two-years as a wing commander. Although the vice wing commander billet is a tremendous proving ground for a future wing commander, the tour length is typically only one year.

Recommendation 5: Adopt a modified Navy model of “fleet up” command at the squadron commander level. Mandate two-year controlled tours for group, vice, and wing commanders and continue to utilize the vice wing commander billet for preparing competitive officers for wing command billets.

An Alternative Career Path

Based on the recommendations above, an alternative career path for the rated community might look like the career path depicted in Figure 12. It takes into account the need to develop, groom, train, and educate officers who become competitive for key senior joint opportunities.

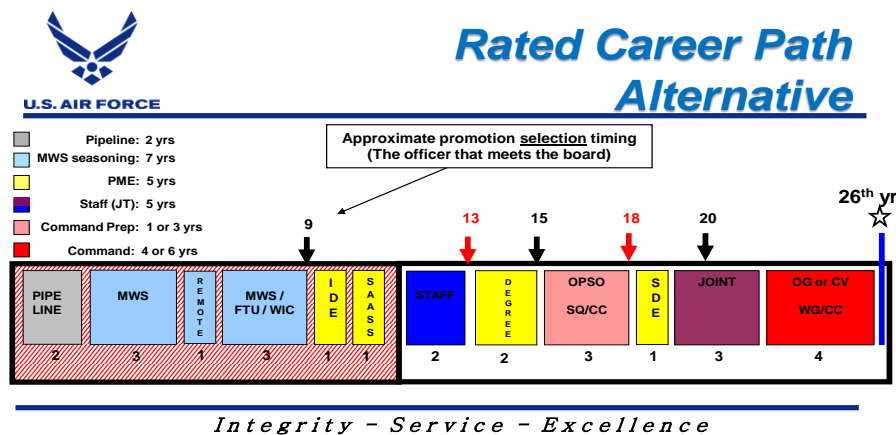


Figure 12 “Alternative” Rated Community Career Path

In summary, the Air Force has the opportunity today to make significant changes to the officer development model currently being practiced. The question is whether or not the Air Force is willing to make the investment today for the future of our Air Force. What the author is not suggesting, however, is that the experience garnered as a colonel is more important than the time spent as a general officer. What is being suggested is that the Air Force needs to better utilize the time as a colonel to better educate and develop future general officers. Let's face it, although there are plenty of development opportunities for general officers, the foundation for success is established at the company and field-grade ranks. General officers do not have extra time on their hands to spend months in academic institutions, or developmental programs to make them better officers. The other services have had tremendous success developing their general/flag officers to be combatant commanders and doing so without promoting them to the general/flag ranks at the 24-year TIS point. As an institution, the Air Force needs to look beyond the fighter pilot mentality of "flexibility is the key to air power" and instead, embrace the notion that "flexibility is the key to airmen development." Senior leaders in today's Air Force do an exceptional job forecasting equipment requirements 10, 15 or even 25 years down the road, but do we project the same with our officer corps? What will the officer of the year 2025 look like? Are we developing officers with the appropriate competency skills today to meet our needs for tomorrow? We have that opportunity today...but it will take time...time to properly train, educate, and develop the "best and brightest" senior officers in the DoD.

Notes

¹ Nagl, Dr. John A. and Brian M. Burton, *Keeping the Edge: Revitalizing America's Military Officer Corps*, (Washington DC: Center for a New American Society, 2010), pg 52.

Notes

² Locher III, James R., “Goldwater-Nichols Act – 10 Years Later” *JFQ* (Autumn 1996), pg 10.

³ *ibid*, pg 10.

⁴ Nagl, Dr. John A. and Brian M. Burton, *Keeping the Edge: Revitalizing America’s Military Officer Corps*, (Washington DC: Center for a New American Society, 2010), pg 51.

⁵ *ibid*, pg 51.

⁶ *ibid*, pg 17.

⁷ Gates, Honorable Robert M., Secretary of Defense, Interview conducted 17 February 2010.

⁸ Petraeus, General David, e-mail correspondence, 1 April 2010.

⁹ Moore, S. Craig and Marygail K. Brauner, *Advancing the U.S. Air Force’s Force-Development Initiatives* (Santa Monica, CA: Project Air Force, RAND Corporation, 2007)

¹⁰ *ibid*, pg 17.

¹¹ *ibid*, pg 18.

¹² *ibid*, pg 57.

¹³ *ibid*, pg 57.

¹⁴ Phone interview conducted with Lt. General Paul J. Selva, ACJCS, 18 February 2010.

¹⁵ Gates, Honorable Robert M., Secretary of Defense, Interview conducted 17 February 2010.

¹⁶ Donley, Honorable Michael B., Secretary of the Air Force, Interview conducted 22 January 2010.

¹⁷ Current policy is that an officer has an opportunity to be promoted a total of four years BPZ, two-years to lieutenant colonel and two-years to colonel.

¹⁸ The author would argue that the depicted career path is a minimum number of career opportunities needed to develop an officer with the broad prospective necessary to command joint forces at the senior officer ranks.

¹⁹ Department of the Navy, HQ U.S. Marine Corps, General Officer Matters, phone interview, 25 January 2010.

²⁰ Department of the Air Force, AF/DPO Colonel Management Office, *Spread the Word Briefing*, April 2009.

²¹ Dr. John A. and Brian M. Burton, *Keeping the Edge: Revitalizing America’s Military Officer Corps*, (Washington DC: Center for a New American Society, 2010), pg 55.

²² Telephone interview conducted with Lt General Paul Silva, Assistant to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 18 February 2010.

²³ Dr. John A. and Brian M. Burton, *Keeping the Edge: Revitalizing America’s Military Officer Corps*, (Washington DC: Center for a New American Society, 2010), pg 56.

²⁴ Ehrhard, Thomas P., *An Air Force Strategy for the Long Haul* (Washington DC, Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, 2009), pg 57.

²⁵ *ibid*, pg 57.

²⁶ Department of the Air Force, AF/DPG, General Officers Management Office, Senior Leader Announcement, 13 April 2010.

²⁷ Department of the Army, Human Resource Command, General Officer Management Office, General Officer Biographies.

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²⁸ Department of the Air Force, AF/DPO Colonel Management Office, *Spread the Word Briefing*, April 2009.

²⁹ Department of the Air Force, Air Force Personnel Center, Command Policy and Directive.

Chapter 10

Conclusion

“The Air Force has a lot to do to broaden their experience...other services start earlier in preparing their officers for joint positions; the Air Force tends to make Airmen”¹

—The Honorable Gordon R. England
Former Deputy Secretary of Defense

Command is the pinnacle of any officer’s career. Historically however, very few officers will get the opportunity to lead soldiers, sailors, airmen or marines in combat. Today, Air Force general officers hold four of the 10 geographic and functional combatant command billets, a feat that was not seen in the first 24 years after the inception of the Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986. But if the past is destined to repeat itself, the influence the Air Force has at the combatant commander level will soon fade.

Developing senior leaders starts the day of commissioning and ends with mandatory retirement. Current Air Force policy is that, the more time an officer spends at or below the rank of colonel, the less time he/she can spend in the general officer ranks. In an effort to develop younger general officers, the Air Force has elected to emphasize early promotion as a means of addressing this dilemma. The Air Force thought process is that, by creating a larger pool of brigadier generals who have been promoted several years ahead of their contemporaries, the Air Force has more contenders for the most senior joint billets. This practice is deep in theory, but

short in practicality. Statistically, if one counts the total quantity of Air Force general officers in joint billets, the Air Force would score well. The Air Force, however, scores poorly when the quality of the critical joint positions currently held by Air Force general officers is taken into consideration.² For example, the Air Force does not hold any of the three-Star Joint Staff directorate billets within the Joint Staff, but yet it represents 35% of the one-star deputy directorate positions.³ This is a trend at the three star level the Air Force needs to correct.

A natural tension has always existed between the need to develop future joint leaders with sufficient breadth, while also ensuring the appropriate depth and freshness of operational experience to be a credible commander in a flying organization.⁴ In some cases, officer's progress through the ranks so rapidly that he/she loses the opportunity to develop the appropriate depth of operational experience needed to maintain operational credibility as a commander of a flying organization. This scenario is not in the best interest of the Air Force, the flying organization, or the officer. Additionally, it is in stark contrast to the practices of our sister services, in which operational leadership and development are exercised by "time in the seat" and not just an opportunity to "fill a square" and move up.

While the other services are faced with similar time constraints, they place considerably less emphasis on early promotion and more emphasis on developing operational expertise. The composition of their general/flag officer cadre represents a balance of on-time and BPZ officers.

Those who are critical of the current process for identifying future leaders tend to disparage the promotion system. The promotion system, however, is not the problem.⁵ Promotion boards and the BPZ promotion system are extremely fair. Only a small number of officers can be promoted early, and the boards do an excellent job of identifying some of the "best and brightest" officers for BPZ promotion. The Air Force needs to continue to use BPZ promotions,

along with other discriminators, as a means for identifying future senior joint leaders. While those promoted BPZ are clearly outstanding officers, the BPZ system should be kept in perspective...one should not assume that officers who are not promoted BPZ are incapable of becoming outstanding general/flag officers. In today's complex environment, there is something to be said for both breadth and depth of experience that comes with an officer who has spent some time in the trenches...the factor, however, is time.

The recent change in the MRDs for three- and four-star generals/admirals provides an opportunity for the Air Force to review the relative importance of BPZ promotion in creating and developing senior joint leaders. It is conceivable the Air Force could move toward a better mix between on-time and BPZ officers in its general officer corps. Simply put, not all general officers need to be groomed for four-star billets. It should also be borne in mind that over one-third of the Navy, Marine Corps and Army one-star lists are populated with on-time officers. By having a bench of senior officers who have both the breadth and depth of experience necessary to be senior joint leaders, the Air Force will fulfill its goal of developing a pool officers who are strategically minded critical thinkers.

The recommendations discussed in the previous chapter are nothing new to the Air Force. In fact, similar recommendations were made by senior officers in the past. Recently, the Air Force put together the Force Management Development Council (FMDC), led by the Vice-Chief of Staff of the Air Force, with participants from the other services, RAND, OSD, AF/DPG, AF/DPO, and retired four-star advisors to take a close look at developing senior leaders in the Air Force. Although the issue is complex, they understand the dilemma and are taking the appropriate steps to address the issue. The FMDC understands that it is not about developing airmen to fill joint assignments; it is about developing officers to think and execute at operational

and strategic levels of leadership across the DoD enterprise.⁶ According to Colonel Thomas Sharpy, Director, Air Force General Officers Management Office (GOMO) “...General Schwartz, Chief of Staff of the Air Force, puts a premium on jointness...in fact, 85% of our efforts in GOMO are put toward building the joint fight and ensuring we have a general officer corps that is qualified to be three and four-star leaders in the joint community.”⁷

The author believes the overall objective of officer development is not to create the next Central Command Commander, or even the next Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; it is simply to develop senior officers with the breadth of joint leader competencies intertwined with Air Force-unique institutional competencies that will lead joint operations into the 21st century. The Air Force’s future cannot be outsourced, nor can it be led by touch-and-go-operators. It must come from a cultivated line of experts.⁸

Today, the Air Force has a unique opportunity to take a page from our sister services play book and make a mid-course correction. These corrections do not have to be drastic either, especially in today’s politically sensitive environment. Also considering that the Air Force’s reputation right now is not as stellar as it has been, a “walk before you run” approach may be appropriate. The Air Force can no longer continue to think that airpower, in and of itself, will win conflicts. The Air Force has always claimed that flexibility is the key to airpower. But today, more than ever, flexibility has to be the key to joint development. In an era of jointness, it is surprising to see such dramatic differences between force development/senior officer management policies and those of the other services when the underlying challenge for all of the services is the same: grooming joint leaders today who will lead tomorrow’s joint force.

Notes

¹ Archer, Colonel Stu, *The Next Horizon: Air Force leadership of Geographic Combatant Commands* (Maxwell AFB, AL: Air War College, Air University, 2008), pg 40.

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³ Department of Defense, Joint Staff Key Leadership website.

⁴ Evans, Lt Col Carl D., *Growing Tomorrow's Leaders in Today's Environment* (Maxwell AFB, AL: Air War College, Air University, 1998), pg 69.

⁵ *ibid*, pg 70.

⁶ Department of the Air Force, AF/A1D, staff interview 21 January 2010.

⁷ Department of the Air Force, AF/DPG, General Officers Management Office staff interview, 21 January 2010.

⁸ Ehrhard, Thomas P., *An Air Force Strategy for the Long Haul* (Washington DC, Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, 2009), pg 51.

Glossary

ACIP	Aviation Career Incentive Pay
ACJCS	Assistant to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff
ACSC	Air Command and Staff College
AF	Air Force
AFDD	Air Force Doctrine Document
AF/DPG	Air Force General Officer Management Office
AF/DPO	Air Force Colonel Management Office
AFI	Air Force Instruction
AFIT	Air Force Institute of Technology
AFPC	Air Force Personnel Center
AFPD	Air Force Policy Directive
AOWC	Advanced Operations and Warfighting Course
APZ	Above-the-Promotion Zone
ARC	Air Reserve Component
AS	Aviation Service
AU	Air University
AWC	Air War College
BPZ	Below-the-Promotion Zone
Brigadier general (O-7)	Brigadier general
CADRE	College of Aerospace Doctrine, Research and Education
Capt (O-3)	Captain
CCAF	Community College of the Air Force
CCJO	Capstone Concept for Joint Operations
CENTCOM	Central Command
CGDOR	Current Grade Date of Rank
CGSC	Command and General Staff College
CJCS	Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff
CNAS	Center for a New American Security
COCOM	Combatant Commander
CoL	Continuum of Learning
Col (O-6)	Colonel
COS	Critical Occupational Specialties
CSAF	Chief of Staff of the Air Force
CSB	Command Screening Board
CY	Calendar Year

DoD	Department of Defense
DoDI	Department of Defense Instruction
E-JDA	Experienced Joint Duty Assignment
FO	Flag Officer
FD	Force Development
GEN (O-10)	General
GO	General Officer
GOMO	General Officers Management Office
HAF	Headquarters Air Force
HQ	Headquarters
HRC	Human Resource Command
ICL	Institutional Competency List
IDE	Intermediate Developmental Education
IF	Intensity Factor
ILE	Intermediate Level Education
IPZ	In-the-Promotion Zone
JCS	Joint Chiefs of Staff
JDA	Joint Duty Assignment
JDAL	Joint Duty Assignment List
JFACC	Joint Force Air and Space Component Commander
JIIM	Joint Interagency Intergovernmental Multinational
JIT	Joint Individual Training
JPME	Joint Professional Military Education
JQO	Joint Qualified Officer
JQS	Joint Qualified System
JTF	Joint Task Force
JOD	Joint Officer Development
JOM	Joint Officer Management
Lt (O-1/2)	Lieutenant
Lt Col (O-5)	Lieutenant Colonel
Lt Gen (O-9)	Lieutenant General
Maj (O-4)	Major
MAJCOM	Major Command
Maj Gen (O-8)	Major General
ML	Management Level
MRD	Mandatory Retirement Date

MWS	Major Weapons System
NAF	Numbered Air Force
NDAAs	National Defense Authorization Act
OG	Operations Group
OG/CC	Operations Group Commander
OPD	Officer Professional Development
OPSO	Operations Officer
OSD	Office of the Secretary of Defense
PERSCOM	Army Personnel Command
PME	Professional Military Education
ROTC	Reserve Officer Training Course
SAASS	School of Advanced Air and Space Studies
SDE	Senior Developmental Education
SECDEF	Secretary of Defense
SEL	Select
S-JDA	Standard Joint Duty Assignment
SQ/CC	Squadron Commander
TAFSC	Total Active Federal Commissioned Service
TIG	Time in Grade
TIS	Time in Service
USA	United States Army
USAF	United States Air Force
USC	United States Code
USC Title X	United States Code Title 10
USMC	United States Marine Corps
USN	United States Navy
Wg/CC	Wing Commander
Wg/CV	Vice-Wing Commander
XO	Battalion Executive Officer

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