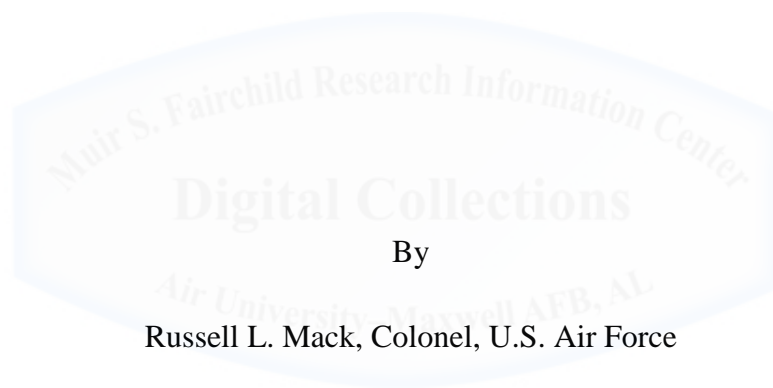


AIR FORCE FELLOWS

AIR UNIVERSITY

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



By

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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 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 sub-unified, functional or geographic combatant command is the capstone of a military career. Currently, Air Force general officers hold four of the 10 sub-unified, functional and geographic combatant commander billets. Throughout military history, Air Force general officers have occupied only a small number of critical joint positions, especially combatant commanders. Since the National Security Act of 1947, a total of 129 four-star general 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

Breaking down the 129 total commanders, the Army has had 51 (primarily Central, European, and Southern Commands), the Navy 49 (primarily in the Pacific), the Marines nine, and the Air Force 20 (primarily Transportation and Strategic Commands) selected. It is important, however, to point out that the Army has been the “boots on the ground” and have dominated the greater part of the strategic environment over the past 20 years (Table 1). Thus, the fundamental problem the Air Force faces 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.³

There is certainly no doubt in anyone’s mind that future military operations around the world will be conducted as “joint” operations, and in partnership with our joint/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.⁴ 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*.⁵ With this definition in mind, it assumes the joint force will retain two of its main strengths:⁶

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.⁷ Although important to all four services,

this assumption is particularly critical to the Air Force. Why? In the author's opinion, because the Air Force spends less time becoming familiar with their service partners and their service capabilities, they lack a full understanding of their ideas and strategies. With a better understanding, Air Force officers may be more competitive as future combatant commanders.

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."⁸ The historical 1986 Goldwater-Nichols DoD Reorganization Act gave the DoD the guidance they needed to build today's joint force and implement 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."⁹ Today's joint leaders must be strategically minded, critical thinkers, and skilled joint warfighters who can lead a complex joint force into the future. 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."¹⁰ Today, this means having officers with a breadth of staff experience, and the necessary operational credibility in a complex and dynamic joint warfighting environment.

From an Air Force perspective, if the objective is to produce the largest possible bench 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 institutional Air Force needs to explore a couple of options. First, provide additional 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.¹¹ Second, the Air Force needs to re-evaluate the career development model 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.¹² 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”.¹³ Air Force General Gregory S. Martin, former Air Force Material Command Commander, echoes these sentiments stating, “it is critical for the Air Force to broaden officers beyond the tactical and operational levels.”¹⁴ Additionally, understanding ground centric operations and the type of counterinsurgency warfare that has dominated U.S. military operations this past decade is also vital. Thus, the recent experiences of Airmen in Iraq and Afghanistan should go a long way toward building the foundation of air, space and cyber-space warriors armed with the required skill-sets. Although this combat experience is important to grooming future joint officers, additional time must still be allocated for officers to receive the training and education necessary to be competitive candidates for joint command positions.

The author would argue that the most critical element 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.¹⁵ 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.¹⁶ Now, there may be valid reasons for the lack of Air Force visibility in these key combatant commander or directorate billets which include:¹⁷

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.

Although compelling, these reasons fail to address the inadequate amount of time spent at the lieutenant colonel and colonel level fully developing joint officers - a time critical for properly grooming senior leaders for key joint staff billets.

Unfortunately, the Air Force is notorious for placing their “bright and shiny” officers into key joint billets and then moving them at the earliest possible opportunity...22-months minimum by law. The Air Force then adds insult to injury by constantly asking that the joint organizations allow 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 18-20 months in the joint billet while their Army, Navy, and Marine Corps partners will occupy the job

for a full 36 plus months. This *dynamic* kills our credibility and reputation as joint warriors. Thus, it is no surprise that Air Force officers have not done as well 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 the “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 Thomas P. Ehrhard, *An Air Force Strategy for the Long Haul* (Washington DC, Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, 2009), pg 57.

⁴ Chairman of the Joint Chief of Staff, *CJCS Vision for Joint Officer Development*, November 2005, pg 2.

⁵ *ibid*, pg 1.

⁶ *ibid*, pg 1.

⁷ *ibid*, pg 1.

⁸ Thomas P. Ehrhard, *An Air Force Strategy for the Long Haul* (Washington DC, Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, 2009), pg 57.

⁹ Chairman of the Joint Chief of Staff, *CJCS Vision for Joint Officer Development*, November 2005, pg 2.

¹⁰ Rebecca Grant, “Why Airman Don’t Command” *Air Force Magazine* (March 2008), pg 49.

¹¹ Thomas P. Ehrhard, *An Air Force Strategy for the Long Haul* (Washington DC, Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, 2009), pg 57.

¹² *ibid*, pg 57.

¹³ 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.

¹⁴ Phone interview conducted with Air Force General Gregory S. Martin, 5 January 2010.

¹⁵ Department of the Air Force, AF/DPO Colonel Management Office, *Spread the Word Briefing*, April 2009.

Notes

¹⁶ Department of Defense, Director of Joint Staff, Joint General Officer Management Office.

¹⁷ 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/combatant commander 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 prerequisites required to become a future Air Force leader – 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 Washington DC tour, and selection for early promotion – and the impact these prerequisites have on the officer development model. Chapter 7 will describe how these six prerequisites tie to the promotion of Air Force general officers and how critical early promotion is to 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 they were concerned with the excessive power and influence the four services had, which hindered the integration of their separate service 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..²

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..³

The Act centralized operational authority through the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs as opposed to the individual 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. More importantly, it brought together individual services into a joint warfighting organization that was meant to be a force multiplier necessary to meet today's complex threat..⁴

With its desire to create a more appropriate balance between joint and service interests, Congress declared eight purposes for the Act..⁵

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 purpose of this research, the most significant proposal outlined above is the improvement of the joint officer management policies, which is spelled 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 a career ender, 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.”⁶ Congress, however, had a different view. They believed that the Joint Staff and headquarters staffs of unified commands were the most important military staffs within the DoD. They also found the situation described above inexcusable, thus, Title IV of the Act established procedures for the selection, education, assignment, and promotion of joint duty officers.

Obviously, 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.”⁷

The services were also concerned and pushed back on the idea of a joint officer personnel system because they felt they would lose absolute control of officer promotions and assignments, but more importantly, it would weaken their control 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.”⁸

The joint officer requirements, and standards prescribed by the Act have made a difference in the quality of the officer 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.”⁹ 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.”¹⁰

Although the services implemented the joint officer provisions directed by the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) and the Joint Staff differently, positive results were achieved. Now, some 25 years after the enactment of the Goldwater-Nichols Act, the DoD, specifically the Air Force, is still grappling with the idea of managing joint officers. The Goldwater-Nichols Act’s objective of improving joint officer management policies has been achieved, but some would argue that the Air Force still lacks a vision for implementing the development of their joint officers. 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.”¹¹

Joint Development

Fighting jointly did not happen overnight, but it did come together in the U.S. military in the early 1990s. Since 1991, the success in Iraq, Bosnia, and Afghanistan has highlighted the effectiveness of the joint military force and its incredible 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 1986.¹²

Defining Joint and Joint Matters

For research purposes, “joint” is defined as 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.¹³

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.¹⁴ This incredible responsibility is carried out by maintaining a highly-technical and unmatched military capable of deterring war in the most contested environments known, and 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.¹⁵ In order to achieve this, our military must evolve into a force that thinks more critically, is more strategically minded, and is the most skilled joint warfighting force. Our military, now and in the future, will only work as a joint/combined force to quickly plan, and adjust to any situation with devastating 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.¹⁶

All of the services and the national command structure recognize the need for “jointness” to maximize force capabilities. The National Security Strategy, the National Defense Strategy, and the National Military Strategy advocate joint operations in everything that we accomplish. A recurring theme throughout, however, is the need for military personnel to be trained, educated, experienced, and qualified in joint operations. Therefore, the strategic connection between the mission and the vision of the DoD for developing their joint personnel is paramount.

Strategic Objectives

Although the DoD has made great strides in achieving the original objectives identified in the Act, there is still work to be done. They recognize the need to modernize the current joint management processes to facilitate a responsive joint qualified officer construct to meet the ever-changing challenges of today and tomorrow’s 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.¹⁷

<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. ¹⁸	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. ¹⁹
Develop a pool of fully qualified and inherently joint leaders for promotion to general/flag officer rank. ²⁰	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 adjust DoD's philosophy on joint officer development. Overcoming the complex and evolving global security challenges facing the United States today 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 2016-2028.²¹ While the purpose of the CCJO is to lead force development, it is assumed within this purpose that the leaders of the CCJO-envisioned force must also be 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.²² 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.²³

The primary objective of JOD outlined by the CJCS provided the impetus for instrumental changes in how the DoD will develop joint leaders of the CCJO-envisioned force. The

chairman's vision was intended to guide the development of strategies and approaches that, in turn, will produce the senior 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 bench of fully qualified joint officers suitable for joint command and staff responsibilities. The center point for that development will be high potential joint colonels and captains (O-6s). The chairman's vision for JOD ensures that all O-6s are highly 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 officer.²⁴

- *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.

Service leader competencies will vary by service component, but how officers are developed will be 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..²⁵

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.²⁶ Performance and potential is the cornerstone 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 must be addressed to ensure it produces high-quality joint officers. With that in mind, the chairman's vision established a joint learning continuum of four interdependent supporting pillars. These pillars are:²⁷

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

Essential in the joint learning continuum is the establishment of a variety of ways to attain the JOD's primary 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.²⁸ 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 joint requirements.

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.²⁹

- *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.³⁰

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.³¹

Services Responsibilities Regarding Joint Officer Development

As stated earlier, the key joint principal is: *joint officers are built on Service officers.*³² While the CCJO clearly recognizes the value of service diversity as a strength and enabler of the joint force, warriors today join a specific service and not the joint/combined force. Therefore, in a macro 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 requires the services to reward (through promotions and increased responsibilities) those officers who demonstrate the desired joint leader competencies. 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."³³ The next chapter will outline the requirements for "becoming joint" in today's strategic environment.

Notes

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

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 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.

⁴ 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.

⁵ James R. Locher III, "Goldwater-Nichols Act – 10 Years Later" *JFQ* (Autumn 1996), pg 11.

⁶ *ibid*, pg 14.

⁷ *ibid*, pg 15.

⁸ *ibid*, pg 15.

⁹ *ibid*, pg 15.

¹⁰ *ibid*, pg 15.

¹¹ Phone interview conducted with Air Force Lieutenant General Paul J. Selva, 18 February 2010.

¹² 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

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¹³ Department of Defense, DODI 1300.19, *DOD Joint Officer Management Program*, 21 August 2008, pg 12.

¹⁴ Department of Defense, *National Defense Strategy*, June 2008, pg 6.

¹⁵ Department of Defense, *Strategic Plan for Joint Officer Management and Joint Professional Military Education*, 3 April 2006, pg 3.

¹⁶ *ibid*, pg 3.

¹⁷ *ibid*, pg 8.

¹⁸ Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, *CJCS Vision for Joint Officer Development*, November 2005, pg 3.

¹⁹ *ibid*, Appendix B.

²⁰ 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.

²¹ Department of Defense, *Capstone Concept for Joint Operations, Version 3.0*, 15 January 2009, pg iii.

²² Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, *CJCS Vision for Joint Officer Development*, November 2005, pg iv.

²³ 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.

²⁴ Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, *CJCS Vision for Joint Officer Development*, November 2005, pg 2.

²⁵ *ibid*, pg 3.

²⁶ *ibid*, pg 5.

²⁷ *ibid*, pg 5.

²⁸ Department of Defense, *Capstone Concept for Joint Operations, Version 3.0*, 15 January 2009, pg iii.

²⁹ *ibid*, pg 28.

³⁰ *ibid*, pg 28.

³¹ *ibid*, pg 28.

³² Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, *CJCS Vision for Joint Officer Development*, November 2005, pg 9.

³³ 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 is outlined in Title IV of the Act and can be broken down into three categories: the establishment of joint positions; the creation of a bench of officers with joint education and experience; and the connections between promotion and joint experience.

Establishing the Joint Duty Assignment

The Joint Officer Personnel Policy 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: the Standard-JDA (S-JDA) and the Experience-based JDA (E-JDA). Additionally, the Joint Duty Assignment List (JDAL) is a list of permanent joint positions comprised from the consolidated list of S-JDAs. Over the years, the JDAL is updated as new requirements are identified and others eliminated. The current JDAL contains 11,218 joint billets shared among the services, with the Air Force holding 3,600 of the positions.³ Unfortunately, of these 3,600 billets, the Air Force is only filling approximately 70% of their

total requirements.⁴ 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 development of a bench of officers with joint education and experience. To accomplish this, the DoD created the JQS. This is a multi-level system, for all officers of the active and reserve components, which combines joint experiences, (S-JDA or E-JDA) with 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.⁵ 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.⁶ The JQS consists of four different levels of joint qualification with each requiring a minimum number of accumulated joint points and the requisite JPME. The four levels of joint qualification criteria are depicted in Figure 2 below.⁷

Joint qualification can be obtained two ways: The traditional method through which the majority of officers will complete an S-JDA; and the non-traditional joint experience path where 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 and 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 38 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.⁸ 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.⁹ 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.¹⁰ 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) to receive full joint credit in 22 months.

Designated Military Occupational Specialties

Title 10 U.S.C., Section 664(d) acknowledged that the completion of a 36-month joint tour was not always realistic for those in warfighting specialties.¹¹ Therefore, 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.”¹² 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:¹³

- 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 equality for officers in joint billets. In order to improve the caliber of officers assigned to joint billets, Congress created a direct connection between a joint duty assignment and the officer promotion system.

Specifically, 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 (JQO).”¹⁴ As a result, this provision required potential O-7s to complete a JDA prior to promotion.¹⁵ For the four Services, especially the Air Force, this was a paradigm shift in the development of senior officers. Historically, the Services were able to promote officers to O-7 without being a JQO because of a provision in the law that allowed the Services to waive the requirement to be a JQO prior to promotion.¹⁶ In essence, the waiver allowed the Services to skip a critical phase in the development of future brigadier generals...development in the joint arena.

Additionally, Title 10, U.S.C., Section 662, required the services to compare promotion rates of JQO's with those who were not, and to break down the promotion statistics within each promotion zone for all selected field grade officers.¹⁷ In simple terms, Congress determined the promotion policy objectives for joint officers to ensure that the qualifications of those officers assigned to joint duty assignments are such that:¹⁸

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 “best and brightest” and 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 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 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, Joint Staff, J-1 Division.

⁵ Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, CJCSI 1330.05, *Joint Officer Management Program Procedures*, 1 May 2008, pg GL-II-3.

⁶ Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, CJCSI 1330.05, *Joint Officer Management Program Procedures*, 1 May 2008, pg GL-II-3.

⁷ Department of Defense, DODI 1300.19, *DOD Joint Officer Management Program*, 21 August 2008, pg 25.

⁸ *ibid*, pg B-5.

⁹ *ibid*, pg B-5.

¹⁰ *ibid*, pg GL-II-7.

¹¹ Evans, Lt Col Carl D., *Growing Tomorrow's Leaders in Today's Environment* (Maxwell AFB, AL: Air War College, Air University, 1998), pg 20.

¹² Department of Defense, DODI 1300.19, *DOD Joint Officer Management Program*, 21 August 2008, pg K-1.

¹³ Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, CJCSI 1330.05, *Joint Officer Management Program Procedures*, 1 May 2008, pg K-1.

¹⁴ United States Code, *Title 10 – Armed Forces*, (Washington DC: United States Government Printing Office, 5 January 2009) Section 619a.

¹⁵ Evans, Lt Col Carl D., *Growing Tomorrow's Leaders in Today's Environment* (Maxwell AFB, AL: Air War College, Air University, 1998), pg 21-22.

¹⁶ *ibid*, pg 21-22.

¹⁷ *ibid*, pg 22.

¹⁸ United States Code, *Title 10 – Armed Forces*, (Washington DC: United States Government Printing Office, 5 January 2009) 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 a number of career specialties in the Air Force, the emphasis of this paper will be limited to an evaluation 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 combat 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, and produces a total force – active duty, Air National Guard (ANG), Air Reserve Component (ARC), and our Air Force civilians – 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.”² Specifically, the program:³

- 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.⁴

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 1-1* are tactical, operational, and strategic. Each level requires a different mix of competencies and experience, and is described below.⁵

- 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:⁶

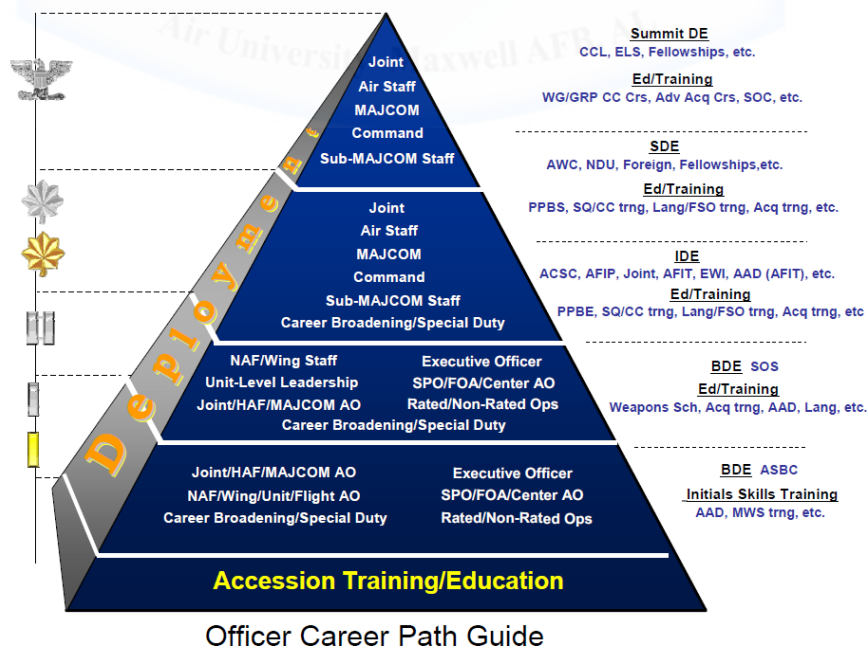


Figure 4 Officer Career Path

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 Institutional Competency List (Figure 3) to produce agile and knowledge-enabled Airmen. Thus, executing force development will:⁷

- 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

Of note, the force development model described by AFI 36-2640 seems very parochial in its approach to force development and should be expanded 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”⁸. 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 different when compared to remainder of the line Air Force. As the Air Force develops their rated force, they must take into account an officers: flying gates, major weapons system (MWS) proficiency, and professional development.

In the rated community, an aviator's career normally consists of several back-to-back operational tours, and is done so for a couple of reasons. The first is the “gate” system which tracks an aviator's time in his/her major weapons system, and is directly tied to monthly flight pay. The second is the experience required for an aviator to master the critical skills required to fly today's state of the art aircraft. These two complicated issues, along with the necessity to pursue command opportunities at all three levels of leadership, produce a void in professional development outside the cockpit. A discussion of Aviation Career Incentive Pay (ACIP) and MWS proficiency skills training will follow.

Aviation Career Incentive Pay (ACIP)

In order for the Air Force Personnel Center to properly manage the development of rated officers they had to find a balance between career broadening opportunities and rated gate months. The Aviation Career Incentive Act of 1974 allowed for rated officers to meet their

flying obligations while at the same time affording them the opportunity to broaden their careers outside the cockpit.⁹ The Incentive Act of 1974 also determined that, “an officer who holds an aeronautical rating or designation, and is qualified for aviation service is entitled to continuous monthly incentive pay.”¹⁰ The challenge for the personnel system, however, is that in order for rated officers to continue receiving their monthly incentive pay (or flight pay), they need to continue to meet their flying gates...in other words, the more flying gates met, the more flying a rated officer does. In technical terms, the “gate” structure entitles rated crew members to monthly 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 1996.¹¹ As part of the NDAA of 1989, Senator John Glenn introduced legislation to increase the Aviation Career Incentive Pay for all rated officers.¹² The current “gate” system as established by the NDAA of 1996 is described below.¹³

- 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, 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, a rated officer must complete 144 months (12 years) of AS during the first 18 years of AS.

As stated earlier, the more gates a rated officer completes, the more flying they conduct and the more proficient in the jet they become. The most critical factor in all of this, however, is proficiency...proficiency in some of the most sophisticated aircraft in the world.¹⁴ So it goes without saying that, if a crew member’s “gates” are managed correctly, then proficiency in a the major weapons system (MWS) will take care of itself.

Major Weapons System 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 a MWS. These skills are developed early in a rated professional's career and typically spans the first nine to eleven 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.¹⁵ For simplicity's sake, the early years of a rated officer's career are highlighted by their initial flight training (specialized undergraduate pilot/navigator training), an operational tour of duty, a possible remote tour, and then either another operational tour, a school house tour, or selection to weapons school. For most major weapons systems, it takes an average of 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 simply 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.¹⁶ For a rated officer, this "building skill competence" occurs in their major weapons system and typically spans the first nine to eleven years of an aviator's career. At this point, a small cadre of promoted majors will have the opportunity to attend an intermediate

developmental education (IDE) program and then transition to the operational level of leadership.

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.¹⁷ The operational level of leadership is aimed 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 develop skills at a higher level of management within the squadron and then complete IDE or a selected graduate-level degree program to further educational needs as a maturing professional.

In-Residence Professional Military Education (PME)

In-residence professional military education is a critical aspect of an officer's professional development. Intermediate Developmental Education (IDE) is attended by majors (and selects), while Senior Developmental Education (SDE) is attended by lieutenant colonels (and selects) or colonels (and selects). While PME can be completed in either seminar or correspondence courses, the ideal method is to attend an in-residence program. Attendance at in-residence IDE and SDE programs is incredibly competitive, and only a small percentage of officers will have the opportunity to go. Simply put, high potential officers will attend in-residence PME. The advantage of an in-residence program is that it affords an officer the opportunity to concentrate solely on PME for one year. Additionally, these programs provide the opportunity for officers to foster relationships with fellow officers from our sister services, our allies, and our government

civilian agencies...these relationships may be vitally important someday when supporting future joint operations. Finally, and more importantly, it provides an officer with the opportunity to spend precious time with their family.

The Air Force Personnel Plan states that "ideally, all officers will attend PME in residence."¹⁸ Limited resources, however, restrict residence IDE and SDE attendance to the "best qualified" candidates. Nonresident programs are available to all eligible officers and civilians.¹⁹

The process by which officers are selected for in-residence PME (IDE/SDE) is incredibly competitive, with the majority of officers chosen as "candidates" in combination with their promotion board. 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.²⁰ 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.²¹

According to the Air Force Personnel Center, approximately 25-30% of the officers selected for major will attend IDE in-residence...for SDE, the opportunity is only about 10% per year group.²² Attendance at in-residence IDE/SDE is a significant quality indicator for identifying future Air Force/joint leaders.²³

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 opportunities and various 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.²⁴ For the Air Force the obvious benefit is the development of a strategically minded, critical thinker, and 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.²⁵ Education emphasizes understanding of broad concepts and offers insights into complex issues not commonly available in operational environments.²⁶ 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 war-games.²⁷

At this level, assignments to command opportunities (Sq/CC, OG/CC, Wg/CV, or Wg/CC) or staff duties at the Joint, HAF, MAJCOM, or NAF level will develop 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:²⁸

- *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 process 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.²⁹ 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..³⁰

The purpose of the CSB is to provide eligible officers the opportunity to command at the colonel level, but ultimately the process is designed to ensure that the Air Force has selected the

best possible commanders. The CSB consists of a panel 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.³¹ Certainly not an easy task given the caliber of officers in today's Air Force.

The challenge, however, is that the selection criteria for the CSB can be subjective. To be selected for the Group commander list, candidates must be colonels or colonel-selects with less than 24 years of TAFCS, and Wing commander candidates must be colonels with less than 26 years of TAFCS.³² Additionally, rated officers need a minimum of 50 hours within the last seven years to be eligible.³³

The selective CSB process creates an increased emphasis on developing a group of future officers who are competitive for promotion to brigadier general. The typical career path for a rated officer flows something like this: group or vice-command, SDE, joint/headquarters staff (in no particular order), followed by wing command. What this roadmap creates, however, is the perception that commanders need to be identified early in their career, even if they lack operational credibility. Although these high potential and often promoted BPZ officers are selected to command, it goes without saying but in order to be competitive for future opportunities, they need to complete a successful command tour...which is not always a guarantee.

By analyzing CSB results, it is obvious to the casual observer that the Air Force emphasizes early promotion when selecting group/vice, and wing commanders. In fact, you could make the case that BPZ promotion is the primary consideration when selecting wing commanders. That said, if you look at the results of the CY09 CSB, you would see that 100% of the rated Wg/CC candidates, and 87% of the OG/CC and Wg/CV candidates were promoted early.³⁴

Simply put, early promotion is no doubt a prerequisite for identifying future Air Force leaders. The next chapter will describe the six prerequisites used to select 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 2.

⁴ *ibid*, pg 9.

⁵ Department of the Air Force, Air Force Doctrine Document 1-1, *Leadership and Force Development*, 18 February 2006, pg 29-33.

⁶ Department of the Air Force, AFI 36-2640, *Executing Total Force Development*, 16 December 2008, pg 38.

⁷ *ibid*, pg 4.

⁸ Phone interview conducted with Admiral William J. Fallon, 15 January 2010.

⁹ Evans, Lt Col Carl D., *Growing Tomorrow's Leaders in Today's Environment* (Maxwell AFB, AL: Air War College, Air University, 1998), pg 14.

¹⁰ Public Law 93-294, *Aviation Career Incentive Act of 1974*, May 31, 1974, pg 177.

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

¹² Evans, Lt Col Carl D., *Growing Tomorrow's Leaders in Today's Environment* (Maxwell AFB, AL: Air War College, Air University, 1998), pg 23.

¹³ Department of the Air Force, AFI 11-401, *Aviation Management*, 18 May 2009, pg 47.

¹⁴ Evans, Lt Col Carl D., *Growing Tomorrow's Leaders in Today's Environment* (Maxwell AFB, AL: Air War College, Air University, 1998), pg 14.

¹⁵ 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.

¹⁶ Department of the Air Force, Air Force Doctrine Document 1-1, *Leadership and Force Development*, 18 February 2006, pg 30.

¹⁷ Department of the Air Force, Air Force Doctrine Document 1-1, *Leadership and Force Development*, 18 February 2006, pg 29.

¹⁸ Department of the Air Force, AFI 36-2301, *Professional Military Education*, 27 June 2002, Incorporating Change 2, 26 September 2007, pg 10.

¹⁹ *ibid*, pg 10.

²⁰ *ibid*, pg 10.

²¹ *ibid*, pg 10.

²² *ibid*, pg 10.

Notes

²³ Evans, Lt Col Carl D., *Growing Tomorrow's Leaders in Today's Environment* (Maxwell AFB, AL: Air War College, Air University, 1998), pg 42.

²⁴ Interview with Dr. Stephen D. Chiabotti, Vice Commandant of the School of Advanced Air and Space Studies.

²⁵ Department of the Air Force, Air Force Doctrine Document 1-1, *Leadership and Force Development*, 18 February 2006, pg 34-35.

²⁶ *ibid*, pg 34-35.

²⁷ *ibid*, pg 34-35.

²⁸ *ibid*, pg 34.

²⁹ Department of the Air Force, AF/DPO, Colonels Group, "Spread the Word Briefing 2009", May 2009.

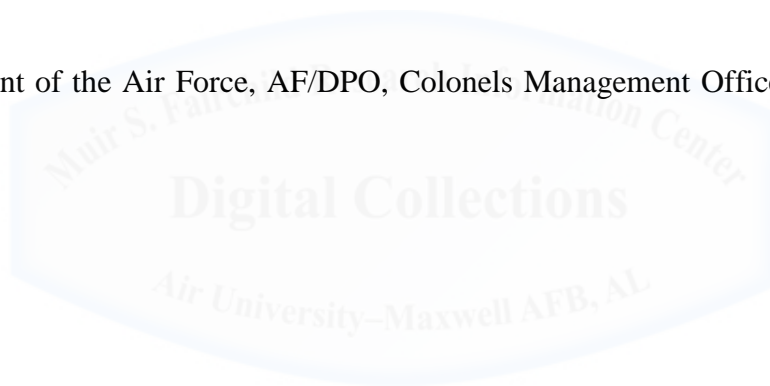
³⁰ Department of the Air Force, AF/DPO, Colonels Group staff interview, 21 January 2010.

³¹ Department of the Air Force, AF/DPO, Colonels Group, 2009 Command Screening Board Information Sheet, pg 1.

³² *ibid*, pg 1.

³³ *ibid*, pg 1.

³⁴ Department of the Air Force, AF/DPO, Colonels Management Office staff interview, 21 January 2010.



Chapter 6

Prerequisites for Promotion

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. The current officer development model expects rated officers to have operational credibility coupled with a staff job at the Joint Staff, Air Staff and/or MAJCOM level. 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. But what? By analyzing the demographic data for colonels and general officers, one can infer that there are six prerequisites common to an officer’s resume that make him/her competitive for promotion to brigadier general. Although this list is not all inclusive, it includes in no particular order: command, a joint duty tour, in-residence PME, operational credibility, a Pentagon or Washington DC tour, and probably the most important prerequisite, BPZ promotion.

Now this idea of “prerequisites” is not new. In fact, Air War College student Lt Col Carl Evans identified similar discriminators or “quality indicators”, as he described them, in his

research paper, some 12 years ago.² Before discussing these prerequisites, however, it is important to understand the “ideal” leadership model typically followed by rated officers.

Leadership Development in the Rated Community

The “ideal” career path for the rated community is depicted below.³ 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.

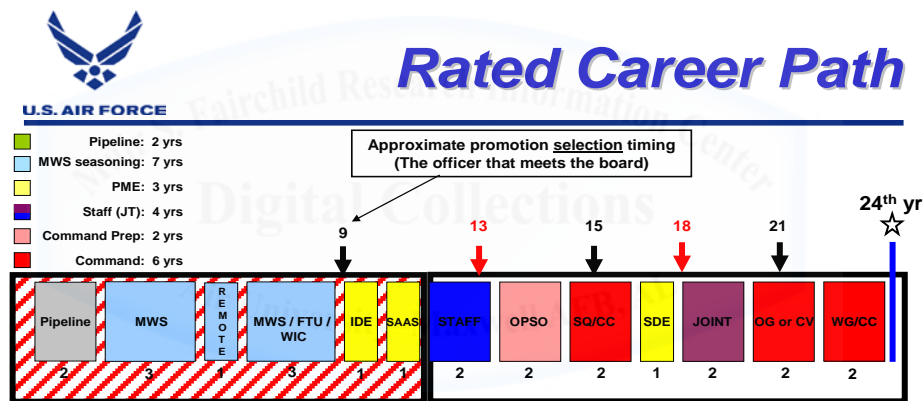


Figure 6 “Ideal” Rated Community Career Path

Assuming the career path depicted above is the roadmap for promotion to general officer, the most important take-away is the factor of time. For example, in the rated community, operations officers and squadron commanders 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 above 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.⁴ Given all of the prerequisites 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) shorten/eliminate command opportunities; or (b) shorten/eliminate joint/staff opportunities; (c) forego PME; (d) sacrifice operational credibility; or (e) be promoted BPZ...any of which may take away an officer’s competitive edge for promotion. Analysis reveals that career success in these areas have become the de facto prerequisites that the Air Force uses to promote the “best and brightest” to be senior officers.

Command

In today’s Air Force, command experience at the squadron, group, and wing level are a key component of a future leader’s career progression...but it comes later in an officer’s career as compared to our sister Services. Although command experience cannot be taken for granted or overemphasized, its importance to the development of an officer’s career is critical. Specifically, a command opportunity allows both the Air Force and the rated officer the opportunity to evaluate their command skills. More importantly, though, it’s a key indicator for future leadership opportunities.

For rated officers, command opportunities are hard to come by, and very limited in number. Similar to the highly competitive CSB process for colonels, the MAJCOMs conduct squadron commander selection boards to identify future squadron commanders. But as mentioned above, these limited command opportunities occur later in an officer’s development – typically as a lieutenant colonel, squadron commander – their first true test of leadership. After squadron command, newly promoted and competitive colonels will go on to command at both the group or

vice and wing level. Statistically, 100% of the rated officers selected to brigadier general have commanded at the squadron, group or vice and wing level.⁵ Additionally, the CY08 brigadier general promotion results validates the fact that 86% of the officers selected to brigadier general were BPZ to at least two ranks and 100% were promoted BTZ.⁶

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 rise to the rank of brigadier general. Thus, command performance, particularly as a Wg/CC, is a prerequisite for selection to brigadier general.

Joint Duty

A Joint Duty Assignment (JDA) is a critical component of an officer's career development especially in the rated community. More importantly, however, is that a JDA allows an officer to broaden their perspective reference to our sister Services. Unfortunately, due to the heavy operational pace that drives 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.⁷

Congress, through the Goldwater-Nichols Act, has driven the services toward the requirement of assigning top-notch officers to serve in current and future joint billets...a requirement that is mandated by law. Additionally, 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 Joint Qualified Officer (JQO).⁸ 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.⁹

Although, this exception exists, it is rarely utilized. Since Title 10 created a connection between JQOs and the promotion system, placement in a JDA has become extremely competitive. For example, JDAs are not service centric. Just because an Air Force officer is serving in a JDA billet doesn't necessarily mean their backfill will be an Air Force officer. Therefore, it is paramount for AFPC to nominate only the highest caliber officers to JDAs. However, due to operational constraints, current AFPC policy is to release only those officers who have completed IDE/SDE in-residence to Joint Staff billets.¹⁰

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 betterment 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."¹¹ 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."¹² The author believes 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, and to serve in a JDA. Thus, for future senior leaders in the Air Force, a JDA becomes a prerequisite for future promotions.

In-Residence Professional Military Education (PME)

As already discussed, Professional Military Education is a critical component of an officer's development, so the focus of this discussion will be on the emphasis the Air Force places on PME as a prerequisite for future promotions and/or command opportunities. Although attendance at IDE is incredibly valuable, it cannot be inferred that an officer who attends IDE in-residence is a high potential officer or will make the rank of brigadier general...or colonel for that matter. But what is guaranteed is a promotion to lieutenant colonel. According to the Air Force Personnel Centers published statistics for the CY08 lieutenant colonel promotion board, 100% of the rated officers who attended in-residence IDE were promoted in their primary zone.¹³ When you analyze the same statistical data for those who attended in-residence SDE, you will see the same statistic...100% of the rated officers were promoted to colonel in their primary zone.¹⁴ Additionally, the probability of an officer getting promoted to lieutenant colonel and/or colonel BPZ increases 10 fold when you attend in-residence PME. It is obvious that those who attend an in-residence PME program will get promoted to at least the rank of lieutenant colonel. Finally, the CY08 brigadier general promotion board results revealed that 100% of the rated selects completed SDE in-residence.¹⁵ Thus, although attendance at an in-residence PME program is not the only criteria used to promote officers, nor is it a guarantee you will make general officer, but attendance at in-residence SDE is certainly a prerequisite for a promotion to brigadier general.

Gaining Operational Credibility

AFDD 1-1, *Leadership and Force Development*, implies that operational credibility is:

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.¹⁶

Because of the skills necessary to fly today's sophisticated aircraft; rated officers must build their technical expertise early in their career. Over time, this technical expertise leads to operational credibility that must be routinely practiced to avoid atrophying skills. As Lt Col Evans pointed out, "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."¹⁷ There are other indicators that can also enhance an officer's operational credentials, and include, but are not limited to: an officer's flight evaluation record; flight qualifications, such as instructor pilot; evaluator pilot or aircraft commander; and operational deployments.

Washington DC / Pentagon Tour

Having had the opportunity to serve in the Pentagon, there is no question in the authors mind as to the value of an assignment in the "building" or Washington DC when it comes to understanding what takes place at the strategic level of the Department of Defense (DoD). Like many field grade officers, the author was able to complete a Pentagon tour while serving on the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) Staff, while my peers served on the Joint Staff or the Headquarters Air Staff. In any case, an assignment in Washington DC allows an officer to garner a perspective reference the DoD that will not be obtained anywhere else, and will undoubtedly broaden an officer's career.¹⁸

For the rated community, a Pentagon and/or Washington tour is considered invaluable and only offered to the "best and brightest" rated officers due to the critical shortage of rated officers in the cockpit. As already stated, AFPC policy is that the only officers they will release from flying duties to complete a joint/Pentagon tour are those that have attended PME in-residence.¹⁹

So there is no question that a highly coveted tour in Washington will bolster a rated officer's resume, and undoubtedly be viewed as a potential prerequisite to future promotions.

BPZ Promotion

Historically, a promotion below the zone to lieutenant colonel and or colonel identifies high potential officers. The current Air Force policy allows for BPZ promotions up to two years early for lieutenant colonel and colonel.²⁰ 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. Currently, the maximum BPZ selection quota used in the Air Force is 7.5% for lieutenant colonel promotions, and 15% for colonel promotions.²¹ 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%.²²

The six prerequisites just described have become de facto indicators for officers who have been selected as senior leaders. And, although these prerequisites 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 along with general officer management, in the next chapter.

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 Evans, Lt Col Carl D., *Growing Tomorrow's Leaders in Today's Environment* (Maxwell AFB, AL: Air War College, Air University, 1998), pg 39.

Notes

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

⁴ 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.

⁵ Department of the Air Force, HQ Air Force Personnel Center, Demographics and Statistics.

⁶ Department of the Air Force, AF/DPO Colonel Management Office, *Spread the Word Briefing*, April 2009.

⁷ Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Staff, J-1 Division.

⁸ United States Code, *Title 10 – Armed Forces*, (Washington DC: United States Government Printing Office, 5 January 2009), Section 619a.

⁹ *ibid*, Section 619a.

¹⁰ Department of the Air Force, HQ Air Force Personnel Center, A-1 Manpower Division.

¹¹ Phone interview conducted with General (ret) John P. Abizaid, 5 January 2010.

¹² Phone interview conducted with Lt. General Paul J. Selva, 18 February 2010.

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

¹⁴ *ibid*.

¹⁵ Department of the Air Force, AF/DPO Colonel Management Office, *Spread the Word Briefing*, April 2009.

¹⁶ Department of the Air Force, Air Force Doctrine Document 1-1, *Leadership and Force Development*, 18 February 2006, pg 27.

¹⁷ Evans, Lt Col Carl D., *Growing Tomorrow's Leaders in Today's Environment* (Maxwell AFB, AL: Air War College, Air University, 1998), pg 42.

¹⁸ *ibid*, pg 41.

¹⁹ Department of the Air Force, HQ Air Force Personnel Center, A-1 Manpower Division.

²⁰ Department of the Air Force, HQ Air Force Personnel Center, Demographics and Statistics.

²¹ Department of the Air Force, HQ Air Force Personnel Center, Demographics and Statistics.

²² Department of the Air Force, HQ Air Force Personnel Center, Demographics and Statistics.

Chapter 7

Timeline for 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

In today’s Air Force, less than one percent of officers will obtain the rank of general officer. The Air Force Colonel’s Management Office (AF/DPO) 2009 *Spread the Word Briefing*, highlighted that approximately one out of 86 line colonels will be promoted to brigadier general.² To be future senior leaders in the military, it is extremely important to develop young company/field grade officers early in their careers...but timing is everything.³

Time in Grade (TIG) Requirements

Once an officer obtains the rank of colonel time becomes a critical factor in their potential promotion opportunity.⁴ The framework of general officers and the amount of time spent in grade as a general officer is governed by public law.⁵ Specifically, Title 10, of the U.S. Code (Title 10, U.S.C.), Section 619, “*eligibility for consideration for promotion: time-in-grade and other requirements*” outlines the time-in-grade requirements for all officer grades in the

military.⁶ Additionally, according to Title 10, U.S.C., Section 619, an officer of the Army, Air Force, or Marine Corps holding a permanent appointment in the grade of colonel or brigadier general may be eligible for promotion to the next higher grade after just one year time-in-grade.⁷ However, the law goes on to say, “...when the needs of the service require, the Secretary of the Military Department concerned may prescribe a longer period of service in grade for eligibility for promotion.”⁸ The Air Force, for example, prefers to promote colonels to the rank of brigadier general around the 24-year time in service (TIS) point.⁹ This affords the Air Force the opportunity to grow general officers to compete for future promotion/appointments. However, the later an officer is promoted to the rank of general officer, the more time becomes a limiting factor in his/her promotion potential, simply because they reach the general officer mandatory retirement date (MRD).

According to Title 10, U.S.C., Section 619, to be eligible for promotion to major, lieutenant colonel, or colonel, an officer must have a minimum of three years TIG at the current rank.¹⁰ The Secretary of the Force may waive this requirement to permit at least two opportunities for BPZ.¹¹ 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.¹²

According to DoD Instruction (DoDI) 1320.12, the services may promote field grade officers early to rank provided they adhere to the following restrictions:¹³

...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..¹⁴

Current Air Force policy allows for officers to be promoted up to two years early to lieutenant colonel and colonel for a total of four years early..¹⁵

By promoting high potential officers early, you increase the opportunity for future officer development in more senior ranks to include, perhaps, general/flag officer ranks. On the other hand, from a force development perspective, if an officer is promoted too early, he/she may be deprived of the professional development necessary to groom high potential senior leaders..¹⁶

High Potential Officers (HPO)

The Air Force Colonels Management Office (AF/DPO) is responsible for managing the careers of 3,255 line colonels..¹⁷ 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..¹⁸

Congress and public law dictates both the tenure and framework of general/flag officers retained in the respective services. Specifically, Title 10, U.S.C., defines tenure for general/flag officers through Mandatory Retirement Dates.

Mandatory Retirement Date (MRD)

MRDs are based on years of total active federal commissioned service (TAFCS).¹⁹ For example, colonels reach high year tenure at 30 years of TAFCS. General officers, on the other hand, reach high year tenure through a combination of TAFCS, TIG, and age.

Brigadier generals have a MRD of five years TIG or 30 years of TAFCS, whichever is later.²⁰ Major generals, on the other hand, must retire upon reaching five years TIG or 35 years of TAFCS, whichever is later.²¹ Finally, The MRD for a lieutenant general/vice admiral (O-9) is 38 years of TAFCS and 40 years TAFCS for a general/admiral (O-10).²² When it comes to age, all general officers must retire at the age of 64 unless a waiver is obtained for officers serving in the grade of O-9 or O-10.²³ With this, the Secretary of Defense can waive the age requirement to 66, while the President of the United States can waive it to 68.²⁴ The figure below reflects the current MRD construct.²⁵

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 7 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 2007.²⁶

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 8 General Officer Mandatory Retirement Dates (Pre-2007 NDAA)

The most significant take-away from the figure above 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.

Major general is the last mandatory promotion board an officer will meet. A promotion to the rank of O-9 or O-10 is actually an appointment by the president of the United States. Said another way, the president appoints individuals to temporary vacancies that carry the rank of 3-star or 4-star general/flag officer. 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.”²⁷ In order to retire in the rank of 3- or 4-star general/flag officer, the president nominates and Congress approves retirement, otherwise the officer retires in their permanent rank of 2-star.²⁸ Additionally, the management of general officers is driven specifically by the number of authorizations and, as already discussed, MRDs.²⁹

Authorizations for General Officers

Title 10, U.S.C., governs the total number and framework of general officers in the military. Currently, the Air Force is authorized 279 general officers, while Title 10, U.S.C., provides for an additional 65 general/flag officer positions.³⁰ These additional authorizations allow the services to meet individual service authorizations in the joint arena. 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.³¹ The Air Force is currently authorized a total of 304 general officers.³²

Title 10, U.S.C., also defines, by service, the exact number of general/flag officers per grade. General officer grade distribution is based on the following three requirements:³³

1. Half of all general officers must be brigadier generals (O-7).
2. A maximum of 16.4% of general officers may serve as lieutenant generals (O-9) and generals (O-10).
3. A maximum of 25% of the 16.4% of general officers in the grades of O-9 and O-10 may serve as generals (O-10).

In pictorial form, Figure 9 outlines the distribution of Air Force general officers:³⁴

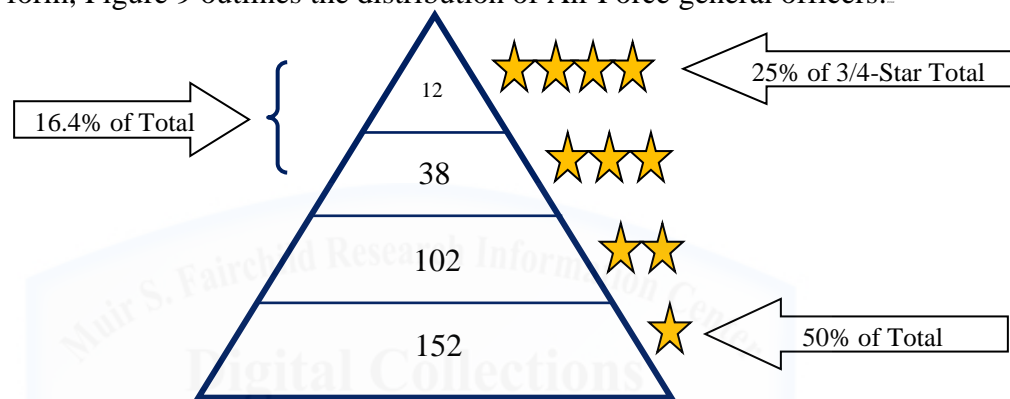


Figure 9 Air Force General Officer Grade Distribution (304 Total)

It is important to understand that the emphasis on early promotion drives the timeline for Air Force general officer management.

Promotion to Brigadier General

Air Force policy dictates promotion timing to brigadier general.³⁵ According to Title 10, U.S.C., Section 619, officers are required to have a minimum of 1-year TIG as an O-6 (colonel) before being eligible for promotion to brigadier general.³⁶ Air Force policy, however, is a bit more restrictive. For example, eligible colonels must have a minimum of two years TIG at the time the brigadier general board is convened.³⁷

As discussed, brigadier generals can serve for five years or until 30 years TAFCS, whichever occurs later. Simple math will tell you that a colonel who gets promoted later than

their 25th year of TAFCS will extend beyond 30 years because of the MRD policy. However, with the post-2007 NDAA change in MRDs promoting an officer later than the 25th year does not have as large an impact on three-star potential as it previously did.

Even to the casual observer, it is obvious that the later an officer is promoted to brigadier general the less likely they are to make four-star rank. On the other hand, the earlier you promote an officer the more opportunity, and time, there is to grow through the ranks.³⁸ But the question becomes, why do we have to promote the vast share of our general officers at the 24-year TIS point? The answer was tied to the MRD because, in order to make a fourth star by the 35-year TIS point, an officer had to be promoted early.³⁹ Today, that is no longer the case.

If you analyze the Air Force Colonels Management Office (AF/DPO) statistical data for promotion to brigadier general you will find that the average brigadier general is promoted with 4.7 years of TIG as a colonel and 24-years of TIS.⁴⁰ Additionally, the CY08 brigadier general promotion board revealed that 83% of the selects are promoted between 23 and 25 years of TAFCS.⁴¹ Of note, 98% of the selected officers completed SDE in-residence, and 86% of those selected were 2+ grades BPZ.⁴²

The promotion timing to brigadier general plays a critical role in the Air Force's development of officers. In fact, it is the catalyst behind the Air Force's requirement to develop a bench of colonels who have been promoted early while wedging in the desired tactical, operational, staff, educational, and command experience necessary for promotion to the rank of general officer.⁴³

Why So Early to General Officer

So why does the Air Force insist on promoting the majority of their brigadier generals at the 24-year TIS point? Simple, the Air Force desires a deep bench of talented general officers with

enough time to grow to be 4-star generals.⁴⁴ This somewhat simple practice is certainly not Air Force policy, nor the law...Title 10, U.S.C., is the law, and technically speaking an officer could be promoted at the 29-year TAFSC point, pin-on a star, and still be promoted to major general prior to their 35th year, or 5-years TIG.⁴⁵ In fact, AWC student Lt Col Carl Evans pointed out some 10 years ago, depending upon when the officer was promoted to 2-star, they could, in theory, make the rank of 4-star prior to reaching their mandatory TAFSC date.⁴⁶ The problem this creates is a general officer with limited strategic depth, and as Thomas Ehrhard, author of *The Air Force Strategy for the Lang Haul* opined; the Air Force needs to “...upgrade the strategic competence of their senior officers.”⁴⁷ So with a limited number of four-star positions available, the Air Force does not need to promote every colonel to brigadier general with the hope they will achieve the four-star level. However, the Air Force’s current mind set is to promote the majority of colonels to brigadier general at or before the 25-year TIS point, thus creating a larger bench of officers from which to choose future general officers, and perhaps a combatant commander.

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.”⁴⁸ 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.”⁴⁹ The Air Force can reverse this trend, but to do so will take time and perhaps a little less emphasis on BPZ promotion.

Overall Perception of Early Promotion

We are the greatest Air Force in the world not because of the sophisticated aircraft we fly or because of our ability to command and control a large air campaign, it is simply because of the tremendously talented men and women we recruit. These highly educated, technologically savvy volunteers are the “best and brightest” our nation has to offer, and the Air Force owes them the opportunity to grow through the ranks.

Fortunately, the Air Force promotion system does promote the most talented, well-rounded officers with a small percentage being promoted ahead of their peers. This of course, is no easy task given the talented professionals in the Air Force, and all the Services for that matter. But let’s assume that an officer promoted BPZ is a more talented, or capable officer than those who are not. If true, you could argue that the Air Force is simply promoting the “best of the best”...which is a good problem to have. The perception, however, is that this small percentage of highly developed, incredibly talented and promoted BPZ officers is the only contenders for command opportunities. In the grand scheme of things, this is certainly not a bad thing as long as the sole determinant for the selection to command was not the BPZ promotion.

To highlight this point, the recent CY09 CSB match revealed that 100% of the fighter wing commanders selected to command had a minimum of one-year BPZ promotion, with the majority two-plus years BPZ.⁵⁰ Thus, the perception in the rated community is that unless an individual is a high-potential officer and promoted BPZ, his/her chances of being selected for a command opportunity or brigadier general is slim to none. The next chapter will provide an

Army perspective on officer development, along with our sister service's view on early promotions.

Notes

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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

The Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986 constrained all four services, yet each has incorporated the notion of joint development in its own way. For the Air Force, the primary issue with officer development is simply time...there just isn't enough quality time available to do all that they would like to do. The Army model of officer development, however, provides a different perspective.

The Army Vision

The 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) clearly lays out the Army's well-developed officer personnel management system (OPMS). 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.³

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."⁴ The Army develops their officers to be multi-skilled leaders with the following attributes:⁵

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.

By comparing the CJCS *Vision for Joint Officer Development* with that of the Army and Air Force vision, you will see strong similarities. Since actions speak louder than words, the Army seems to have taken a more proactive approach to executing their vision than the Air Force.

The Army Model

DA PAM 600-3 describes, in great detail, the career path for officers by branch (infantry, armor, field artillery, etc.). It clearly outlines what officers can expect to accomplish at each

rank and establishes prerequisites for command at each level. Officers who meet these strict requirements are considered for command. As an example, the career path for active duty army infantrymen is depicted below.⁶ It's important to highlight that the Army takes more of a “peanut butter spread” approach to career/joint development by encouraging career broadening opportunities across an officer's entire career.

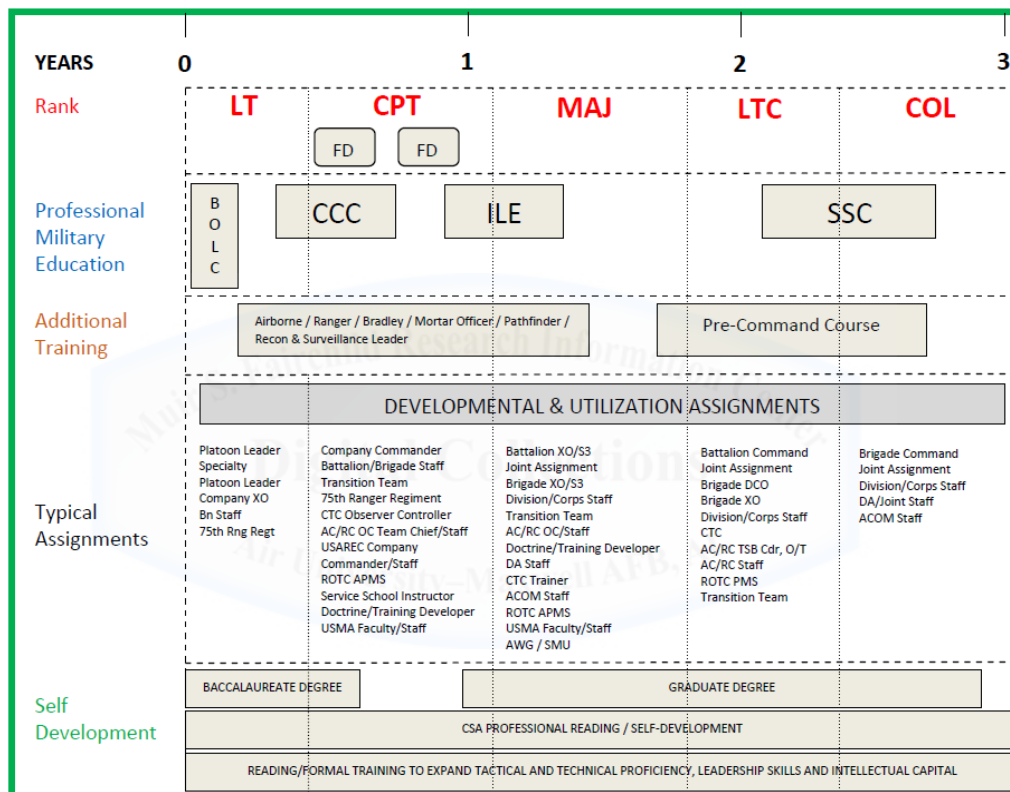


Figure 10 Infantry Active Army Development Model

Branch Qualification

The Army develops their officers through a concept known as “branch qualification.” Company grade officers become branch qualified by serving/leading soldiers at the company, battalion, or brigade levels as staff officers.⁷ Additionally, most branches require officers to obtain command experience at the company level before being considered a branch-qualified company grade officer.⁸ 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.⁹ In order to become branch-qualified, a company-grade officer must successfully complete company command.¹⁰

As an infantry major, the primary professional development objective is to create a combined arms warrior/leader that has a comprehensive understanding of operations in a joint and expeditionary environment. In order 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). An infantry officer must also develop their skills in the planning and execution of combined arms warfare and develop expertise in the Joint Interagency Intergovernmental Multinational (JIIM) operational environment...which typically occurs on a 24-36 month Joint Staff assignment.¹¹

The pivotal assignment for an infantry lieutenant colonel is command. It is vital to the Army that an officer serve in an assignment that further develops their 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.¹² Those infantry officers selected for command will normally serve two to three years at the battalion level, and only battalion commanders will be considered for command at the brigade level as a colonel.¹³

At the colonel level, brigade level command is the critical assignment for infantrymen. In order to become a brigade commander, however, officers must have served as a battalion commander. Similar to the Air Force, every successful command tour in the Army is a stepping stone to the next level. Although not textbook, the Army branch qualification system outlines the operational experience requirements for all soldiers, and provides clear guidance for line

officers when it comes to professional development. The following sections will examine how the Air Force could apply the Army development model to strengthen their own development program.

Controlled Tour Lengths

Similar to the Air Force, the Army mandates the length of time an officer spends in a command tour.¹⁴ DA Pam 600-3 states that the 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.¹⁵

Like command billets 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 manage the length of command at both the brigade and battalion level.

Although tour lengths vary from MAJCOM to MAJCOM, the Air Force should reinforce a strong commitment to developing leaders by institutionalizing a strict command policy for squadron, group, and wing command tour lengths. For a variety of reasons, a two-year controlled tour is beneficial to both the officer and the organization. First, it allows senior officers the time to evaluate their commanders for future command opportunities. Second, it provides the officer the opportunity to grow as a commander and to affect change within their organization. Finally, and in the opinion of the author, the most important benefit to a two-year controlled tour is that it provides stability for the officer and his family. Therefore, if group and wing command is indeed a critical command test before advancement to brigadier general, then a longer tour would seem appropriate.

Professional Military Education (PME) in the Other Services

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 field grade officer 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, selects officers to attend PME as a result of an administrative assignment action rather than a board process. The majority of naval officers believe 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.¹⁶ 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.¹⁷

The Marine Corps and the Air Force have a similar process, with only the “best and brightest” being selected to attend intermediate and/or senior level PME. The Army, however, 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).¹⁸ 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.¹⁹ For the Army, Air Force, and Marine Corps attending senior level PME is seen as a career broadening opportunity that comes with greater responsibility and a potential promotion. Thus, the Air Force needs to emphasize PME at every level of officer development to ensure it is developing officers with the required competencies.

The View of Other Services

When it comes to the promotion of general/flag officers, there is no doubt that each of the four services takes a different approach with regard to early promotion in their force development model. They also differ when it comes to the placement of senior leaders in critical joint/leadership billets.

The U.S. Army takes a very conservative approach to BPZ promotions. Army policy only allows officers to be promoted one year early to major, lieutenant colonel, and colonel.²⁰ 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%.”²¹ Army policy, however, sets the below-the-zone capability at 5.0 to 7.5 percent, thereby limiting the number of early promotions.²²

The Marine Corps (USMC) on the other hand, does not believe in BPZ promotions. According to the USMC General Officer Management Office, the USMC views early promotion as being single-minded.²³ 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 generals (and selects) are promoted at the 25- to 26-year TIS point.²⁴ 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.²⁵ Bottom line, the Marine Corps values career broadening, operational experience, and diverse assignments over a below the zone promotion.

Although U.S. Navy policy permits officers to be promoted up to two years early to lieutenant commander, commander, and captain, in practice, they rarely promote their 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 2006.²⁶ Additionally, early promotion in any aspect of a naval officer's professional development could derail their career timeline.

Finally, the Air Force without a doubt values BPZ promotions more than the other three Services. The emphasis on command combined with a career requiring two O-6 commands, SDE, and joint/headquarters staff opportunities prior to being promoted to brigadier general, indicates a greater need for early promotions within the Air Force officer development model. In order to be competitive for brigadier general an Air Force officer must complete the requirements stated above, and pin on colonel before the 19-year TIS point. Unfortunately, this development model places a premium on early promotion, such that it is no longer "if" you were promoted early, but "how many" times you were promoted early. For example, the results of the CY09B CSB indicated that 67% of all rated Wg/CC candidates had been promoted at least three years early.²⁷ Additionally, the same CSB statistics revealed that 100% of the Wg/CC candidates had been promoted one year early.²⁸ Thus, it is easy to see that early promotion is an important discriminator to a garnering command opportunity, and for making brigadier general.

Selection of General/Flag Officers in Other Services

If you analyze the average TIS and TIG statistics (chart below) of the recently selected brigadier generals and rear admirals (lower half) within each of the Services, you will notice a difference in general/flag officer promotion timing.

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

The Army and the Air Force tend to promote most of their brigadier generals around the 25-year TIS point. In recent years, Army 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.²⁹ Additionally, the Army CY08 brigadier general promotion board selected 48 officers for promotion; 37% (18) had never been promoted early; another 29% (14) had only been promoted one year early; 25% (12) were two years early; and only 8% (4) had been promoted the maximum of 3 years ahead of their contemporaries.³⁰ Although Army policy allows colonels to become eligible for promotion as soon as they have one year of TIG as a colonel, they rarely promote officers to brigadier general with less than four years of TIG as a colonel.³¹ Even though the Services are equally constrained in terms of MRD, you can see that the Army values a balance of on-time and BPZ promoted officers.

The USMC, on the other hand, views promotion timing for brigadier generals completely different from the other Services. During their CY08 brigadier general promotion board 12 colonels were selected to the rank of brigadier general. Their average brigadier general select had 26.1 years of TIS and between 3.3 to 4.0 years of TIG.³² The most interesting statistic,

however, is that none of the 12 brigadier general (sels) had ever been promoted early...to any rank.³³

By comparison, the average Navy rear-admiral (lower-half) had 27.5 years of TIS and 5.5 years of TIG. According to the Department of the Navy, Flag Officer Matters, approximately 55% of the officers recently selected for promotion to rear admiral (lower half) had never received an early promotion, and the remaining 45% were promoted only one-year BPZ.³⁴ Additionally, Navy policy requires captains to have three years of TIG before they are eligible for promotion to flag rank, and on average they promote officers to rear admiral (lower half) an average of two and a half years later than the Air Force.³⁵

The Air Force, by comparison, has not selected an on-time line colonel for promotion to brigadier general...every one of them has been promoted at least one year early. In fact, the statistics show that the average Air Force brigadier general select has 24.8 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.³⁶

The one thing that can be inferred from the chart above is that regardless of what the Service specific policies allow with regard to TIG requirements prior to promotion to general/flag rank, all four Services value time as a colonel/captain prior to promotion. This allows Service promotion boards to evaluate a longer period of performance as a colonel/captain, and a leader before they are selected for promotion to brigadier general/rear admiral. With the exception of the Air Force, it is obvious that the Army, Navy, and USMC place less emphasis on early promotion...and more emphasis on a balance of operationally competent BPZ and on-time general/flag officers.

Now that there is a better understanding of how the other Services view BPZ promotions, the question is does the Air Force place too much emphasis on BPZ promotions at the expense of joint, operational and strategic competency? The perception, unfortunately, is that the Air Force would rather develop a bench of BPZ colonels who have tactical and operational Air Force expertise to become exceptional *Air Force* general officers, rather than a balance of on-time and BPZ officers with the breadth and depth of Air Force, joint and interagency experiences to become *joint* senior leaders. 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.”³⁷

There is no question in the author’s mind that in the Air Force, BPZ promotion is a 100% prerequisite for 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.

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³⁴ Department of the Navy, Flag Officer Matters, interview 21 January 2010.

³⁵ Department of the Navy, Flag Officer Matters, interview 21 January 2010.

³⁶ Department of the Air Force, AF/DPO Colonel Management Office, *Spread the Word Briefing*, April 2009.

³⁷ 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...the Pentagon agreed..² In fact, Secretary of Defense Casper Weinberger and the service chiefs resisted reorganization legislation throughout a “bitter”, five year battle with Congress..³ Of course, Congress won, and Goldwater-Nichols became law. Since then, the services have overcome institutional resistance and parochialism 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..⁴ This complexity dictates the need for senior leaders who have mastered their service-related functional area and who can also skillfully operate in unstructured, dynamic environments with multiple actors and across varied physical

and cognitive domains.⁵ 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.⁶ 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 imbedded in service doctrine and an expert in developing the finest functional general officers in the DoD?

While conducting research for this paper, it became apparent 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.”⁷ 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.”⁸ 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.”⁹ 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.¹⁰ 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.¹¹ 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.¹² 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.¹³ 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) re-thinking command opportunities at the squadron, group, vice and wing command level.

Officer Development

A variety 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.¹⁴ 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.¹⁵

Today's Air Force leader development policy is centered on posturing high potential colonels for general officer. Additionally, it compresses three-command opportunities at the lieutenant colonel to senior colonel level into a six- to seven-year timeframe. This compressed command timeline, plus SDE timing, makes professional development and other opportunities at the colonel level virtually impossible. 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 level.¹⁶ Expanding the timeframe to obtain these command experiences might also provide opportunities for colonels to obtain quality joint expertise or other career broadening experiences. In some officers' opinion, Air Force officers are viewed as far too technical, that we reward officers for being good operators and excellent pilots, yet we don't reward them for being critical thinkers, strategists or idea people.¹⁷

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.”¹⁸

Brigadier General Promotion Timing

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.¹⁹ 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 time period 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.²⁰ In order for an “on-time” officer to hit all of the “squares” – 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.²¹

If the Air Force wants to build a bench of officers who are the best trained, best educated, and the most agile leaders in the DoD, they need to expand the “heart of the envelope” promotion window to the 26-year TIS point. Doing so will allow the Air Force to:²²

1. Widen the bench of eligible officers for command at the group and wing level.

2. Build a bench of officers with the proper competencies necessary to lead our Air Force, and not just officers who “fill squares” to get promoted BPZ.
3. Broaden the eligible bench of high potential officers who can become general officers.
4. Develop a bench of officers who will be competitive for key joint billets and combatant command positions at 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, 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.²³ 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” for two four-star jobs, they will need to speed through the general officer ranks. In other words, future four star general officers, and potential combatant commanders, will be promoted BPZ. But this is acceptable because not all of the officers promoted to general/flag rank need to be promoted to four-star general/flag officer.

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...the Air Force needs to use BPZ promotions as a way to continue promoting the “best and brightest” officers.

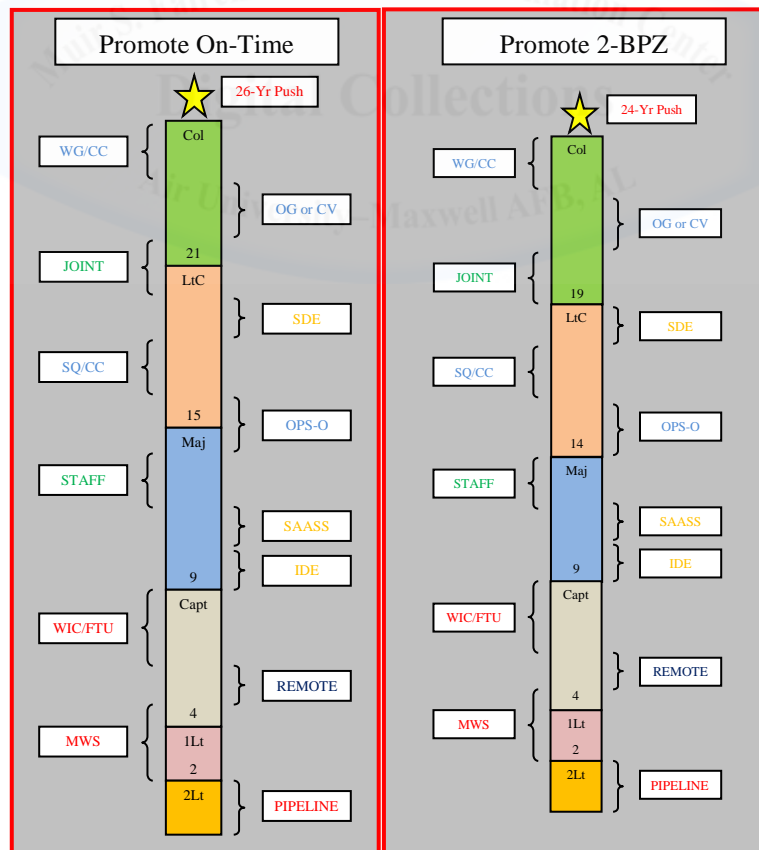


Figure 11 Promotion Timelines

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.²⁴ 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 model 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 truly wants to develop senior officers with the right skill-sets 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.”²⁵ Col Zastrow is exactly right; officers need 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.”²⁶ In simple terms, the Air Force just is not at the joint table most of the time developing the working relationships with their sister service counterparts. The Air Force needs to develop officers across a wide spectrum of diverse 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

The current development model for the rated community restricts aviators from broadening their careers outside the cockpit. Attending a graduate-level civilian program would, in many cases, interrupt the current warrior-to-commander career progression.²⁷ Instead, the rated community chooses to obtain advanced academic degrees through a correspondence program to simply fill a “square” for promotion. 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.²⁸ 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.²⁹ 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.”³⁰

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 the 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.³¹ 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,³² 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.³³

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 model 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 tough. For example, less than 6% of the command opportunities in the Air Force are at the wing level.³⁴ 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.³⁵

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 professional development courses, management level review boards, promotion boards, etc., the vice-wing commander spends a great deal of their time leading the wing. Since the vice-wing commander billet is not a controlled tour, AF/DPO typically sees it 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 a

one-year tour as less than optimal, but it does give a future senior leader the opportunity to understand how a wing operates prior to taking a wing command. So the author strongly advocates for keeping this tremendous proving ground opportunity as a one-year tour.

Command timing really starts at the squadron level. Unfortunately, the current development model in the rated community advocates that an officer spends two years as a squadron operations officer and another two years as a squadron commander. For an aviator, time is precious, so the author suggests we take the Navy “fleet up” approach for squadron command. The Navy hires flying squadron commanders directly into operations officer billets assuming they will spend one year as an operations officer and then “fleet up” to squadron command to complete a one-year command tour. Although there are advantages to the concept, specifically time and command opportunity, the chaos of constant turnover outweighs those benefits. There is a compromise here...“fleet up” to an 18-month command tour after serving 18 months as an operations officer. At the colonel level, command is paramount. Thus, the current construct mandating a two-year tour as a group commander and two-years as a wing commander, is optimized for developing the leadership skills necessary in future senior leaders. This two-year timing also puts less stress on the organization with regard to constant turnover at the senior leader level.

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

An Alternative Career Path

Based on the recommendations above, an alternative career path for the rated community might look something 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.

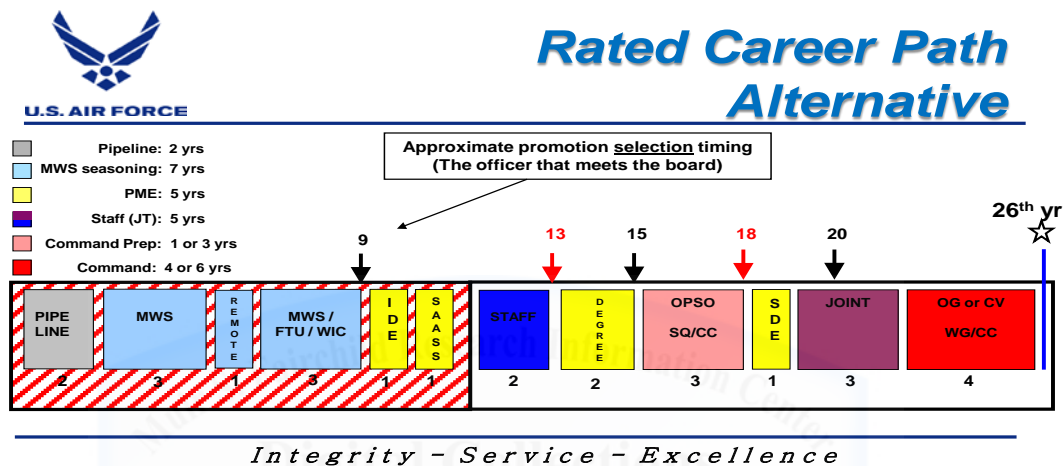


Figure 12 “Alternative” Rated Community Career Path

In summary, the Air Force has the opportunity today to make significant changes to the officer development model currently being utilized. 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 future budget requirements five or even 10 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 skill-sets and competencies 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 military.

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.

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 51.

⁷ *ibid*, pg 17.

⁸ Gates, Honorable Robert M., Secretary of Defense, Interview conducted 17 February 2010.

⁹ Petraeus, General David, e-mail correspondence, 1 April 2010.

¹⁰ 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)

¹¹ *ibid*, pg 17.

¹² *ibid*, pg 18.

¹³ *ibid*, pg 18.

¹⁴ *ibid*, pg 57.

¹⁵ *ibid*, pg 57.

Notes

¹⁶ *ibid*, pg 57.

¹⁷ Phone interview conducted with Lt. General Paul J. Selva, ACJCS, 18 February 2010.

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

¹⁹ Donley, Honorable Michael B., Secretary of the Air Force, Interview conducted 22 January 2010.

²⁰ 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.

²¹ 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.

²² Compiled by the author from a number of senior leader interviews and phone conversations.

²³ Department of the Navy, HQ U.S. Marine Corps, General Officer Matters, phone interview, 25 January 2010.

²⁴ Department of the Air Force, AF/DPO Colonel Management Office, *Spread the Word Briefing*, April 2009.

²⁵ 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 55.

²⁶ Telephone interview conducted with Lt General Paul Silva, Assistant to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 18 February 2010.

²⁷ 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 56.

²⁸ Ehrhard, Thomas P., *An Air Force Strategy for the Long Haul* (Washington DC, Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, 2009), pg 57.

²⁹ *ibid*, pg 57

³⁰ *ibid*, pg 57.

³¹ Department of the Air Force, AF/DPG, General Officers Management Office, Senior Leader Announcement, 13 April 2010.

³² The remainder of this paragraph is taken from the: Department of the Army, Human Resource Command, General Officer Management Office, General Officer Biographies.

³³ Department of the Army, Human Resource Command, General Officer Management Office, General Officer Biographies.

³⁴ Department of the Air Force, AF/DPO Colonel Management Office, *Spread the Word Briefing*, April 2009.

³⁵ 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, but very few officers will get the opportunity to lead soldiers, sailors, airmen or marines. 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 its self, the influence the Air Force has at the combatant commander level will soon fade.

So in order for the Air Force to maintain their relevance at the senior 4-star level, they must build a foundation of highly educated, diversely developed, and strategically-minded officers. In an effort to get to this point, the Air Force must put a premium on early promotion. Thus, by promoting officers to brigadier general at the 24-year point they first; create a larger pool of officers that they can groom through the general officer ranks to compete for future combatant commander opportunities, and second; they provide additional time to broaden an officer’s career portfolio. This practice is deep in theory, but short in practice. Statistically, if you look at

the total number of Air Force general officers filling joint billets, the Air Force appears to be doing well. On the other hand, if you look at the more promotable joint billets currently held by Air Force general officers we don't score as well.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 With a better officer development plan, the Air Force can correct this downward trend at the three-star level.

As Lt Col Carl Evans stated, “a natural tension has always existed between the need to develop future joint leaders with sufficient breadth, while also ensuring the appropriate depth and relevant operational experience to be a credible commander in a flying organization.”⁴ For example, Lt Col Evans argues that the Air Force promotes officers so quickly that they fail to gain the strategic depth, and the operational and tactical experience required to maintain credibility as a commander or staff officer.⁵ Unfortunately, this scenario does not bode well for any one...not the officer, not the organization or the Air Force for that matter. Additionally, it is counter to what our sister services practice. In their case, they prefer to garner operational leadership by having “time in the seat,” and completing full JDA's instead of developing a corps of BPZ promoted general/flag officers.

Although some criticize the way Air Force develops its senior officers, it seems there are more critics of the promotion system...but the promotion system is not the problem.⁶ The Air Force always seems to promote the “best and brightest” officers, and they do it through a deliberate and thorough promotion board system that includes BPZ promotions. Let's face it, not every officer can or should be promoted early. We need to have faith in the system to identify those high potential officers who will, one day, be senior leaders in our Air Force. Therefore, the author strongly believes the Air Force must continue to use BPZ promotions...but with the right

perspective...one should not assume that officers who are not promoted BPZ are incapable of becoming outstanding general/flag officers. The Air Force must also factor in other discriminators or “prerequisites” for identifying future four-star general 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 Air Force needs to take advantage of the recent change in the MRDs for senior general/flag officers, and adjust their sight picture relative to BPZ promotions and force development.⁷ *Specifically, the Air Force should find a balance between on-time and BPZ officers at the rank of brigadier general.* Simply put, not all general officers need to be groomed to be a four-star. It should also be noted that over one-third of the Navy, Marine Corps and Army one-star selects are on-time officers. By having a bench of BPZ and on-time senior officers who have the breadth and depth of experience to be joint leaders, the Air Force will have a pool of officer’s who are strategically minded critical thinkers.

The recommendations previously discussed 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.⁸ 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.”⁹

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 mixed with Air Force-unique institutional competencies that will lead joint operations into the 21st century.¹⁰ 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.¹¹

Today, it is paramount that the Air Force takes a page from our sister services play book and change the way they do business. These changes 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 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.

² Department of the Air Force, AF/DPG, General Officers Management Office staff interview, 21 January 2010.

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 *ibid*, pg 70.

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⁷ *ibid*, pg 71.

⁸ Department of the Air Force, AF/A1D, staff interview 21 January 2010.

⁹ Department of the Air Force, AF/DPG, General Officers Management Office staff interview, 21 January 2010.

¹⁰ Ehrhard, Thomas P., *An Air Force Strategy for the Long Haul* (Washington DC, Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, 2009), pg 51

¹¹ *ibid*, 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
NDAA	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
SAMS	School of Advanced Military 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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