AIR FORCE, SQUAWK IDENT:
CULTURE AND CONGRESSIONAL LIAISON

BY

ROBERT J. MACK

A THESIS PRESENTED TO THE FACULTY OF

THE SCHOOL OF ADVANCED AIR AND SPACE STUDIES

FOR COMPLETION OF GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

SCHOOL OF ADVANCED AIR AND SPACE STUDIES

AIR UNIVERSITY

MAXWELL AIR FORCE BASE, ALABAMA

JUNE 2018

APPROVAL

The undersigned certify that this thesis meets master's-level standards of research, argumentation, and expression.

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Dr. Stephen Chiabotti 30 May 2018

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Dr. Derrick Frazier 30 May 2018

DISCLAIMER

The conclusions and opinions expressed in this document are those of the author. They do not reflect the official position of the US Government, Department of Defense, the United States Air Force, or Air University.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Major Robert Mack graduated from the United States Air Force Academy in 2004. Following initial training at Vandenberg Air Force Base, California, Rob performed missile operator duty at Malmstrom Air Force Base, Montana where he served in multiple roles including instructor, evaluator, and two stints as section chief. Following Malmstrom, he served at Headquarters Twentieth Air Force, Francis E. Warren Air Force Base, Wyoming, in positions that allowed him to instruct evaluation practices and write Emergency War Order procedures. His assignment to Headquarters Air Force Global Strike Command culminated with him as the Deputy Director, Commander's Action Group and Legislative Liaison, where he was responsible for crafting legislative strategy and preparing the commander to engage Congress. He has a Bachelor of Science in computer science from the Air Force Academy and a Master of Information Systems Management from Auburn University. Upon completion of SAASS, he will return to missile operations.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I'd like to first thank my wife for her support throughout this process, especially considering she was writing a thesis of her own for SAASS.

There were a number of people who were instrumental throughout this process. First, Major General Steven Basham, Director, Legislative Liaison made himself and all those who work for him available to me throughout the research process. Without this level of access, none of this would be possible. I must also deeply thank Undersecretary of the Air Force Matthew Donovan for granting me an interview, without which I would not have had such insightful perspective both from the military and congressional points of view. Finally, numerous staff members from Capitol Hill generously gave me their time and attention for which I'm thankful.

Lastly, I must thank those who were vital in bringing this thesis to life – first, my advisor, Dr. Stephen Chiabotti, for giving me his time and feedback. Additionally, Dr. Derrick Frazier was extremely helpful in making this thesis a quality product – thank you!

ABSTRACT

The Air Force as of late is going through a change in its mission areas and in what the nation has asked of it in time of war. It has transitioned from a bomber-centric type of "strategic" warfare into a diverse force capable of applying effects in a range of conflicts. Part of that change process has induced an identity crisis of sorts, a blurring of the culture. This paper has set out to look at the culture in the context of the Air Force's legislative strategy and see where, if at all, improvements could be made to better the service's relationship with Congress.

This paper focuses primarily on the Air Force Legislative Liaison office, although much could still apply to the Financial Management office in charge of congressional relations. This paper first sets out to establish a basis of understanding regarding the culture and organization of the Department of Defense, and the same for Congress. It utilizes the Navy as a comparison due to similar mission areas and strategic outlooks. It then delves more deeply into the culture of both the Air Force and Congress.

This paper concludes with recommendations for a way-ahead, including some short-term and long-term suggestions. It is critical the Air Force approach Congress as a partner instead of an adversary. Already the service has made gains, but there is more work to be done. In that effort, it must first work to understand its own culture, capturing its identity. Since that is a long-term prospect, the Air Force must also bolster its legislative affairs activities including moving with a bureaucratic sense of urgency. Additionally, the Air Force needs to recruit the right people for legislative affairs, and make efforts to keep those professionals engaged and educated throughout their careers.

CONTENTS

Introduction

The goal of this thesis is to explore the Air Force's strategy as it relates to congressional relations. The United States Congress wields considerable power over the military through the authorization and appropriations processes. There are many stakeholders attempting to influence this important body and its committees on a daily basis. The Air Force happens to be one of them, and it is critical the service meets with success as much as possible in order to ensure its effectiveness in national security. The Air Force spends a lot of effort on organizing, training, equipping, and eventually sending its units into harm's way as the Commander in Chief deems necessary. But before any of that can happen, it must ensure it has the right equipment, enough people, and the authorization to employ its forces. That is where Congress comes in, and the Air Force needs to approach its relationship to Congress appropriately in order to increase its effectiveness.

Similar to the Air Force, Congress has a constitutional mandate to provide for the common defense.[1] Congress should not be seen as simply an obstacle to be overcome. Instead, the members of Congress and their staffers are partners in achieving the United States' goals. The Air Force culture should embrace this ideal and develop service members with this mindset, educate them, and continue to use them properly. Military and legislative cultures are different, but Congress and the Air Force must be able to work through those differences while working toward the common good — national security. Military strategy is important, but without the right foundation it risks crumbling as the country works through domestic and international priorities.

Secondary sources will form the basis of the explanatory portion of

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[1] Roger Pilon, *The Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States of America,* 2013, 35.

this thesis. There are a number of works discussing congressional operations, which will provide critical context. Primary sources such as testimony transcripts will fill out the research about Congress and the Air Force, illustrating some of the relationships between them. These two types of sources will explain why Congress operates the way it does, what the pressures on the members are, and how the relationship between Congress and the Executive branch should present itself. Additionally, many of the same sources, with the help of Department of Defense and Air Force regulations, will illustrate military processes and how they fit into the overall congressional responsibilities. Finally, interviews will be critical in analyzing the effectiveness of established relationships within the Air Force and between the Air Force and the Congress.

A common theme throughout this paper is understanding. Specifically, understanding the stakeholders involved in crafting legislative strategy for the Air Force. Before one can delve into the specifics, however, it is important to have an overview of what culture is and how it is formed. Then one can move on to how Congress is organized. True understanding cannot come, however, from simply looking at an organizational chart of how Congress is set up. Instead, it is important to understand its constitutional role and how that informs everything from bill passage to its relationship with the executive branch. Legislative strategists must understand the committee structure made up of members and their staffs, as well. Once one has a better understanding of Congress, it is time to move on to the Department of Defense and the individual services. A brief overview of how the Department is organized informs how the Air Force organizes its legislative liaison offices. An understanding of the context in organization and culture between the Air Force and Congress will inform a strategy for interaction. Additionally, the Navy might serve as a useful comparison for the Air Force, with the hope of discovering improved legislative liaison practices.

Once Air Force legislative strategists have a good foundation on which to build, they must look to the stakeholders' culture. Understanding both Congress' and the Air Force's culture is critical as it is the basis for action. Without a clear identity informing culture, the Air Force will not be able to speak with a single voice to any organization, let alone Congress. Therefore, one must understand how culture is initially formed and the different artifacts of culture, for both Congress and the Air Force. Leadership is, of course, foundational to any existing culture, but is extremely important if one hopes to shift the culture, if needed. How an organization responds to change is affected not only by leadership; buy-in from all levels is critical.

Finally, once legislative strategists understand Congress' roots, Congress' operations, Department of Defense organization, service organization, and cultural issues, one might be able to make recommendations to improve legislative strategy. Speaking with multiple stakeholders in both the military and Congress sheds light on some potential points of friction that could be addressed. The Air Force is not in dire straits, and one should not walk away with that impression from this paper. No organization, however, is perfect. Leaders should always strive to improve themselves and the organizations they represent. The Air Force has begun making some changes to address shortfalls in legislative affairs, but there is more work to be done, especially considering the importance of relations with Congress.

Chapter 1

What is Culture?

Since culture is at the center of the relationship between the Air Force and Congress, it is important to each organization. The first step in delving into each organization's culture is to grasp what one even means by the term "culture." How is culture created and how can it change over time? Culture itself can be broken down into multiple levels, which helps someone understand a given organization. Of course, one of the most significant impacts on an organization's culture is leadership. Leaders affect culture from the very inception of an organization, but they continue to influence it by their behaviors, policies, and empowerment of their subordinates. Organizations themselves morph over time, so one has to be aware of task proliferation and how that can impact an organization's culture. Finally, no organization operates in a vacuum. External pressures most certainly affect an organization, which means a culture has to be resilient to ensure any change is intended and not merely a consequence of outside interference.

Culture Makeup

What makes up culture? This is the fundamental question one struggles with when looking at an organization's culture. Ultimately, culture boils down to an organization's shared learning that accumulates from its creation until the present day.[1] The accumulation of that shared learning is one of the essential concepts because it informs not only how culture is formed, but also what can be done if one hopes to change it.

When an organization is formed, it begins with a culture. Often it will be based on the founder's (or founders') intentions, attitudes, and beliefs. However, once people join the organization, it changes, which is a fundamental piece of culture — that people affect it. When people join an

[1] Edgar H. Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 5th Edition (Hoboken, New Jersey: Wiley, 2017), 6.

organization, they bring their own beliefs and values. The organization is then forced either to integrate or reject them, even at the micro level. Likewise, however, those same people must either accept or reject the resulting organizational culture. It is a give and take between the individuals and the organization.

Ultimately, the organization's identity gives employees the context they need in order to interpret and find meaning in their and others' behavior.[2] More specifically, it informs employees' processing of surface-level behavior. Further, employees can then make sense of what their organization's priorities are, and, more important, find meaning in the work they do.[3] Motivating employees is much more effective if one can harness their inner will to contribute to a bigger cause, and an organizational identity helps with that, but this is a continuous process.

Once organizations grow and change, culture becomes a pattern of beliefs and values, which, over time, become norms within that organization.[4] Organizations are almost like living creatures, taking inputs and creating outputs. Any time a new input is injected into the system, the organization must adapt in some fashion. The longer an organization has existed, the more time the norms have had to set into place, which can make change within organizations difficult, but not impossible. So organizations, in summary, are a reflection of their leadership and their employees.

Levels of Culture

Understanding what culture is and how it came to be is an essential step in defining a given organization's culture. One must also look, however, to how culture manifests itself. If one hopes to change the

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[2] Davide Ravasi and Majken Schultz, "Responding to Organizational Identity Threats: Exploring the Role of Organizational Culture," *Academy of Management* 49, no. 3 (June 2006): 437.
[3] Ravasi and Schultz, 437.
[4] Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 6.

culture or even influence it, he or she must know what to look for. There must be signs of culture, examples of it must bubble to the surface. Schein argues there are three primary levels of culture: artifacts, espoused beliefs and values, and basic underlying assumptions.[5]

The first level of culture, artifacts, is probably the easiest to identify. The other levels are distinct yet manifest themselves as artifacts. One should think of artifacts as some kind of physical representation or evidence of culture. They are visible phenomena within an organization. Publishing of some kind or observed behavior by those within the organization are examples. Espoused beliefs and values, make up culture, and exist at another level. These beliefs and values begin at organization formation but can change over time as different people come and go. Additionally, the underlying assumptions of an organization and its people impact the overall culture. Sometimes these can be beliefs that are simply taken for granted or assumed.[6]

Bolman and Deal take the concept of artifacts in a different direction, which is also applicable, especially when looking at service culture. They refer to symbols as helping to reveal and communicate an organization's culture. Their examples are mascots and trademarks like GEICO's gecko or Target's bullseye.[7] In a way, these are subsets of artifacts as they are still physical manifestations, but instead being of culture specifically, they are of the organization as a whole. What an organization chooses as its trademark or mascot, however, sets the tone for culture and is the expression for how it wants to be viewed by others.

Leadership

One of the most critical parts of an organization's culture is its leadership. Leadership is responsible for the root culture of an

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[5] Schein, 18.
[6] Schein, 23.
[7] Lee G. Bolman and Terrence E. Deal, *Reframing Organizations: Artistry, Choice and Leadership*, 6th edition (Hoboken, New Jersey: Jossey-Bass, A Wiley Brand, 2017), 242.

organization by shaping expectations at the beginning. Early on, leaders set the tone by exhibiting the behavior they expect from others but also by codifying cultural norms. Members play a role in an organization's culture, of course, but it is the leadership that can set expectations and follow through on them. Leaders' success in fostering a culture they want can depend on many factors like general leadership ability, existing sub-groups within the organization, timing, and expectations.

Ultimately, however, a leader's role is to manage the culture.[8] At the beginning of an organization's formation, the leader creates groups and movements, thereby giving birth to the organization's culture. One can do this actively by encouraging specific behaviors or establishing relationships within the organization. However, one can also create culture by lack of action. Specifically, the practices allowed to happen despite potential negative impacts also define the culture of an organization. This phase falls under Tuchman's "forming" stage of group evolution.[9] The critical part of the forming period is that any new member added must find his or her place in the organization and will take existing cultural norms and organizational beliefs as input to that discovery process. The group creator gets to inform that by setting the example for future members.

The next phase of organizational culture formation is the "storming" phase, where new members confront existing norms and test each other to see where they fall within the structure.[10] Again, leaders play a role in this phase because they often act as arbiters, even unofficially, in these power struggles. Something as simple as calling on a particular person in a meeting can impact this phase of group formation. These power struggles are most applicable to today's Air Force

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[8] Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 125.
[9] Schein, 127.
[10] Schein, 128.

as we see new domains, such as space and cyber, come to the forefront. Members of these sub-groups have to jockey to see where they fall, let alone the sub-groups themselves having to find their place in the overall organizational structure. Power struggles have far-reaching impacts, much past that of culture, including budgeting and spending.

Everything a leader does or says has the potential to be seen by followers, a fact especially true in an era of social media and recording devices in everyone's pockets.[11] Therefore, a leader must work to set the example for followers at all times, which is true in business but is especially true in the military. As General George S. Patton, Jr. once stated, "You are always on parade."[12] In new groups, members will be even more likely to pay attention to what a leader does so they can figure out the culture and expectations.[13] The same can be said, however, for any crisis where followers are looking for guidance.

Part of setting the example as a leader is consistency. Specifically, leaders need to remain consistent both in their actions and to what they decide to pay attention.[14] Sometimes, leaders are entirely unaware they are sending mixed signals to their followers because of their internal conflicts or issues.[15] No one is expecting a leader to be perfect, of course, but too much inconsistency on top drives inconsistency within an organization. Followers will attempt to adjust to the shifting priorities as much as possible, but this switching will create inefficiencies and mixed messages both internally and externally.

Another thing leaders control is lining up the organization's requirements with what employees value. The more this can be aligned,

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[11] Schein, 147.
[12] Colonel Thomas A. Drohan and Captain Tobi S. Warden, *Air Force Academy Cadet Handbook: Contrails*, vol. 46 (United States Air Force Academy, 2000), 64.
[13] Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 147.
[14] Schein, 188.
[15] Schein, 189.

the more likely the leader can rely on employee self-direction and self-motivation, or what Douglas McGregor calls his "Theory Y."[16] The crux of his argument is that the more an organization's requirements are in line with what an employee values, the less the leader will actually have to do. The employees, instead, will be self-motivated to accomplish their tasks because they want to, not because someone told them to. The counter to this scenario is one where alignment is poor and leaders have to force their employees to accomplish tasks because they assume employees are apathetic. This leads to the scenario where employees live up or "live down to your expectations."[17]

Task Proliferation

One of the things Schein focuses on when looking at an organization's culture is strategic focus. That is, how well can the organization stay focused on its strategic goals and how does culture play into that ability? One of the main factors contributing to the organization's ability, or lack thereof, to maintain strategic focus is task proliferation.[18] As tasks increase, it becomes harder for leaders to focus on the core mission areas of an organization.

One of the important things a leader must do is decide what tasks are critical to the organization and which can go away, a difficult decision much of the time.[19] Just as important, however, is deciding how to manage tasks that remain. For instance, should an organization maintain an organic capability, or allow that capability to be centralized in some other part of the organization or externally altogether?

External Adaptation

The previously discussed stress on culture and task proliferation dealt primarily with internal factors. Most organizations, however, must

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[16] Bolman and Deal, *Reframing Organizations*, 123.
[17] Bolman and Deal, 123.
[18] Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 210.
[19] Schein, 210.

interact with external entities at some point in their lifetimes. Whether the organization is contracting help from or giving support to an external entity, there is potential outside influence on the organization's culture. External forces can expose "cracks" in the system, weaknesses in an organization's ability to deal with turbulent times. While an organization cannot necessarily control the external agency's actions that might be affecting culture, it can ensure it fosters resiliency within itself to withstand outside pressures, as necessary.

There are a number of ways an organization can make itself resilient in the face of external pressures. The first is related to the organization's mission. Specifically, understanding the organization's mission provides leaders and employees with the reasons the organization exists in the first place.[20] This first step in building a resilient culture enables the organization to remain true to its roots. This is not to imply organizations cannot or should not ever change. In fact, the opposite is true, but any change should be a deliberate decision, not something accomplished on a whim. Not all change happens in a clear, obvious way. Instead, incremental changes can happen over time unbeknownst to leaders, and, over time, may lead to rather significant changes in organizational identity. Leaders need to take stock of their organization's culture and ensure it still lines up with the mission. When a group of employees is working on a project or toward a goal, the mission of the organization guides them in decision making and informs their behavior. Put another way, the mission helps ensure everyone within the organization is moving in the same, and correct, direction.

Having clear goals is another way an organization maintains resiliency.[21] Goals are directly tied to a clear mission, however. Goals that are not aligned with the organization's overall mission are worthless, as

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[20] Schein, 152.
[21] Schein, 156.

they will breed confusion and discontent. Goals should be thought of in tiers, which allows for different groups within an organization to have their own sets of goals. The key, however, is ensuring any sub-group goals are also aligned with the organization's overall objectives, meaning mission and goals. If leaders do not work to ensure this alignment, over time workers will start moving in different directions, creating a divergent culture within the organization.

It is important to note some of the basics for why identity and culture affect organizations and employees, alike. Organizations begin with some kind of culture, introduced by early leaders, but that culture changes over time, affected not only by leaders but also the members of the organization. As shown, culture is complex and can have many facets. If strategists hope to be effective, they must understand their own organization’s culture but also that of the “target” organization. For an Air Force legislative strategist, there are a couple of questions that come to mind right away. What does the Air Force value and how do I know that? Do I truly understand how Congress operates so that I can then hope to grasp its culture? Is there even one Congressional culture or many?

Chapter 2

Congressional Stakeholders and Processes

One must understand the basic organization of Congress and composition of its stakeholders before formulating the Air Force's legislative approach. Within Congress, there are many levels of stakeholders in the area of legislative affairs, each with different interests and priorities. Understanding these unique roles of influencers at all levels is critical to understanding how one should approach Congressional relations. First, it is imperative to understand the legal basis for Congress and its operations; examining its Constitutional foundations will illuminate the complexity of the organization itself. To overcome the enormous workload and allow for specialization, Congress operates through the use of a committee system. The primary stakeholders in Congress are, of course, the members themselves. Each has a tripartite role to fill, one of local interest dedicated to constituents, balanced with party affiliation and national interest. Members sit on committees, which include another essential set of stakeholders — professional staff members, who serve as the long-term expertise for members.

Constitutional Role

Congress is often criticized for its lack of ability to accomplish much or to agree on much of anything. It is easy to bemoan a "do nothing" Congress that seems unusually divided along partisan lines. However, one would be mistaken to assume this opinion is either different from other times in history or that it is counter to what the framers intended. Federalists, especially in the Federalist Papers, wanted to avoid the mistakes made in crafting the Articles of Confederation.[1]

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[1] William F. Connelly, *James Madison Rules America: The Constitutional Origins of Congressional Partisanship* (Lanham, Md: Rowman & Littlefield, 2010), 16.

Ensuring Congress had the appropriate amount of power in the correct areas was critical to this goal. Beyond that, the federal government had to be able to exercise enough power to keep the nation together while not infringing on states' rights. The framers were trying to create a system with a strong-enough executive, a states'-rights-enforcing function, and an impartial check on the entire system. The balance among the President, Congress, and the court system did just that. The Constitution explicitly set out the rules and boundaries by which the government should operate. Congress, being a critical part of the government, as it represents the people, finds itself described right at the beginning of Article 1.[2]

A common phrase that comes to mind when considering the United States system of government is "separation of powers." More apt, however, is to think of it in terms of separation of functions, not of powers.[3] In fact, it is not separation of powers at all, but instead, a sharing of powers.[4] This sharing of powers creates the balance the framers were after when they wrote the Constitution. Consider the creation of a law, something which Congress proposes and passes but the President must sign, representing the executive branch. These two institutions share the power of passing legislation, resulting in conflict and cooperation. Further, the bicameral Congress creates room for tension as the House of Representatives and the Senate must pass the same bill language before the law is sent to the President for signature. The conflict and cooperation between the branches of government and within Congress itself were intentionally included in the Constitution.[5]

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[2] Pilon, *Declaration of Independence and Constitution*.
[3] Connelly, *James Madison Rules America*, 136.
[4] John Haskell, Marian Currinder, and Sara A. Grove, *Congress in Context*, Second edition (Boulder: Westview Press, A Member of the Perseus Books Group, 2014), 10.
[5] Walter J. Oleszek, *Congressional Procedures and the Policy Process*, Ninth edition (Thousand Oaks, California: CQ Press, 2014), 4.

The checks and balances built into the system are what link the branches together and provide the forcing function to work together. In fact, in most cases, the only way to resolve differences between branches is through some form of negotiation or compromise, something also seen in Congress.[6] These openings for bargaining and compromise provide opportunities for a legislative strategist to advocate or explain particular policies or programs.

With its well-thought-out linkages between branches of government and the inherent relationships those ties create, the Constitution serves as a stabilizing force in government, especially in Congress. Early in America's history, Alexis de Tocqueville observed, "The Americans often change their laws, but the basis of the Constitution is respected."[7] A common thread of complaint is the seemingly endless campaign of Congress. Tocqueville observed this phenomenon in his time, something that should reassure present-day observers, and was not worried about it because the Constitution provided stability through decentralized government and checks and balances.[8] Of course, campaigning is critical should we expect Congress to reflect the wishes of the populace. Without frequent elections, Congress would not be held accountable so easily. Additionally, with the term-length differences between the House (two years) and the Senate (six years), Congress retains stability while remaining true to the voters.

Some of the functions of Congress require more close cooperation with the executive branch than others. Most people are familiar with the lawmaking part of Congress' mandate. However, Congress' oversight of the executive branch is a large part of its responsibility. When Congress establishes a department or law, it must also ensure its requirements

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[6] Oleszek, 5.
[7] Connelly, *James Madison Rules America*, 139.
[8] Connelly, 139.

and expectations are being met. In the mid-20th century, there was a lot more trust between Congress and the executive branch than there is today.[9] This trust resulted in broad statutory responsibility given to the departments, but today Congress is much more involved in ensuring its directives are being followed.[10] Congress' oversight functions, hearings, organizations like the Government Accountability Office, and control of appropriations all ensure the executive branch is following Congressional direction. This is one of the factors that drives frequent interaction between the legislative and the executive branches of government. For the Air Force legislative strategist, Congress' oversight responsibilities provide an opportunity to show the importance of certain mission areas and the dedication of the people working, both of which can work to the service's benefit on Capitol Hill. These oversight visits are an opportunity, not a burden.

Another benefit the Constitution brings is the distribution of functions, which inevitably creates specialization across government branches but also within Congress itself.[11] Jessica Korn points out, as a rebuttal to Woodrow Wilson's critique of the separation of powers, that the separations themselves end up producing a division of labor that necessitates specialization if one is to do the job successfully.[12] As the government has grown in size since the country's founding, the job of Congress becomes much more complex. Personal and professional staff members surely help with this process and illustrate the benefits of specializing, notably within the committee system. In fact, the committee system itself is a perfect example of Congress coping with the complexity of its job by encouraging specialization by both members and congressional staff.

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[9] Haskell, Currinder, and Grove, *Congress in Context*, 197.
[10] Haskell, Currinder, and Grove, 197.
[11] Connelly, *James Madison Rules America*, 120.
[12] Connelly, 120.

Committees

Committees serve an essential function in Congress, whether facilitating specialization or balancing the overall workload. Understanding the organization of Congress illustrates how committees play a central role in day-to-day work of legislation. According to Madison in Federalist 51, the bicameral nature of Congress was intentional to slow the overall process down.[13] Although he gives precedence to the legislative branch, he argues that the inefficiency of a two-house Congress counterbalances that precedence. Ultimately, however, Congress must accomplish something. As mentioned previously, there is just too much to do for the entire House or Senate to take up every bit of work as a whole.

Early members of Congress wanted to avoid dominant subgroups forming within government, so select committees were more commonplace.[14] These committees functioned in a more temporary status, therefore, helping to prevent a powerful group from forming, while also enabling Congress to work efficiently. Things continued this way for quite some time, with standing committees becoming truly modernized only after World War II.[15] However, as early as the Civil War, standing committees became more popular, creating continuity of jurisdiction between different congressional sessions.[16] Committees are further broken down into subcommittees. Again, this helps with specialization and ensures that Congress can keep up with the ever-increasing workload. Of note, after World War II the number of bills passed in the House and Senate climbed into the 2000s, further indicating why the

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[13] Connelly, 160.
[14] Christopher J. Deering and Steven S. Smith, *Committees in Congress*, 3rd ed (Washington, D.C: CQ Press, 1997), 26.
[15] Deering and Smith, 26.
[16] Deering and Smith, 26.

committees' work was so important.[17] A counterpoint to the modern committee system, which some could say is outdated and needs to be changed, is the number of bills Congress passed in recent years. The House, for instance, passed only 223 bills during the 113th Congress.[18] Of course, this would be misleading, as in that same Congress, there were over nine thousand bills introduced that never went anywhere.[19] The committee system is not going anywhere anytime soon. Therefore, it is vital for anyone hoping to interact with Congress to understand the committees of relevance both on the House and Senate sides, realizing they may have different priorities.

One of the committees' most important instruments of power and productivity is holding hearings. They serve many purposes for Congress as a whole but also for individual members. Hearings allow members of Congress to raise issues of importance to the nation and their constituents. They allow information to be put on the record, usually to build a case for or against a piece of legislation.[20] They are also used to highlight important issues of the day. The types of hearings can range from relatively predictable posture hearings for the President's Budget to hearings on hot-button issues with witnesses from the private sector. Regardless, hearings allow members to build a coalition for or against a piece of legislation.[21]

Some may say hearings are just political theater and do not reflect actual work getting done. The truth in this statement is partial. First, there is a simple reason hearings are important — members say they

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[17] Brookings and American Enterprise Institute, "Vital Statistics on Congress," *Brookings* (blog), September 7, 2017, 6–1, https://www.brookings.edu/multi-chapter-report/vital-statistics-on-congress/.
[18] Brookings and American Enterprise Institute, figs. 6–1.
[19] "Historical Statistics about Legislation in the U.S. Congress -," GovTrack.us, accessed May 25, 2018, https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/statistics.
[20] Oleszek, *Congressional Procedures and the Policy Process*, 127.
[21] Deering and Smith, *Committees in Congress*, 158.

are.[22] Even if much of the hearing seems staged (because it likely is) or if members seem uninterested in responses (they sometimes are, as members are known to leave immediately following their portion of questioning), the hearing is still important. Any organization that is trying to inform Congress should keep this fact in mind when approaching hearings. Also, it would be a mistake to underestimate members, as they are often very well informed by the expert staff who likely wrote the questions at hand.

A common critique of Congress is that parties have become too powerful or that party affiliation is all that matters. Politics is an area where military legislative specialists sometimes find discomfort. In the United States, the military, as an organization, is apolitical. Therefore, for some, it can be uncomfortable dealing with the political nature of Congress and engaging in anything remotely political. This, however, is a critical part of Congress and understanding how and why it operates the way it does. While there is certainty that since the founding, parties have become more powerful, Congress has come to rely on committees more than parties when it comes to accomplishing something of value.[23] As mentioned previously, a division of labor is critical if Congress hopes to accomplish anything in a given session. To that end, to serve the broader agenda, committees carry a lot of power in originating and processing legislation. Because committees' importance has increased, so has that of committee chairpersons.

Finally, an important distinction in the organization of Congress is the difference between authorization and appropriation. This difference will come into play later when discussing how the Department of Defense is organized. Put simply, before a program or department can be created or continue to function, it needs to be authorized to do so and then

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[22] Oleszek, *Congressional Procedures and the Policy Process*, 127.
[23] Deering and Smith, *Committees in Congress*, 5.

funded accordingly. Those two steps are distinct and carry different implications. Authorizers tend to deal with the what and how of programs, dictating what the Air Force, for instance, should do and how it is organized. However, a program or agency cannot move forward unless the appropriators give the necessary money to do so. Understanding the process of authorization and appropriation sheds light on the "battle rhythm" of the Air Force when it comes to Capitol Hill efforts. The President's Budget, due in February (although often late), kicks off the process each year with the goal of having a funded government by the next fiscal year (also something that is often late in recent years).

The budget process has gained in importance recently since the 1974 Congressional Budget and Impoundment Control Act. The changes brought about by this act are many, but primarily it changed where some of the influence in Congress lies. It set up a process that put restrictions on how the committees operated and where some of the power was wielded by removing some of it from committees that, in the past, had relevant jurisdiction.[24] The law established the concurrent budget resolution, effectively producing a spending limit (302(a) allocation) which then gets split up into different categories and given to the relevant subcommittees (302(b) suballocation).[25] This process reduced the flexibility of the subcommittees but had the goal of approaching spending with a more comprehensive plan in place. Another important part of the law established the Congressional Budget Office, an organization designed to provide non-partisan analysis. Specifically, its goal is to provide analysis of budget and economic issues through reports

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[24] Deering and Smith, 194.
[25] James V. Saturno, Bill Heniff Jr., and Megan S. Lynch, "The Congressional Appropriations Process: An Introduction" (Congressional Research Service, November 30, 2016), 16.

and cost estimates.[26] It provides a vital service when scoring pending legislation so lawmakers can make more informed decisions based on how the bill may affect the nation's finances and debt.

Members and Staff

Congressional foundations and organizations are essential; however, the most influential stakeholder in legislative affairs is, of course, the member. Members' personalities, experiences, party affiliation, and goals are just some of the things that influence their decisions and actions on Capitol Hill. One of the most valuable things legislative strategists can do is improve their understanding of the members who have the greatest influence or interest in the desired subject. To achieve that level of understanding, one must comprehend the motivations and responsibilities that pull members in multiple directions.

Members of Congress always have to balance national and local interests. Every single member of Congress has a local constituency of some kind. For House members, that is their congressional district; for Senators, their "district" is an entire state. This difference alone helps to explain why those in the Senate and House act differently. Inherently, the Senator's "district" is much more diverse, as it encompasses the state rather than a small, sometimes carefully crafted, House district. "District" size can serve to temper the Senator's positions and encourage more compromise on contentious issues. Because of this, Senators tend to balance national and local issues much more effectively than do Representatives.

Because every member of Congress has a home district with voters to whom he or she is responsible, it is critical any legislative strategist

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[26] "Introduction to CBO," Congressional Budget Office, February 21, 2011, https://www.cbo.gov/about/overview.

understands the priorities of that district. One cannot underestimate the importance a member puts on his or her constituency.[27] In fact, it is helpful to think of a member's constituency as his or her ultimate "boss."[28] If a vote, decision, or position seems disconnected from national interest, one should look at the district. A recent example of this is the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) issue that has popped up in recent years.[29] The Air Force has asked for a BRAC study many times recently, seemingly never to garner enough support to make it a reality. Logic would seem to indicate it is a good idea to ensure the Air Force is not wasting resources keeping bases open unnecessarily. That surely is in the national interest. However much members of Congress may be in favor of cutting back, local interest will tend to play more heavily on their minds. Put another way, members of Congress who may typically be in favor of that kind of cut-back may not support it if the reductions come from their district.

Another way to illustrate the tough position in which many in Congress find themselves is by looking at polling numbers. It is common knowledge that Congress' overall approval rating is almost always low. As an organization, most people are not happy with its work. However, this does not hold true locally. Ask a person if they are happy with how Congress is doing and they would likely answer "no"; but ask them if they are happy with how their Congressman is doing and they might answer "yes." For instance, in a 2013 Gallup poll, Congress' approval rating was 16 percent. Research has also shown, however, that about 46 percent would reelect the member from their local congressional district.[30] In fact, earlier data shows that number to be much higher,

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[27] Haskell, Currinder, and Grove, *Congress in Context*, 22.
[28] Oleszek, *Congressional Procedures and the Policy Process*, 37.
[29] Mackenzie Eaglen, "All the Misleading Reasons Not to Do BRAC," AEI, March 17, 2016, http://www.aei.org/publication/all-the-misleading-reasons-not-to-do-brac/.
[30] Elizabeth Mendes, "Americans Down on Congress, OK With Own Representative,"

even above 60 percent, which is astronomical by today's standards concerning approval ratings.

Congress, as a whole, would love this kind of approval rating. Its overall approval rating has only gone down in recent history, outside of short-term spikes. For instance, in October 2001 following the terrorist attacks, its approval rating was 84 percent, but it rarely has moved out of the teens in recent years.[31] As Gallup has shown, however, individual members tend to have higher approval ratings from their constituency. Interestingly, Gallup also revealed that the individual approval rating was higher if the respondent knew his or her representative's name.[32] This disparity in approval ratings between the group and its individuals lends further credence to the personal nature of politics, and why politicians must pay close attention to their constituencies.

There are critics of this dual posture, and Woodrow Wilson was one of the most prominent. He was a critic of how Congress operated, although his views subtly shifted with age and the more involved in government he became. Concerning this parochialism, Wilson was concerned about the local influences overriding national interest. He believed Congress needed clear, general deliberation on critical national issues.[33] Wilson and other Anti-Federalists like him thought individualism was excessive and was, indeed, a central flaw in the Constitutional makeup of Congress.[34] The fact that Wilson was critiquing the design of United States government as early as the 1880s highlights an important point — these debates have gone on for a long time and likely will continue as long as the United States exists.

One of the problems with the argument that Congress is too local,

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Gallup.Com, May 9, 2013, http://news.gallup.com/poll/162362/americans-down-congress-own-representative.aspx.

[31] Haskell, Currinder, and Grove, *Congress in Context*, 28.

[32] Mendes, "Americans Down on Congress, OK With Own Representative."

[33] Connelly, *James Madison Rules America*, 116.

[34] Connelly, 116.

however, is that it glosses over the central purpose of Congress, which is to be the most representative part of the government. The executive, although elected, has too broad a "constituency" to be a good representative for small groups of people. The judiciary, especially at the federal level, does not act in this role. Congress was designed, however, to be the people's advocate at the national level. Even the level of access the public has to Capitol Hill and hearings point to this purpose. Any citizen can walk almost anywhere on Capitol Hill, attend open hearings, and sit in on sessions and debates. Almost all activity is televised to give access to the average citizen. The whole purpose of Congress is manifested in the local-first mentality of most members.

Because members of Congress ultimately work for their constituents, they must to some extent put a priority on local issues. This locally focused priority is especially true around campaign season. Members' personal candidacy will affect their legislative calculus.[35] Interestingly, because of the difference in election cycle between the House and Senate, the House members are almost always campaigning and therefore more likely to factor local issues into their legislative calculus. Other than the broader constituency of a given Senator, because of the six-year cycle, in theory, a Senator can be more deliberative and make decisions that might be better for the whole, rather than a smaller part. The Framers anticipated these tendencies when forming the Constitution; Congress is working as intended. The public has a say, but not too much of a say.

Because they are pulled in so many directions, members of Congress become generalists.[36] Some may be more steeped in specific issues, while others may be experts at navigating the rules of their chamber. They cannot, however, be an expert on every subject that

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[35] Connelly, 61.
[36] Haskell, Currinder, and Grove, *Congress in Context*, 12.

comes across their desk nor on every topic on which they must vote. This generalist approach to lawmaking has implications in the laws of our nation and in governmental departments. Generalists often create ambiguity, leaving room for interpretation of laws (something the judicial branch is supposed to do).[37] This fact also leaves room for agencies to operate within bounds given to them but to do so creatively. The Air Force can and should be willing to work in the gray areas, obeying laws and regulations, while not shying away from creative implementation.

One of the ways members of Congress cope with the fact that they cannot be experts in everything is to have staff. Staff members work in both the members' personal offices but also for the committees themselves. Often referred to as professional staff members, those who work for the committees fulfill a variety of roles, working at the discretion of the chairman or ranking member, as appropriate. Organized under a staff director for each, these people will interface with agencies, in this case the Department of Defense and services, to learn about programs, engage in oversight of directives given to the Department, and ultimately play a crucial role in crafting future legislation. For this reason, policy expertise resides with the committee and subcommittee staffs in both chambers of Congress.[38]

Staff members, especially professional staff on the committees, are some of the most critical stakeholders in the entire process. As mentioned, they are the keepers of policy expertise. It is not fair to imply that members themselves cannot be experts on issues, but rarely do they have the time to focus on particular topics like staff members do. Because members serve on multiple committees and must vote on all matters, they are generalists. Staff members, however, work for only one committee or subcommittee; so they can afford to focus on issues. In

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[37] Haskell, Currinder, and Grove, 12.
[38] Haskell, Currinder, and Grove, 141.

fact, that is their job. They are often the ones writing the legislative language that finds its way into law. They often write the questions members ask in hearings. They are usually in place for a significant amount of time, meaning they often have more experience with a given program than the military member advocating for it on Capitol Hill.

Although much of identifying how the Air Force's legislative strategy and relationship with Congress depends on internal Air Force stakeholders, policies, and practices, it is nonetheless vital to first understand Congress. Congress is not just a single branch of government but is instead made up of a significant number of people. Each person working on Capitol Hill, whether a member of Congress or a staffer, has interests, priorities, and even an agenda. Understanding the significant stakeholders' roles is vital to any strategist contemplating how to approach improving the Air Force's relationship with Congress. The legal basis for Congress, the Constitution, is the first and most important part of this understanding. Having an appreciation for why Congress works the way it does begins there. Additionally, understanding the roles members play and the different responsibilities they have will shed further light on why things happen the way they do. Realizing a member's first duty is to his or her constituency informs how one approaches that member. Since all members work on committees, and these committees are staffed by professional staff members, a legislative strategist must understand the role staff members play in the lawmaking process.

Chapter 3

Department of Defense Stakeholders and Processes

Once the stakeholders and organization of Congress are explored, one must look to the Department of Defense to understand the interaction of the two organizations. It is also helpful to understand the roles defined by the Department for the individual services and then discover how the Air Force implements this guidance. Each service operates differently within those roles, so this paper will use the Air Force and Navy as a comparison to illustrate these differences.

The Air Force and Navy both have similar missions and portfolios, which makes them useful for comparison. For instance, both services have global power projection at their cores, with the ability to do so from stand-off ranges against an adversary. Additionally, they are the only services that have the ability to employ nuclear weapons. Finally, they both rely heavily on the advancement of technology to stay relevant in their respective domains. This focus on technological reliance does not mean to imply the other services do not also rely on it to some extent, but that the Navy and Air Force cannot exist in their domains at all without the help of technology. Importantly, however, each service has a unique culture, and this is key to its interaction with Congress.

Additionally, there are official organizational structures but also informal ones. The formal structures are essential in that they provide the bounds in which the military services operate. There are rules imposed upon the Department as well with regard to appropriations and authorizations. Specifically, the services are required to have separate offices to represent those functions. In addition to official structures, however, informal processes and organizational culture affect day-to-day activities and the relationships that form between the different stakeholders. Both formal and informal processes come together to

create the structure in which legislative-affairs specialists operate. Organizational culture also affects the legislative strategy itself.

Department of Defense

The Department of Defense maintains its legislative affairs specialists who advise the Secretary of Defense and help manage overall legislative strategy for the Department. They integrate with the rest of the executive branch, especially on the President's Budget, to try to present a single, approved message to Congress. This level of coordination is essential, as many organizations in the Department have their own legislative-affairs organizations. For instance, each of the services has offices dedicated to liaising with authorization and appropriation members and staffs.

Many may not be aware, however, that the differentiation goes further than that. Combatant commands also have legislative affairs specialists to help articulate their unique messages to Congress. Each combatant command has its set of responsibilities, whether geographical or functional. Regardless, they have unique mission sets and potential difficulties or challenges that interest Congress.

There are many diverging, and sometimes competing, interests within the Department of Defense. What may be good for the Air Force, might not be good for the Navy, which could impact multiple combatant commands. Coordinating the different messages to try to provide a united one to Congress is a difficult task during the best of times, let alone during contentious debates over weapon systems, personnel, basing, or overall budget. In fact, Department of Defense regulations speak mostly to day-to-day activities.[1] They do not focus on an overarching vision for relationships with Congress.

Air Force Organization and Manning

[1] "DODI 5400.04, Provision of Information to Congress," March 17, 2009.

The Air Force's legislative affairs organizations follow the split between authorization work and appropriation work. The first part of that division in responsibility falls to the Air Force Legislative Liaison, a two-star general who works for the Secretary of the Air Force; hence the office symbol SAF/LL. This paper deals primarily with SAF/LL, not because it is any more important than those who work with appropriations, but because many of its issues are indicative of service-wide ones. SAF/LL is the official liaison with Congress except for appropriations, budget, coordinating with the Congressional Budget Office, and working with the Office of Management and Budget. Basically, SAF/LL is responsible for everything except getting actual money placed against specific programs, particularly in the year of budget execution. As discussed earlier, Congressional authorizers will be specific on how much money a program should receive, but it is the appropriators who decide how much money that program will actually get in a given year.

Air Force regulations specify SAF/LL functions. Some of these major functions are coordinating legislative programs and keeping Congress informed of issues, planned and unplanned, within the Air Force.[2] Like most Air Force regulations, the Air Force Instruction specifies duties that must be accomplished and who is responsible for those actions. It does not delineate, however, the overall conceptual role or place for SAF/LL. It focuses on the day-to-day activities but not the big picture. This regulation will be contrasted with the Navy's later.

SAF/LL is divided functionally to allow its specialists to focus on certain areas, ensuring timely responses to Congress along with proactive engagement as necessary. One section, for instance, focuses on preparing Air Force leadership for its meetings with Congress, including

[2] "AFI 90-401, Air Force Relations With Congress," June 14, 2012, 5.

preparation for testifying before Congress. SAF/LL also has a section dedicated to working with the House and another with the Senate. In fact, these organizations' offices (SAF/LLH and SAF/LLS) are embedded with Congress in the Rayburn House Office Building and the Russell Senate Office Building, respectively. These specialists manage portfolios made up of members of Congress, which is different than the portfolio managers in SAF/LLW or SAF/LLP.

SAF/LLW and SAF/LLP are made up of legislative specialists managing portfolios of programs or systems. These organizations are different from SAF/LLH and SAF/LLS, where their members' portfolios are people. Portfolio managers who work with programs will have a much different focus than those whose entire job is ensuring they have good working relationships with the members' personal offices. Accordingly, SAF/LLW and SAF/LLP will often deal with committee staff who are the experts in their certain areas of interest, as discussed previously. It makes sense that SAF/LL would organize similarly to how Congress is organized.

As mentioned, the services must have separate legislative affairs organizations for appropriations. In the Air Force, this is accomplished by putting the responsible organization under the Financial Manager and Comptroller, known as SAF/FM. Specifically, SAF/FMBL is responsible for appropriations, budget work, and coordinating with the Congressional Budget Office.[3] SAF/FMBL has responsibilities similar to SAF/LL; only its specialists deal primarily with appropriators in both houses of Congress.

The regulation also does not give any attention to the type of people whom SAF/LL should hire. Of course, no one wants prescribed precisely whom he or she should hire, but the Air Force Instruction

[3] "AFI 90-401, Air Force Relations With Congress," 6.

spends no time talking about the importance of having people comfortable building relationships, working outside standard military chains of command, or the importance of communication skills. In fact, the instruction does not speak to the hiring practices of SAF/LL at all.

Manning an organization is a difficult task under normal circumstances, let alone when SAF/LL is trying to please two masters — the Air Force and Congress. That is one of the principal difficulties facing any hiring manager in a legislative-affairs organization. The Air Force staffs SAF/LL through standard Air Force personnel practices. Military members may have a permanent change of station that assigns them directly into SAF/LL from another duty location. They may also be reassigned to SAF/LL from somewhere else within the Pentagon. SAF/LL is also part of the Air Force Legislative Fellows program, one of the more selective options for intermediate developmental education.[4]

Military members often staff SAF/LL, especially officers, who are doing very well in their military careers. These officers are seen as "going places" in the Air Force, contributing to the feeling of it being a "touch and go" assignment for many of them. Additionally, sometimes SAF/LL has difficulty getting the legislative fellows to complete their follow-on assignments to SAF/LL. One of the contributing factors seems to be the officers' timing, especially concerning command opportunities back in their career fields.

Training is yet another important issue in manning an organization. SAF/LL relies on the Government Affairs Institute, based at Georgetown, to train incoming members.[5] The special course held for the Air Force occurs twice per year, meaning some people will take the class at the beginning of their time while others may have to wait. Regardless,

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[4] Michelle Ryan, interview by the author, February 14, 2019.
[5] Ryan.

this course is taught by professionals in the field and provides a "comprehensive look at congressional processes and organization, and at how Congress affects the daily operations of every department and agency in the executive branch."[6]

Navy Organization and Manning

The Navy legislative affairs specialists are organized similarly to the Air Force. The Navy, as is required by law, separates its authorizing functions from its appropriations functions. There are some interesting differences in Navy regulations as compared to the Air Force. Recall, the Air Force instructions were focused on organization and duties but not so much on the big picture regarding what SAF/LL should do.

The Navy, however, does include some important statements in its legislative regulations. First, it highlights the importance of legislative affairs for the entire service when it says that the Secretary of the Navy "regards the conduct of congressional affairs as a primary responsibility of the Department."[7] Although this may seem like a generic statement and one of many in a regulation, it shows the Navy places high importance on its legislative-affairs apparatus. Not only does this tell its Office of Legislative Affairs (OLA) department how important its job is, but the statement also makes clear to everyone in the Navy that the Secretary of the Navy expects them to work closely with and be responsive to the Office of Legislative Affairs.

Later, the same regulation specifies the mission of the Office of Legislative Affairs and includes "coordinating relationships" with Congress.[8] This innocuous phrase holds great importance in legislative affairs. In fact, if one were to ask just about anyone working for or with

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[6] "Congressional Operations Seminar | The Government Affairs Institute," accessed April 17, 2018, https://gai.georgetown.edu/congressional-operations-seminar/.
[7] "SECNAVI 5730.5J, Mission, Function, and Responsibilities of the Office of Legislative Affairs," July 31, 2007, para. 3.
[8] "SECNAVI 5730.5J, Mission, Function, and Responsibilities of the Office of Legislative Affairs," para. 5a.

Congress, they would often cite relationships as one of the most important things in getting the job done. Good relationships built on trust enable sharing of information and a sense of respect each organization has for the other. It is notable the Navy cites this directly in its regulations.

Navy Office of Legislative Affairs manning is different from the Air Force in some respects. First, OLA is much smaller than SAF/LL in number. At the time of writing, OLA had approximately 50 personnel while the Air Force had 80. Additionally, the Navy staffs OLA with a broader spread of ranks, tailored to specific jobs. For instance, the Navy utilizes junior officers (most around O-3) in its Capitol Hill offices and relies on them for much of its member and personal staff travel activities. These young officers tend to be closer in age to a lot of the congressional staff with whom they deal. The Navy, however, tends to have higher-ranking officers, over half being O-5s, handling specific programs or weapon systems.[9] They are usually post-command officers who have a breadth of experience and knowledge they can leverage in OLA. Recall the Air Force tends to have mostly O-4s accomplishing these duties.

The Navy also attempts to hire for their leadership positions people who have had some previous legislative experience. The service deliberately hires people who have a good track record in this unique and demanding area. Interviews are a critical part of OLA's hiring practices. With very few exceptions, a candidate is interviewed at least four times with the final hiring decision resting with the Chief of Legislative Affairs, a Navy two-star. The Deputy Chief of Legislative Affairs for Strategy and Assessment, a civilian with extensive congressional experience, personally interviews all candidates to ensure they have the right personality for the position. OLA recognizes that an officer with a strong

[9] Sandra Latta and Captain Jon Rodgers, interview by the author, January 30, 2018.

record will not necessarily succeed in OLA where communication is critical, building relationships is vital, and being able to operate in the gray area is required if one hopes to be successful.

Air Force and Navy Comparison

Hiring decisions are critical in an organization charged with ensuring relations with Congress are as positive as possible so the service can adequately advocate its priorities. Comparing the Air Force to the Navy is useful due to many shared mission areas, such as nuclear portfolios and common aircraft platforms. One might be able to find best practices in one service that can be shared with the other. Both organizations must work within their own service's hiring standards, but there are still differences between how each office staffs itself.

As discussed previously, SAF/LL and Navy OLA staff their offices differently. As a general rule, Navy personnel who manage weapon system portfolios tend to be of a higher rank, around O-5 to O-6, while Air Force officers tend to be lower, O-4 to O-5. With this rank difference comes many benefits for Navy OLA. According to one committee staff member, with a command tour often complete, the Navy officers tend to have more experience and contacts, due both to prior experience and simply having more time in service. This staff member equated the experience and professional contacts with quicker responses and more confidence in delivering answers in a timely fashion.[10] This staff member's experience seems consistent with Under Secretary Donovan's perception, as well. Recalling his time as a staff member on the Senate Armed Services Committee, he commented on the fact that Navy personnel, especially within the top positions, seemed to have previous legislative experience while this was less common in the Air Force.[11]

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[10] Interview with congressional staff member familiar with DOD issues, January 30, 2018.
[11] Matthew Donovan, interview by the author, January 29, 2016.

Another difference between the two offices is the perception of time in the position, even when each office advertises the positions to be a two- to three-year job. A House staff member recalled in a six- to seven-year timeframe working with portfolio representatives from both services. During that time, this staffer worked with three liaisons from the Navy and at least five from the Air Force, which creates the sense that the Air Force uses its SAF/LL organization as a "touch and go" position for up-and-coming officers.[12] This observation is not to imply either service promotes its legislative affairs specialists differently, but it is an important data point nonetheless. Ultimately, if congressional staff members sense better experiences with one service over another, it is something to which the Air Force should pay attention.

The Navy attempts to bring officers back in leadership roles who have previous legislative experience. The Air Force currently has no codified system in place to accomplish this, although there are indications of change. The Air Force now has a Special Experience Identifier for legislative experience. Currently, SAF/LL applies this code to military members who have performed well and are interested. This code is not applied to everyone who works in SAF/LL, but instead has a quality factor incorporated into it. Unofficially, it appears as though the Air Force values previous legislative experience, especially in the two-star general who oversees the organizations. However, just as with lower-ranking leaders, there is nothing written down even encouraging this practice.

Getting quality people into the organization is critical but can be difficult when one hires primarily based on paper records and career history. Navy OLA interviews every potential hire into the organization to determine if the military member would be a good fit for the kind of work

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[12] Interview with congressional staff member familiar with DOD issues, January 30, 2018.

required. The types of questions asked during the interviews try to help determine how the potential hire would react to situations that are not black and white, something with which military professionals can often struggle. The candidates are also considered based on social skills, since much of the job relies on interpersonal relationships, not only between the service and Congress but also internal to the Pentagon. Navy OLA believes it has been able to choose the right people for the job because of the interview process.[13] The Air Force, however, does not have an interview process. As mentioned previously, it hires based on the standard personnel processes. This means there is not quality check for personality. Admittedly, there is word-of-mouth discussion on potential hires, especially those within the Pentagon. Unfortunately, not everyone understands the needs of SAF/LL and the kind of people who might work best in a complex environment.

The Department of Defense is a vast organization, so it makes sense there are multiple legislative affairs offices spread throughout the department. The Department has its own legislative affairs office, but so do the combatant commands and the services themselves. Each service must implement guidance passed down by the Department of Defense to ensure compliance, but each has flexibility on how it organizes, trains, and hires. This chapter discussed Air Force organization and manning practices and compared them against the Navy. SAF/LL and Navy OLA each fill the same function in their respective services, but they differ in how they go about doing so. Official structures within each matter to some extent, but it is the informal practices and organizational culture that affect their activities more. These factors ultimately contribute to how successful each service is in ensuring its voice is heard on Capitol Hill.

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[13] Latta and Rodgers, interview by the author.

Chapter 4

Congressional Culture

Thus far this paper has discussed the organization and structure of the major stakeholders in the legislative process. Especially for those unfamiliar with Air Force Legislative Liaison, much of this information alone is informative and useful. For those already working in legislative affairs, however, much of the information will seem like "old news." This chapter begins the focus on the "so what" of this research — what the Air Force can learn about Congress' culture, in addition to its own. The Air Force must take a hard look at its culture and what it wants its identity to be moving forward to the future. While changing culture is a long-term effort, there are immediate things the Air Force and SAF/LL can do in order to improve its approach to legislative affairs. Part of this solution seems simple but is critical — the Air Force needs to better understand Congress.

Congress is a critical partner in ensuring the Air Force can meet the nation's needs, and as such has its own culture developed over centuries. Just as with any organization, Congress' culture begins at its founding and with those who established this country. The Constitution serves as the primary guide for congressional action, as discussed earlier in this paper. Over time, however, Congress has cemented certain beliefs and values, and it certainly has established norms throughout its history. An example of a belief born from the Constitution and firmly cemented in the modern Congress is that of the Senate's role in the advice and consent of Presidential appointees to various departments within the executive branch. To advise and give consent to nominees is a Constitutional role,[1] but one that is very important to the legislative

[1] Pilon, *Declaration of Independence and Constitution*, 46.

branch in ensuring the right people fill critical positions in government. It also happens to be a lever the Senate can use when trying to exert control in other matters. It has been known to hold up civilian and military nominees as long as needed to get an issue heard.

Congress, like any organization, has artifacts that help describe culture. The Constitution, for instance, is probably one of the most prominent artifacts relating to Congress' culture as it outlines the very existence of the organization. One cannot expect, however, Congress to have a single set of overarching artifacts since it is made up of 535 different members. Therefore, each member must be treated individually when trying to understand the culture of Congress and, more importantly, how to leverage that culture to the Air Force's benefit. For instance, when in a member's office, a visitor can see many different types of artifacts. Perhaps one is the diploma from the member's school. Another could be a set of military coins on the desk. It is important to piece together the story for each individual if one hopes to understand the organization as a whole. Observing what hangs on a member's wall is only part of the solution, however, as one must ascertain which of those hold the most importance and how that translates to that member's influence of Congressional culture. This means legislative strategists must make efforts to understand the member, influenced by those artifacts. Finding the thread that runs from that member to culture is difficult, but quite important.

Part of the shared learning that occurs within the organization is the creation of a pattern of norms.[2] Congress is no different in this regard. In fact, both chambers of Congress have rules and procedures that form the basis of the norms with which they each operate. Some of these apply to how a bill is brought to the floor in the House, or perhaps

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[2] Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 6.

how to file for cloture on a bill in the Senate, thus limiting debate and making it filibuster-proof. These different tactics are part of congressional culture and should be appreciated if one hopes to understand the organization and collaborate with its members to accomplish one's goals.

Just as with any organization, leadership plays a critical role in the development of Congress' culture. One only has to look to the House of Representatives as an example of this. The Speaker of the House of Representatives is often viewed "as symbolizing the power and authority of the House."[3] The role of Speaker is one that has changed over the years as the Constitution does not specify any duties other than requiring the House to choose a Speaker.[4] Because of the Constitution's lack of specificity, the role is shaped by those who inhabit the office but also the rest of the House, which assigns extra duties and responsibilities to the Speaker. For instance, among other functions, the Speaker calls the House to order, allows members to speak on the floor, appoints select and conference committees, and refers work to all committees.[5] There is another layer of leadership, however, and that is as party boss.

Because the Speaker comes from the party currently in power, he or she has extra privileges. The House Democratic Caucus and Republican Party conference operate similarly, each giving the Speaker power over the steering committees, albeit in different ways. Additionally, the Speaker is part of either the National Republican Congressional Committee or the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, dependent on party.[6] This kind of leverage gives the Speaker control not

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[3] Valerie Heitshusen, "The Speaker of the House: House Officer, Party Leader, and Representative" (Congressional Research Service, May 16, 2017), i.
[4] Pilon, *Declaration of Independence and Constitution*, 27.
[5] Heitshusen, "The Speaker of the House," 3–4.
[6] Heitshusen, 5.

only over procedures of the House but also over how the party is run within the House. These split roles contribute to the culture in the House of members having to serve many masters. They must be loyal to their constituents if they want to be reelected, they must be loyal to their Speaker if they want important roles, and they must be loyal to their party if they want support come re-election time.

Another aspect of Congress' culture that impacts the Air Force relates to something with which any military member can identify — jointness. Although normally discussed in terms of military activities, one should look to Congress as one of the most "joint" organizations in government. Some of this stems from the fact that Congress authorizes and appropriates money for all the services, therefore it must learn the intricacies of each. More than that, however, is the fact that Congress specifically told the services to become more joint by way of the Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986. Interestingly, the Navy, the most joint service of all, pushed back extremely hard on reorganization for fear of losing some control over its forces.[7] Navy Secretary John F. Lehman, Jr. was also concerned about losing the ground it had gained in expanding the service and its responsibilities.[8]

The joint "movement" stemmed from troubles in joint operations, such as the attempted rescue of American hostages from Iran. Further, however, were indicators that the best people were not being sent to joint jobs since there was little incentive to do so.[9] Therefore, some of the goals of the Goldwater-Nichols Act included improving "effectiveness of military

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[7] James R. Locher, *Victory on the Potomac: The Goldwater-Nichols Act Unifies the Pentagon*, 1st ed, Texas A & M University Military History Series 79 (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 2002), 252.
[8] Locher, 257.
[9] Kristy N. Kamarck, "Goldwater-Nichols and the Evolution of Officer Joint Professional Military Education (JPME)" (Congressional Research Service, January 13, 2016), 2.

operations" and improving "joint officer management policies."[10] Part of the idea of this reform was to increase education in the joint arena with the goal of better quality and experience for future joint leaders.[11] It is clear that Congress expected the services to take seriously the importance of joint education and experience in grooming their respective flag officers. This desire has not waned in recent years, and probably has become more of interest especially in the age of austere economic conditions. One only has to look to the joint F-35 to see an example of how this has played out.

Thus far, the discussion has been centered on the culture as it relates to the institution of Congress. Other factors, however, also play into Congress' overall culture. For instance, the fact that members are spending less time in Washington, D.C., than they used to impacts culture on a number of levels. Lack of time in Washington, some congressmen argue, leads to divides and lack of cooperation because when they are all together, they are trying to pass measures that are often at odds with other members' agendas. Instead of spending more time getting to know each other, they are arguing.[12] Some complain they spend most of the day in meetings when they are in Washington, leaving little time for actual legislation. The point is, members are spending more time back in their districts where they feel real work can be accomplished. It also happens to be where their main customers are – the voters. Some congressmen argue that the districts are exactly where they are supposed to be since they are elected to represent the people in their district, and therefore must spend time to understand what those

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[10] "Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986," Pub. L. No. 99–433 (1986), sec. 3.
[11] Kamarck, "Goldwater-Nichols and the Evolution of Officer Joint Professional Military Education (JPME)," i.
[12] Lisa Desjardins, "Congress in D.C. Far Less than It Used to Be," CNN, August 1, 2013, https://www.cnn.com/2013/08/01/politics/congress-work-time/index.html.

constituents need. Nonetheless, it is easy to see how the system based on a "series of starts and stops, punctuated by flights to and from fundraisers" might affect the organization's culture.[13]

Another piece of the puzzle affecting each individual seems obvious but is no less important. Each member of Congress has three primary loyalties – district, party, and nation. Rarely are all three loyalties completely in line, creating a culture in need of compromise, both internally with oneself but also with other members. The core interest of many, if not most, members is their district. Some see this interest through a cynic's lens, assuming it is solely about re-election. Of course, re-election is a concern, but constituent services date back to the earliest years of the United States when the House (in 1794) and the Senate (in 1816) set up select committees to handle Revolutionary War claims.[14] These needs are balanced against the needs of the country as a whole. Finally, the party to which the member belongs also influences decisions as the member usually must rely on some level of party support for re-election and to help garner support for her own proposed legislative initiatives. These loyalties can manifest themselves in artifacts (e.g., proposed legislation, voting record, etc.) or in espoused beliefs (e.g., what the member says in a speech on a given topic).

One should also look to what kind of educational background and job experience members have, which could provide a useful comparison to the Air Force, which sees itself as a technical service. These differ somewhat between the Senate and the House. For instance, in the Senate, law dominates as the declared profession, while in the House it is business.[15] As for education, in the current Congress 37.8 percent of

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[13] Desjardins.
[14] Sarah J. Eckman, "Constituent Services: Overview and Resources" (Congressional Research Service, January 5, 2017), 1.
[15] Jennifer E. Manning, "Membership of the 115th Congress: A Profile" (Congressional Research Service, April 12, 2018), 2.

House members and 55 percent of Senators hold law degrees.[16] Additionally, only about 18 percent of members have served (or are currently serving) in the armed forces, a continuation of the long-term trend of fewer veterans in Congress.[17] With such large portions of each chamber coming from non-technical backgrounds and having fewer veterans in Congress, it is no wonder why the cultures between the Air Force and Congress can sometimes clash. Part of being a good lawyer or businessperson is being able to tell a story, communicate the impact of some kind of decision; it is not always about numbers.

It is clear Congressional culture is complicated as it has many facets and levels ranging from institutional to individual. Institutionally, Congress has norms and traditions of which a legislative strategist should be aware. For instance, rules and procedures are important if one hopes to know how to effect change, but also the role of leadership matters if one hopes to know which levers may have more effect over time. Just as important as the institution are the members themselves, as they each have a number of loyalties. Understanding where they came from and what kind of professional background they have is critical as legislative strategists look to engage them on key issues.

Unfortunately, the Air Force likely has little opportunity to directly influence Congress' culture. Perhaps, one could argue, through managed outreach programs, the Air Force could shape Congress' culture, but this is highly unlikely given how ingrained much of that culture is. Congress' observed behavior speaks loudly about its culture. Congress is a complex organization with varying interests and power centers. This complexity means it is difficult to pin Congress down to one culture since that can vary from chamber to chamber or committee to committee. Interestingly, there are similarities in this context with the Air Force, which has

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[16] Manning, 5.
[17] Manning, 8–9.

multiple tribes and sub-organizations, each with their own agendas. The difference, however, is the Air Force has a Chief of Staff and a Secretary who consolidate the service's position. As a general rule, Congress has a parochial culture based not only on how it is structured in the Constitution but also on how its members get re-elected.

Chapter 5

Air Force Culture

As discussed, how an organization initially forms sets the tone for its culture and outlook. The Air Force is no different. Spun off from the Army, it had spent years fighting against the inclination of Army leaders to use airpower in the form of close air support and air interdiction. Understandably, early commanders wanted to use airpower as reconnaissance for their ground forces or a new type of artillery. As airpower developed, however, air-minded leaders like Billy Mitchell thought airpower could do much more.

Mitchell, a maverick for his time, advocated for airpower and what it could bring to the fight. He bucked the system and eventually paid for that decision with his career. He, however, is emblematic of the nascent air force's mentality concerning its contributions to a conflict. Since its inception, the Air Force has tried to message the reason it needs to be a separate service. It advocated for thinking differently when applying airpower in a conflict, primarily that it could be used strategically. The original leaders in the Air Force led this charge and inculcated those beliefs and values into the young Airmen who then helped form the culture over time.

The strategic application of airpower, the idea that airpower can provide a war-winning, primarily airpower-driven, solution to a conflict is nothing new in today's armed engagements. World War II provides the first example of the development of airpower as a strategic solution. The Air Corps Tactical School accomplished much of this theoretical work while educating and informing airpower thinkers in the Army Air Forces. This academic work developed into the industrial web theory where airpower would be utilized to jump the battle lines and strike deep into

enemy territory with the goal of disrupting the source of enemy power.[1] Bombing surveys tend to be mixed on the results of this strategy. They argue that it was likely the industrial attacks pressured Hitler.[2] The effect on the population's morale, however, is another story altogether. Air Corps Tactical School strategists focused on denial, not specifically punishment by morale bombing. Others, however, argued that morale bombing would bring an end to the war since the people would rise against the government. The opposite seemed to be true, however, when those conducting the bombing surveys found that most people, although demoralized, went about their regular workdays, therefore resulting in little loss of production.[3]

Coming out of World War II, the Air Force envisioned itself a strategic force, especially in the context of nuclear weapons. The Korean war did not seem to change that trajectory, and even difficulties in the Vietnam War were blamed on politicians. This shifting of blame meant that the Air Force continued to believe in the strategic application of airpower, albeit learning some lessons along the way. The Air Force culture shaped itself around these beliefs and values, forming norms of a strategic force, which informed procurement and force structure leading up to Desert Storm. Builder argues that the Air Force shifted institutionally from a general strategy for airpower to one of focus on the aircraft themselves.[4]

The Air Force's culture in Desert Storm was not that much

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[1] Tami Davis Biddle, *Rhetoric and Reality in Air Warfare: The Evolution of British and American Ideas about Strategic Bombing, 1914 - 1945*, Princeton Studies in International History and Politics (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 2002), 163.
[2] J. Adam Tooze, *The Wages of Destruction: The Making and Breaking of the Nazi Economy*, 1st American ed (New York: Viking, 2007), 671.
[3] Biddle, *Rhetoric and Reality*, 277.
[4] Carl H. Builder, *The Icarus Syndrome: The Role of Air Power Theory in the Evolution and Fate of the U.S. Air Force* (New Brunswick, N.J., U.S.A: Transaction Publishers, 1994), 151.

different than before, again showing how a culture can become embedded over time. The Air Force still wanted to show that it could almost single-handedly beat back Saddam Hussein's forces from Kuwait by striking at the center of Iraq. Specifically, Col John Warden sought to use his Five Ring model to hit strategic targets hoping to paralyze Hussein and bring the war to a close quickly.[5] Ultimately, his work was incorporated into the overall plan of attack and proved to be a valuable part of the combined-arms effort. It also happens that the type of war the Air Force was being asked to fight suited its capabilities, but what the Air Force came up with did not sit well with ground commanders.[6] Jeffrey Donnithorne's research shows that it may have been likely the Air Force presented exactly what President Bush wanted, but was thwarted by other military influencers.[7]

Carrying its experiences from Desert Storm forward to today, one can still see an Air Force defining its culture by what it can independently contribute to the fight. It has since become much better at operating in a joint environment, and few, if any, airpower thinkers genuinely believe that airpower alone can win a war. But it took decades to come that far, to overcome the culture of deeply held beliefs. At the same time, other cultural beliefs, such as the pursuit of technology, were reinforced. The Air Force came out of Desert Storm with the belief that technology had finally been able to accomplish what strategy and doctrine demanded.[8] Drew argues that "airpower lived up to its potential and fulfilled the promises made by the early prophets of air power."[9] Incidentally, this continues to be reflected with artifacts centered on

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[5] John Andreas Olsen, *Strategic Air Power in Desert Storm*, Cass Series--Studies in Air Power 12 (London ; Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 2003), 83 & 93.
[6] Jeffrey W. Donnithorne, *Culture Wars: Air Force Culture and Civil-Military Relations*, Drew Paper, no. 10 (Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama: Air University Press, Air Force Research Institute, 2013), 41.
[7] Donnithorne, 54.
[8] Donnithorne, 55.
[9] Dennis M. Drew, "Desert Storm as a Symbol," *Airpower Journal* 6, no. 3 (Fall 1992): 6.

technology (e.g., low-observable aircraft, advanced fighter aircraft, and exquisite space capabilities).

The beliefs, values, and assumptions of an organization help make up its culture and are usually demonstrated through published directives or commonly observed behaviors. For the Air Force, the most visible and accessible of these are Air Force Instructions. Specifically, one need look to some of the foundational instructions, such as AFI1-1, "Air Force Standards" or Air Force Policy Directive 1, "Air Force Culture." The service touts its "demanding profession, rich in tradition and culture."[10] It talks about service as "both an honor and a privilege."[11] These phrases evoke a sense of commitment expected from those in the Air Force, attempting to draw people closer together for a shared purpose and experience. There is a blurred line between beliefs and artifacts. Schein argues that published documents about beliefs are artifacts since they are visible signs of the underlying beliefs or values of the Air Force.[12]

The Air Force further links service members together through its core values of "Integrity First, Service Before Self, and Excellence In All We Do."[13] These are something every airman learns in basic training and can recite on demand. They also serve as a guide for how to live a life in accordance with what the service values, something Airmen can refer back to in times of crisis. By putting these specific values — integrity, service, excellence — front and center, the Air Force sends a clear message about the kind of culture it wants to engender. Another significant part of Air Force culture is the wingman concept, which stems from the early days of flight, but carries through to today. The Air Force codifies this concept as more than just a flight-specific use through the

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[10] "AFPD 1, Air Force Culture," August 7, 2012, 1.
[11] "AFPD 1, Air Force Culture," 1.
[12] Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 17.
[13] "AFI 1-1, Air Force Standards," August 7, 2012, 4.

Airman's Creed.[14] Airmen should look out for each other and ensure everyone lives up to the oaths they swore and the core values the Air Force espouses.

Artifacts can take forms other than just written words and declarations, especially in the form of observed behavior. All the instructions and regulations in the world are not worth the ink on the page if no one follows them or believes in them, which is where observed behavior comes in. One must see Airmen put these values to work in their daily lives, both when times are easy and when they are hard. Ultimately, the Air Force exists to defend the people of the United States, sometimes violently. This type of commitment takes courage, both physical and moral; watching how Airmen act during these different situations can indicate if the culture the Air Force wants is, in fact, the one that exists.

While discussing Airmen and their role, it is important to note how their nature alone affects overall service culture. As discussed in the previous chapters, Congress is a joint organization with its members serving three "masters" (i.e., nation, party, district). Airmen, however, are not necessarily comfortable dealing with the gray area of politics. They do not always appreciate the importance of a member's local affiliation. Perhaps one reason for this is that Air Force members often move so frequently they do not always feel tied to any specific locale. One could consider Air Force members citizens of the nation. They think from a national perspective, often frustrated when they see how much local concerns drive a Representative's decisions. For another perspective, consider how uncomfortable a military member would be in an office where everyone's party affiliation is public knowledge and, in fact, is a hiring prerequisite. That is exactly how Congress operates when hiring

[14] "AFI 1-1, Air Force Standards," 5.

personal and professional staff, and is completely foreign to most military members. Of course, members in the Air Force at large play into this aspect of culture, but it also informs how SAF/LL operates.

The Air Force's office responsible for interfacing with Congress, SAF/LL, inevitably has its cultural artifacts. The most visible of these is the instruction guiding SAF/LL's work and defining its responsibilities. Early in the document, the instruction discusses Congress as a "critical partner with the United States Air Force."[15] This statement sets the tone for how SAF/LL should approach Congress as a whole, but also informs the portfolio managers' behavior when they are interacting with congressional staff members. The instruction also refers to the need for "open and honest dialogue" between the Air Force and Congress, explicitly mentioning members of Congress and their staffs.[16] By specifying that kind of relationship in the instruction, the Air Force has set the expectation of excellent communication with Congress.

This open dialogue, however, is not always felt from the perspective of those in Congress, specifically staff members. Requests go unanswered for days or weeks at a time. Therefore, the observed behavior is not always in line with the expectations of the written instruction. It would seem that the culture of SAF/LL, although well-intended, does not always end with open communication. Even if SAF/LL portfolio managers are answering questions as quickly as Air Force or Department of Defense processes allow, there remains the perception from Capitol Hill of mismanaged communication.[17]

Leadership and the organization's origins apply to the Air Force just as it would in any group. The the Air Force was formed as an answer to a new domain. It went further than that, however, because leaders

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[15] "AFI 90-401, Air Force Relations With Congress," 5.
[16] "AFI 90-401, Air Force Relations With Congress," 5.
[17] Interview with congressional staff member familiar with DOD issues, January 31, 2018.

believed this new domain required a unique way of thinking, something separate from what the military had already. In a sense, the Air Force was formed by bucking existing trends and pushing back against conventional thinking. Leaders actively chose to do that because they wanted to create a separate service, which means that when incoming members to the new service were trying to figure out how to fit in, they often mimicked these leadership examples. Therefore, the Air Force has continued to have a sense of trying to "prove itself" that it is, indeed, required to operate as a separate service because Airmen think differently. Of note, it is ironic that the Air Force's continuation of proving its worth impacts the very organization that created it. Congress itself established the Department of the Air Force as a separate service in 1947.[18]

Part of an effective culture is dealing with the interpersonal relationships among team members. The "norming" and "performing" stages see the transition from place-finding into actual accomplishment.[19] Leaders must ensure workers reach consensus and help the organization continue on its path to success. In a well-established organization like the Air Force, this is the most common phase. Of course, sub-groups and sub-organizations can iterate on these phases without impacting the entire service's culture. Air Force leadership, however, sets the tone for the service by encouraging certain behaviors, acting properly, and guiding new groups into existence as smoothly as possible.

The evolution of culture in an established service like the Air Force can and does happen. Often when leadership creates a change, and that change is successful, the organization's culture will eventually follow

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[18] "National Security Act of 1947 (PL80-253)," July 26, 1947, sec. 207, http://legisworks.org/congress/80/publaw-253.pdf.
[19] Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 129–30.

suit.[20] A recent example, although Department of Defense-wide, is the inclusion of women into combat roles across the services, which was a monumental shift in military culture that was a long time coming. The Air Force, for instance, allowed Jeannie Leavitt to be the first woman fighter pilot in 1993 following Secretary of Defense Aspin's direction to remove the restriction on letting women fly in combat.[21] In 2015, Secretary of Defense Carter announced that, without exception, there would be no military occupation off-limits to women.[22] These are perfect examples of leaders having to be the champions of culture change. Indeed, there were those for and against these changes in the services. In fact, the Marine Corps asked, and was denied, an exemption to the policy for certain specialties. Part of being that champion is being visible.

Any military member can identify with this phenomenon. It is embedded into the ethos of what it means to be a commander in the Air Force. Commanders lead from the front, setting the example for their Airmen. As compared to civilian organizations, this is a somewhat unique role. Supervisors in civilian organizations are undoubtedly responsible for treating their people with dignity and respect, but, generally, their authority ends at the office door each day. A commander, on the other hand, is responsible for his or her military personnel both on and off duty.[23] Therefore, the same applies in reverse. Airmen will pay attention to how their commanders comport themselves both on and off base.

The current director of SAF/LL, Major General Steven Basham, has led from the front on Capitol Hill engagements. The general sense from committee staff members is that he is on Capitol Hill more often

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[20] Schein, 131.
[21] Randy Roughton, "AF First Female Fighter Pilot Continues to Break Stereotypes," *Air Force News Service*, March 1, 2013.
[22] Cheryl Pellerin, "Carter Opens All Military Occupations, Positions to Women," *U.S. DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE* (blog), accessed March 3, 2018, https://www.defense.gov/News/Article/Article/632536/carter-opens-all-military-occupations-positions-to-women/.
[23] Major Eric H. Frenck, ed., *The Military Commander and the Law*, 14th ed., 2017, 3.

than previous directors. It is important to note that there is no data to back up that claim. However, perception is what matters. Even if he is interacting with members and their staff to the same degree as previous SAF/LL directors, the impression is he is there more often. This is still an important point because it means current staff members feel like they are paid more attention. By engaging with Congress directly and often, he sets the tone for what the portfolio managers should be doing. Their jobs require getting out there and advocating for their programs and the Air Force mission and people. As Undersecretary Donovan recalled from his time working for the Senate Armed Services Committee, "If you aren't present, you are absent."[24]

The Air Force needs to ensure its leadership team is consistent with its priorities, both those internal to the service and those external to it. Senior Air Force leadership has changed recently due to a new White House Administration and timing of uniformed military personnel's careers. Remarkably, the general priorities have not changed all that much. The Air Force has consistently said its readiness has suffered due to lack of funding, specifically predictable funding. It remains focused on the nuclear enterprise; vital since it is responsible for organizing, training, and equipping two-thirds of the nation's nuclear forces. Air Force leadership, however, had not communicated well in recent history concerning the planned retirement of the A-10. The messaging for the desire was erratic at times, with some leaders saying they no longer needed the aircraft at all while others said they would love to keep it if they could get the appropriate amount of funding necessary. This case study will be discussed in more detail later.

The proliferation of domains in which the Air Force operates, or desires to operate, contributes to a lack of focus. Leaders have to jump

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[24] Donovan, interview by the author.

from priority to priority, all the while advocating that the Air Force is the right service to accomplish whatever mission areas are being discussed at the moment. The plethora of Air Force tasks and responsibilities works its way to SAF/LL as well. Portfolio managers are expected to represent their areas of expertise to the best of their ability. They, however, must also "toe the party line" concerning Air Force priorities. Each time the service has to shift its focus, so too does SAF/LL. Discussed in more detail later, external forces also act on SAF/LL members as they have to be responsive to Congress. SAF/LL portfolio managers are expected to be experts both on Air Force programs but also on what a specific member's priorities might be. To top it off, these same portfolio managers are expected to balance their leadership's priorities with each major commander's priorities, usually coordinated through a specific major command legislative liaison. Varying priorities pull portfolio managers in many directions, which illustrates why consistency from leadership is critical.

Part of leadership is ensuring people are empowered to operate freely to accomplish the organization's goals.[25] Having a culture of empowerment does not mean the leader cedes all control to his or her subordinates, of course. But those subordinates should be allowed to act creatively to solve problems and work with others in the most efficient and effective ways possible. Although the degree to which portfolio managers are empowered is important, it first must begin with the rest of the Headquarters Air Force staff. SAF/LL relies on the rest of the staff to be experts on their microcosm of the Air Force because an individual portfolio manager cannot be an expert on everything.

One indicator of the degree to which people feel empowered is how much risk they are willing to take. Risk aversion is a problem in the

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[25] Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 52.

military, although not where one might naturally think. Although there are rules in place to protect Airmen in combat, leaders accept some level of risk in the operational environment to accomplish the mission. In this regard, the Air Force is likely much less risk-averse than it used to be. Staff risk aversion, however, is another story altogether. Ms. Nancy Dolan, the deputy director of SAF/LL, put it succinctly when she described the problem as the staff being risk-averse in a bureaucratic sense.[26] Expressed another way, the farther one gets from battle, the more risk aversion one might encounter. How might bureaucratic risk aversion present itself?

SAF/LL personnel must frequently rely on the subject-matter experts across the Air Force to adequately represent their portfolios. Portfolio managers may rely on someone down the hall in the Pentagon, or half a world away on a major command staff. Regardless, bureaucracy can sometimes get out of control creating multiple layers of red tape to get a response back to SAF/LL. Has the Air Force properly empowered an O-4 in the Headquarters Air Force Manpower, Personnel and Services Directorate to respond correctly, quickly, and independently to a request from SAF/LL? This is the type of question senior Air Force leadership must consider. Do we trust our military professionals to be just that — professionals?

Assuming the answer to a question gets back to SAF/LL in a timely fashion, are the portfolio managers in SAF/LL then empowered to respond back to Congress in the allotted time? This question appears to raise the stakes somewhat. Before, the headquarters subject-matter expert was responding to a fellow military professional on staff. Now, however, the response is leaving the Pentagon to Capitol Hill, which, for some, changes the seriousness of the situation. As noted previously,

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[26] Nancy Dolan, interview by the author, February 23, 2018.

several congressional staff members have the sense that the Air Force is slower to respond to queries as compared to what they would prefer. Again, following a common theme in this paper, whether or not that is true is beside the point. The perception is there, which means it is a problem. It appears as though the Air Force's culture of empowerment goes only so far before bureaucracy takes over.

There are, of course, enterprising portfolio managers who learn to walk the line on how much information they are allowed to release on their own, versus having to coordinate with their leadership, which is a critical skill for anyone who wants to work in SAF/LL. Ultimately, a partial answer to a congressional staff member on time, or early, is far better than the perfect solution late. A late answer means the target of opportunity has passed. When communicating with Air Force leaders, Undersecretary Donovan stresses the importance of timing when dealing with Capitol Hill. He believes understanding the Congressional processes and timelines are critical if one hopes to be effective.[27] Understanding is only part of the solution, however, since being able to inject information at the right time is what matters. If SAF/LL portfolio managers are hamstrung either by their processes or the rest of the headquarters, effectiveness may suffer.

The final aspect of leadership that is important to how Air Force culture is formed and communicated to Congress is how SAF/LL hires its portfolio managers. According to Schein, "One of the subtlest yet most potent ways through which leader values get embedded and perpetuated is the process of selecting new members."[28] The danger in hiring members into an organization is that often those doing the hiring hire those who resemble current members, even subconsciously.[29]

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[27] Donovan, interview by the author.
[28] Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 195.
[29] Schein, 195.

Specifically, the danger is in potentially overlooking a creative, outside-the-box thinker who may not fit the mold of the current crop of organizational members.

SAF/LL's hiring practices line up with the rest of the Air Force's. Leaders in SAF/LL must abide by standard Air Force hiring practices managed by the Air Force Personnel Center. One of the perceptions, however, by some congressional staff members is that the Air Force uses SAF/LL as a temporary spot for officers who are already on a good path in their careers. As mentioned previously in this paper, one congressional staff member described the portfolio manager position as a "touch and go" for high-performing officers.[30] The implication is that the Air Force uses SAF/LL as a place to help bolster an already-impressive career. Typically, the higher performing an officer is, the harder it is to keep him or her in position long. One of the big reasons for this is the promotion system and timelines these officers have to stay on to command early, so they are set up for good opportunities later down the road. It is important to note that this author does not mean to imply any ill intent on those conducting hiring actions or that these officers are not eminently qualified to be where they are. In fact, one could (and this author will) argue just the opposite, that perhaps they should remain longer.

Of note, the personnel hiring system in this case relies solely on paper records. There may be cross-talk between organizations, especially for those service members already in the Pentagon, to see if someone would be a good fit. One problem with this method is that leaders may advocate strongly for a prospective hire without genuinely understanding what kind of person would do well in SAF/LL. As noted earlier in this paper, SAF/LL does not conduct interviews of its potential hires, which

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[30] Interview with congressional staff member familiar with DOD issues, January 30, 2018.

leaves out a significant portion of what can make someone very successful in that type of position. Specifically, SAF/LL has no formal way of ensuring someone has the right personality for the job, especially considering it is very different from most military positions. There are a lot of gray areas when dealing with Congress, not to mention that congressional staff members do not see the military rank structure as important as military members do. Additionally, there is no current way for SAF/LL to try to assess a potential hire's social skills. Dealing with Congress is mostly relationship-based. It is critical that those hired into SAF/LL can communicate properly and interact in such a way to build a trusting relationship between the portfolio manager and those he or she deals with on Capitol Hill.

Another issue with the hiring culture is somewhat out of SAF/LL's hands but impacts the organization directly. The Air Force Legislative Fellows program, an Intermediate Developmental Education opportunity for mid-career officers, was designed to build legislative expertise within the service, while benefiting the Air Force's relationship with Congress. In this program, officers spend time working in a Congress member's personal office, gaining experience and acting as a liaison between that office and the military. The design of the program is such that they should return to SAF/LL for a follow-on assignment. This "payback" period should allow for better understanding of Congress and how it operates, something that is critical to building a good relationship. It would undoubtedly impact the culture in SAF/LL, as these officers could bridge the gap between the two worlds.

With regard to task proliferation in organizations, the Air Force is not immune. By nature, the Air Force is a place of expanding mission sets. The main reason for this is the way it began — with entirely new technology in a previously unattainable domain, which necessitated embracing technological change and an adaptive mission set. The ever-changing mission is evident during World War II as the air forces were

able to shift into longer-range missions both for bombers and eventually fighter aircraft, changing the way the service could employ its forces.

As technology advanced, so did the way the military might use its air assets. The intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance mission has been part of airpower since its inception. The difference today is that airpower can provide persistent overhead coverage, especially in a permissive environment. In the past, reconnaissance was possible on an as-needed basis, while today it is all but continuously available, including full-motion video, something with which commanders at all levels have become accustomed.

Yet another new domain, space, added to the ability to surveil potential adversaries. It also provided a means to increase command and control. Space has proven to be a contentious topic, especially recently with Congress' added attention. Some argue it is just an extension of the air domain. Others, however, argue it is a completely new domain requiring a new way of thinking altogether. Advocates in the latter group think the Air Force has done a poor job developing this domain. The Chairman of the House Armed Services Subcommittee for Strategic Forces, Mike Rogers, led the charge recently to break the space assets away from the mainstream Air Force and place them in a separate corps. This corps would fall under the Department of the Air Force, much like the Marine Corps falls under the Department of the Navy. Ultimately the Air Force was able to rebuff last year's National Defense Authorization Act advance and make some internal moves to try to alleviate concern. An independent report, however, is still required by the 2018 National Defense Authorization Act. So this fight is long from over. Chairman Rogers recently said that it would take only three to five years to have a separate space service.[31] He accused the Air Force of using "space

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[31] Joe Gould, "US Space Corps Could Launch in 3 Years, Key Lawmaker Says," Defense

programs as a money pot to reach into and subsidize air-dominance programs…"[32] Having to expend time and money on a domain like space chips away at the Air Force's established culture. Some argue the Air Force's culture is holding the space domain back.

Another such advance is the development of the cyber domain. Although all services have cyber components, the Air Force seems to speak the loudest in trying to lay claim to being the Department of Defense expert on cyber forces, systems, and strategies. In its attempt to champion the cyber domain, the Air Force has once again pulled itself away from its established culture. This example does not mean to imply that service culture cannot change and adapt, but the Air Force seems to lack a coherent strategy for doing so. For so long, the Air Force focused on the strategic application of airpower in war-winning strategies, augmented by precision-guided munitions, and persistent intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance. As one congressional staff member noted, perhaps the Air Force should reimagine itself as the "cutting edge" force.[33] In this context, the culture could shift to include these new domains, which should be a comfortable fit as it lines up with the importance the service puts on technology. This would complete the shift of identity from one of strategic attack to one of a technological force designed to move above or around enemy forces, no matter their domain.

With the service always embracing new technology and entering new domains, SAF/LL must work hard to keep up the consistent messaging with Congress. It is forced to embody the Air Force culture when it represents its programs and people to Congress. The Air Force began its life fighting for existence, which is something the service has

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News, February 28, 2018, https://www.defensenews.com/space/2018/02/28/2021-a-space-odyssey-space-corps-could-launch-in-three-to-five-years-key-lawmaker-says/.

[32] Gould.

[33] Interview with congressional staff member familiar with DOD issues, January 31, 2018.

not been able to shed and has contributed to a lack of a focused identity. Without laser-like attention from the service, SAF/LL is unable to have the same focus. As it tries to advocate for the many disparate mission areas in the Air Force, SAF/LL will struggle to articulate the "why" of the service as a whole.

Having clear goals and a defined mission will help the organization and its workers balance the needs of multiple stakeholders.[34] This is true for any organization, and especially so for the Air Force, which has many stakeholders in many different categories. Some examples of these stakeholders are private companies hoping to do business with the Air Force, local communities in which Air Force bases reside, government agencies with which the Air Force must coordinate, executive-branch leadership including the President, and Congress. Each of these stakeholders will have its own demands and preferences. The Air Force must be able to respond to each while maintaining its culture throughout.

One of the ways it can maintain its culture is to ensure the service itself is advocating a clear and consistent message to each of its stakeholders. Context will dictate what and how much information to share, of course, but it is critical the Air Force speaks with "one voice." There are many "tribes" within the Air Force (e.g., global strike, tactical airpower, reconnaissance, mobility, special operations, etc.) each with its own primary focus and priorities. The risk the Air Force runs is these tribes advocating independently to the detriment of the others. What might be good for one community may not be for another, as funding is often limited.

SAF/LL has the responsibility to ensure the single voice is heard in Congress. This means working with the disparate tribes within the Air

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[34] Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 153.

Force to meet leadership's intent. SAF/LL must work closely with public affairs to make sure all public messaging is consistent. This becomes difficult when, as mentioned previously, stakeholders have different priorities. For instance, a senator on the Armed Services Committee may want to conduct a BRAC study to ensure the correct basing requirements, while another senator whose district has a base at risk may fight this effort. This becomes more complicated, of course, when one realizes the Air Force wants to conduct a BRAC study. SAF/LL is, therefore, stuck in the middle of these competing priorities. External pressure is forcing the Air Force to walk a fine line trying to please two masters in this case. It is not hard to see how much more difficult this effort would be if the Air Force does not have a consistent message, ensuring its culture shines through any conflicts.

Culture is everywhere; every organization has one. One must understand what culture is and how to split it into different parts for analysis. One can find physical manifestations of culture, for instance, written down into regulations or through observed behavior by those within the organization. Leaders first embed their own culture into the organization at its beginning. However, as organizational culture is not static, it can be impacted both from within and without. Leaders must understand how they can bring about the kind of culture the organization needs but must understand why the existing culture is the way it is. The Air Force as a service certainly has its culture, informed by its desire to be an independent service, always trying to prove itself. In fact, "the very existence of the Air Force is an organizational rebuke of the other services' inadequate appreciation of airpower's full potential."[35] It has since grown, embracing multiple new domains while still trying to understand its place in the Department of Defense. Ask ten people to

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[35] Jeffrey W. Donnithorne, *Four Guardians: A Principled Agent View of American Civil-Military Relations* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2018), 125.

describe the Air Force's culture, and one would probably get ten different responses. SAF/LL is a sub-group within the larger Air Force, so it inherits much of its culture from the Air Force.

Chapter 6

Practical Congressional Relations

There are countless examples of the services working with Congress to differing levels of success. The following are two, one from each service, showing how each approaches Congress in different ways. The Air Force example, the attempt to divest itself of the A-10, shows what happens when a service goes head-to-head Congress, which did not think the time was right to retire the A-10. The Navy example, the establishment of the National Sea Based Deterrence Fund, shows how the Navy can be successful even in the face of opposition from some factions within Congress. The fact that there is contention between the services and Congress, however, is not necessarily a concern in and of itself. As discussed, this is, in fact, how the entire system was designed by the Framers — the executive and legislative branches are sharing powers, creating a situation where compromise is required.

Congress & the Air Force: A-10 Warthog

The Air Force's goal with the A-10 was to retire the platform in favor of newer airframes. The service claimed the A-10's mission, primarily close air support, could be accomplished with other aircraft such as the B-1, the F-16, or the soon-to-be-online F-35. Secretary James was clear in a news conference on August 24, 2015, when she said the service would retire the A-10.[1] The primary reason cited for the retirement of the A-10 was cost-cutting; specifically, if the service was forced to keep the A-10, other cost-cutting measures would be required.[2]

Already, one can see part of the problem in the Air Force's

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[1] Deborah James and General Mark Welsh, "State of the Air Force (CQ Transcripts)," August 24, 2015.
[2] Deborah James, "Air Force Secretary Deborah Lee James Delivers Remarks at the Air Force Association (CQ Transcripts)," February 12, 2016.

messaging. On one hand, leadership stressed the A-10's mission was being accomplished with other platforms, such as when Secretary James highlighted in her State of the Air Force remarks how other platforms are being used to strike ISIS.[3] On the other hand, however, the Air Force claimed it was a fiscal decision.

The Air Force seemed to be trying to justify its core culture, technological advancement. This does not mean to imply Air Force leadership's intentions were not sound or did not have military members' best interests at heart. However, it points to the fact the Air Force was trying to divest itself of old technology in favor of new platforms it thought could perform the mission equally as well. One of the problems was, from the outside, it appeared the Air Force was trying to replace a dependable, cost-effective platform with an extremely exquisite one, especially in terms of the F-35, which has stealth characteristics. Many wondered why that kind of technology needed to be applied in the fight against ISIS. The Air Force did not do a good job explaining its reasoning in shrinking the number of platforms with regard to potential cost savings, all while ensuring that warfighters have the weapons they need.

Congress, on the other hand, was very clear from the beginning on its position with regard to A-10 retirement. One of the biggest opponents to the Air Force's plan was Senator John McCain, who wielded exceptional power from his position as Chairman of the Senate Armed Service Committee. Additionally, as a prior-service Senator, he had a lot of credibility on the matter. While many may write off Senator McCain's interest in keeping the A-10 as a parochial matter (A-10s are stationed in his home state of Arizona), this would be a mistake. First of all, it is not uncommon for the Air Force to replace retired platforms with the newer airframes, meaning Senator McCain could likely be confident his state

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[3] Deborah James and General Mark Welsh, "State of the Air Force (CQ Transcripts)," March 7, 2016.

would get F-35s. It goes beyond that argument, however.

Senator McCain made very clear he did not want the Air Force to keep the A-10 indefinitely. He focused, instead, on the "folly" of the Air Force's plan to retire the A-10 fleet before a suitable replacement was fielded.[4] In a contentious hearing before the Senate Armed Services Committee, McCain and Air Force Chief of Staff Mark Welsh had a back-and-forth "discussion" on the A-10 and potential replacements. Senator McCain told General Welsh he did not believe the Air Force's intended A-10 replacements (bombers and fighters) were as effective or as cost-efficient as the plane they were replacing.[5] Basically, he was attacking both of the Air Force's cited reasons for replacing the A-10. General Welsh found himself in the unenviable position of trying to convince a Senator who could not be convinced. General Welsh did his best to reiterate that the Air Force uses the F-15, F-16, and B-1 for close air support missions continually, with great effect.[6]

Senator McCain was not the only opponent to the Air Force's plan. Across Capitol Hill, Congressman Mac Thornberry, Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, commented in remarks to the National Press Club that he believed it was not the right time to retire the A-10.[7] Congressman Kelly commented in a hearing before the House Armed Services Subcommittee on Tactical Air Land Forces that he believed the F-16 and F-35 were not as good at destroying tanks as the A-10.[8]

There is another variable in this equation and it is the customer of close air support – ground forces. While one may think the Army, for

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[4] Deborah James and General Mark Welsh, "Air Force Posture," § Senate Armed Services Committee (2016).
[5] James and Welsh.
[6] James and Welsh.
[7] Mac Thornberry, "National Press Club Remarks (CQ Transcripts)," January 13, 2016.
[8] Jerry Harris et al., "Fiscal Year 2019 Budget Request on Air Force Airborne Intelligence," § House Armed Services Subcommittee on Tactical Air and Land Forces (2018).

instance, would be clear and vocal in its advocacy for the A-10, that was not always the case. Surely in informal situations, one could easily find soldiers who would happily share their preference for the A-10 in theater. However, publicly and officially the Army walked a fine line of advocating for continued close air support, while attempting to remain platform-agnostic. In fact, the Army Chief of Staff was quoted as saying, "The only thing I care about is the effect on target, I don't give a rat's ass what platform brings it in."[9] The Army understood the Air Force's argument and had also been giving much thought to how it would fight in future contested environments. Additionally, the Army never considered (at least publicly) the idea of taking over the A-10s and that mission from the Air Force.[10]

Ultimately, the Fiscal Year 2017 National Defense Authorization Act prohibited the Air Force from retiring the A-10 until the F-35 had completed initial operational test and evaluation and the results could be reviewed.[11] Secretary Carter had mentioned in February of 2016 that he did not think the A-10 would be retired until 2022.[12] It is unlikely the Air Force will have a smooth process unless it has a replacement for the A-10 that satisfies both houses of Congress. Interestingly, the light attack aircraft the Air Force is pursuing may help its case when the time comes.

This example shows how important it is for the Air Force to approach Congress not as the enemy but as a partner. Instead of telling Congress it was retiring the A-10, perhaps it should have done a better job of asking Congress how the service should approach the eventual

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[9] Dave Majumdar, "Why the US Army Could Care Less about the A-10 Warthog," *The National Interest* (blog), June 23, 2016, http://nationalinterest.org/blog/the-buzz/why-the-us-army-could-care-less-about-the-10-warthog-16704.
[10] Brendan McGarry, "Army Not Interested in Taking A-10 Warthogs from Air Force," *Military.Com* (blog), February 25, 2015, https://www.military.com/daily-news/2015/02/25/army-not-interested-in-taking-a10-warthogs-from-air-force.html.
[11] Adam Smith, "Fiscal Year 2017 National Defense Authorization Act Summary," n.d.
[12] Ashton Carter, "Remarks on the Budget" (Economic Club of Washington, February 2, 2016).

need to retire the platform. Could the service have been more successful, for instance, in garnering support if it sought Congress' advice and support for a path forward to procure a cost-efficient replacement? Additionally, how did the Air Force appear to its joint-minded warfighting brethren and also to Congress?

Since Congress is one of the most "joint" organizations in government, surely the Air Force should have been prepared for push-back if it wanted to divest itself of the A-10. Yes, there are other platforms that provide close air support, but to Congress the A-10 episode became an exemplar for how the Air Force does not want to integrate with the other services, primarily the ground component. Whether this is was a fair characterization on Congress' part is irrelevant. Once the Air Force perceived that Congress viewed this in a larger context, not even just about local jobs or bases, it should have adjusted its strategy accordingly.

The Air Force is perceived to be the service of technology. Put another way, some would say the Air Force always has its eye on the next "toy." Unfortunately for the Air Force, this happens to be true, but not necessarily for nefarious reasons. The service is founded on the idea of technology. Air power itself relies on technology to leave the earth's surface and maneuver in the third dimension. Therefore, there is no way the Air Force can fully shed the impression it seeks the newest technology, because it must. The service is continually asked to engage across the full spectrum of conflict (or be prepared to engage, at least); so one cannot fault the Air Force for trying to combine mission sets into a smaller number of platforms, that it might field the force the nation demands. The Air Force must message this appropriately and embrace its culture of advancement.

Congress & the Navy: National Sea Based Deterrence Fund

An example of a creative solution the Navy was able to use on Capitol Hill was the National Sea Based Deterrence Fund, which was

created to help the Navy with its shipbuilding budget. Specifically, the Navy was (and still is) trying to manage all the new ships it expected to build to meet national-security needs. Therefore, the Navy wanted to move the Ohio-class submarine-replacement program outside its existing shipbuilding budget.[13] The goal with this move was to ensure the rest of the shipbuilding budget was not broken by the extremely expensive new submarine.[14] Further, this change would mean the submarine would not have to directly compete with other Navy priorities, making the submarine a national asset the Department of Defense would fund.[15]

Although this paper focuses primarily on one service's culture, it is still important to take a brief moment to consider the Navy's culture. First, one should remember the Navy serves as the United States' representative around the world as it docks in foreign ports. It also offers "sovereign US territory and combat power in almost any part of [the] world."[16] Therefore, the Navy uses its technological base in support of both military and diplomatic purposes, also being able to influence economic well-being, as well (e.g., blockades).

The Navy's relationship with the United States dates back to 1775 when the Constitutional Congress designated two ships for official use.[17] Even while the debate raged regarding the United States having a standing army or not, a standing navy enjoyed much more support. Early leaders envisioned not only military, but economic reasons, for a navy.[18] Because of the vastness of the ocean and lack of communication

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[13] Megan Scully, "House Armed Services Holds Other Funding Hostage to Protect Carrier," *CQ News*, April 29, 2014.
[14] "Markup on Fiscal 2015 Defense Authorization Bill (HR 4435)," § House Armed Services Subcommittee on Seapower and Projection Forces (2014).
[15] Frank Oliveri, "Defense Bills Would Create Special Fund for New Navy Subs," *CQ News*, June 6, 2014.
[16] Donnithorne, *Four Guardians*, 41.
[17] Donnithorne, 42.
[18] Donnithorne, 45.

technology, the Navy began as a force used to independent thought and action, backed by the support of the government. This thinking has remained largely in its culture to this day, as commanding at sea is seen as the ultimate goal.[19]

The Navy, much like the Air Force, has a need for expensive weapon systems. Although the Navy has many ships, it has always had an affinity for the largest ones, capital ships.[20] This desire first showed itself in the search for ships with the most or the biggest guns,[21] but later manifested in the form of aircraft carriers, especially after the attack on Pearl Harbor where the Navy lost a large portion of the battleship fleet.[22]

The thinking behind the shifting of funding responsibility is not completely new. For instance, the National Sea Based Deterrence Fund would provide money for the new submarine in much the same way the Missile Defense Agency is funded and managed. They would both be part of the Secretary of Defense's portfolio in both management and funding. Ultimately the Fiscal Year 2018 National Defense Authorization Act continued the fund, expanding its authorities, in fact.[23] The successful implementation of the fund, however, does not mean it came easily for the Navy.

One of the largest arguments against the fund was that it did not actually provide any more funding, it just pulled it into a different place. Representative Blumenauer argued for an amendment that the fund should be moved back into the Navy's budget.[24] Specifically, he argued

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[19] Donnithorne, 50.
[20] Donnithorne, 55.
[21] Donnithorne, 56.
[22] Donnithorne, 58.
[23] Ronald O'Rourke and Moshe Schwartz, "Multiyear Procurement (MYP) and Block Buy Contracting in Defense Acquisition: Background and Issues for Congress" (Congressional Research Service, October 12, 2017).
[24] "House Consideration for National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2016,"

that appropriators originally refused to put money into the fund because it did not actually fix any problems. The replacements were still extremely expensive, and the government was still having to buy them. Ultimately, Blumenauer failed to convince the rest of the House, and the amendment did not pass.[25] The House appropriators, however, attempted to exert their control over the process by barring transfer of funds to the National Sea Based Deterrence Fund, contradicting the House Armed Services Committee.[26]

The Navy's experience is illustrative in a number of ways. Primarily, it shows how creative thinking can be applied to the acquisition process. The Navy analyzed its shipbuilding budget and realized it was untenable to expect all the priorities to be top priorities. This is an enduring problem within every service, but the Navy attempted to do something about it. One could argue it was not as successful as hoped, but it does not appear the Navy has lost any influence or prestige on Capitol Hill because of these efforts.

Another point that is important to keep in mind is that the Navy is not always successful. This paper has compared the Navy to the Air Force in hopes of finding areas of improvement and best practices. It is critical, however, not to put the Navy on some kind of pedestal implying it is successful in all of its endeavors. The battle over the National Sea Based Deterrence Fund showed that creativity and relationships on Capitol Hill are key, but that not every idea the Navy has is popular with members of Congress.

The National Sea Based Deterrence Fund example begs a question. Is the Navy inherently more "political" than the Air Force? Further, what

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Pub. L. No. HR 1735 (2015).

[25] Connor O'Brien, "House Appropriators Take Up Defense Bill," *CQ News*, May 18, 2015.

[26] Connor O'Brien, "Appropriators Defer Arguments, Easily Advance Defense Spending Bill," *CQ Roll Call*, May 20, 2015.

might lead someone to ask that question? Certainly this example shows how the Navy does a good job of messaging its needs and garnering support throughout Congress. The Navy has had centuries of experience both domestically and internationally. The Navy's main focus is abroad and has had to deal with local politics since its inception. Navy ships dock at countries around the world and its leaders must be able to navigate local politics and deal with interests all while maintaining proper diplomatic ties. For instance, this year the U.S.S. Carl Vinson became the first U.S. carrier to visit Vietnam since 1975, in the hopes of normalizing relations between the two countries.[27]

As mentioned, this experience surely has had an effect at the core of the Navy's culture. At the service level, it must be comfortable in ambiguous situations dealing with people's varying interests. This kind of training, accomplished since the United States' founding, can only help a service. The Navy is able to leverage its strengths when dealing with Congress, which is a joint organization. The Navy at its core is a joint organization since it must think in terms of multiple domains. It clearly operates in the sea domain, but must also operate in both the air and on land. Although the Marine Corps has its own legislative affairs, the Department of the Navy must still consider impacts to its Marine Corps, thinking in the joint environment, when advocating on Capitol Hill. This means the Navy is already speaking the same language as members of Congress, and therefore has a head start. As legislative affairs is a relationship-based endeavor, the Navy excels at telling a compelling story in search of advocacy for its programs.

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[27] Carl Prine, "Aircraft Carrier Carl Vinson Returns Home from Asia," *The San Diego Union-Tribune*, April 12, 2018, http://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/military/sd-me-ship-return-20180412-story.html.

Conclusion

This thesis has set out to discover more about the Air Force's relationship with Congress, especially in the context of its existing culture. It could be argued that Congress is the most important stakeholder with which the Air Force interacts, since Congress is the body that authorizes and funds the service. Without that funding and authorization, the Air Force would not be able to organize, train, and equip its forces for combat actions around the world. Therefore, Congress should be seen as a partner, not an adversary, in these efforts. Members of Congress and their staff are hard-working people, many of whom understand Air Force programs better than Air Force program managers do. Congress is not to be underestimated.

Recommendations

It is to the Air Force's advantage to effectively work with Congress. One of the most important things the Air Force can do in order to be more effective on Capitol Hill also happens to be the hardest — understand and embrace culture, both its own and that of Congress. The Air Force needs to speak with one voice to Congress, but it cannot hope to do so without first understanding itself. SAF/LL needs to ensure it understands Congress and how it works, but more importantly needs to get that information out to the rest of the Air Force, primarily higher-headquarters staff. Without understanding the importance of quick responses to Congress, the Air Force risks succumbing to its bureaucratic risk-aversion. Additionally, SAF/LL must hire the right kind of people, but more importantly must foster their growth while in position and after they leave legislative affairs.

The first area that the Air Force needs to address is that of culture. Since one of the critical questions of this paper addressed culture's impact on legislative strategy, it follows that one should consider whether anything can be done at the cultural level of the Air Force before one

thinks about changing legislative strategy. Unfortunately for the Air Force, changing culture is not easy and requires buy-in from many different levels of an organization.

The obstacle the Air Force faces in deciding how it wants to address any potential culture change is that the definition of the existing culture may change depending on to whom one speaks. For instance, the Chief of Staff of the Air Force may have a different opinion as compared to a new lieutenant, let alone a member of Congress or staff member. As Builder contends, the Air Force has become more enamored with its airframes and technology than with a coherent war-winning strategy.[1] The Air Force is commonly thought of as seeking the next greatest technology in order to have strategic effects on the battlefield. As noted earlier in this paper, this began at the outset of the Air Force's creation (and even earlier when the air forces were part of the Army), reflecting the values of those who created the service (or who were first to embrace the new domain). In order for the Air Force to properly advocate for its needs, however, it first must decide what it wants its culture to be.

At quick glance, it appears as though the Air Force may be struggling with how it wants to define its identity and portray the service's relevance to the Department of Defense. Based on airpower, the Air Force has since expanded into new domains such as space and cyber. Becoming the preeminent service for space was not a smooth path, of course. Early in the space race, all services were vying for the mission set, largely in search of resources for their respective services. One could argue the nation is at a similar inflection point now concerning cyber forces.

One could argue cyber is a new domain or perhaps should be viewed as global commons instead. Others could argue cyber is a poorly

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[1] Builder, *The Icarus Syndrome*, 203.

defined term mixing the infrastructure used with methods employed. Regardless, it is clear the Air Force prioritizes the cyber domain when looking to what the force should be in the future. This is confusing, as cyber does not inherently belong in any service, as each uses cyber effects in different capacities. The Air Force risks looking like the service that chases the newest, greatest technology. It is also important to note that Congress does not have some kind of grudge against the Air Force. Airmen would do well to remember that in 1917, Congress appropriated $640M, the largest in its history, for the nation's nascent air forces.[2] Even before airpower was a proven way of war, Congress was on board.

Although it cannot change its name, perhaps the Air Force should brand itself simply as the cutting-edge service.[3] It is the service pushing technological bounds in order to have strategic effects, all the while supporting the rest of the whole-of-government approach in a given scenario. The Air Force can bill itself as the service born from the idea that one does not have to go through enemy lines, but can find a way over or around them. This concept would then line up more clearly with recent Air Force efforts in space, cyber, and whatever the future might hold. Only then, can the service hope to solidify its identity, and begin to adapt its culture accordingly. This process will not happen overnight and will require support from Department of Defense leadership, not to mention the Airmen being asked to do the mission day in and day out. Since this is such a long process, it makes sense to look to the legislative strategy and practices for potential gains.

The key to improving the legislative strategy of the Air Force is to better understand Congress. First, one must understand that, just because the legislative strategy can be improved, it is not necessarily

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[2] Bert Frandsen, "The Birth of American Airpower in World War I," *ASPJ Africa & Francophonie* 1st Quarter (2017): 28.
[3] Interview with congressional staff member familiar with DOD issues, January 31, 2018.

broken. Clearly the Air Force is successful on Capitol Hill. One only has to look to when the Air Force was able to articulate its position concerning potentially separating the space forces from the Air Force and creating a separate Space Corps under the Department of the Air Force. The Air Force was able to get its message across to the right stakeholders and, at least for now, fend off that advance. Thus far, it appears as though the Air Force made the right decisions in this regard. The work on the National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 2019 has begun. Instead of attempting to set up a separate Space Corps as before, Chairman Rogers has introduced legislation to create a sub-unified combatant command under United States Strategic Command.[4] This would ensure space is treated as a warfighting domain with the seriousness it deserves, while keeping the Air Force in charge of organizing, training, and equipping its units accordingly.

The phrase "understand Congress better" is misleading as it implies this would be an easy thing to accomplish if one simply sets his or her mind to it. It is much more complicated, however, due largely to the complexity of the organizations involved. Congress is similar to the Air Force and has a number of cultures and sub-cultures. This presents a complicated problem for legislative strategists as they work to grapple with such complexity. They must appreciate that members are pulled in a number of directions not only because of institutional culture, but also because of individual culture. One needs to know which culture is acting as the most influential in a given scenario. Is a member acting a certain way because of rules and norms established by the institution? Or perhaps they are feeling pressure from their home district because something the Air Force wants to do will cut jobs. Understanding the

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[4] Mike Rogers, "Strategic Forces Markup: Chairman Rogers' Opening Remarks," April 25, 2018, https://armedservices.house.gov/news/opening-statements/strategic-forces-markup-chairman-rogers-opening-remarks.

"why" behind a member's actions is critical.

As this paper has tried to spell out, understanding Congress' purpose and structure is an important first step. Another important part is understanding who to talk to. Talking to the right person on Capitol Hill may sometimes mean not always seeking a meeting with a member of Congress. More commonly it makes sense to find the right staff member to talk engage and seek his or her advice. This relates directly back to the previous discussion and the important of knowing the "why" behind a given action.

Asking for advice versus telling Congress what the Air Force wants to do could go a long way in building up the relationship between the two organizations. The relationship does not have to be (and should not be) adversarial. To be sure, there is some built-in tension due to the Constitutional design of government; but, this tension can be one of collegial cooperation. Part of understanding each other is also appreciating how members of Congress have local and national constituencies, not to mention party affiliations. And part of the local constituencies means using the tools one has available. The Air Force should work to leverage the National Guard Bureau's advantages, namely units spread across the United States reporting to state governors. These units are locally-focused even while accomplishing national missions. The Air Force should make use of its basing and national guard units to spread a home-town message to members of Congress.

SAF/LL should work to foster these improved perspectives not only within its own organization but also throughout the Higher Headquarters staff. Some of the above recommendations are obvious to members of SAF/LL but may not be well understood by others on staff as they prepare products or advocate for programs. The same holds true for messaging when members and staffers visit the wings throughout the Air Force. Wing commanders are crucial in this effort, but do not always

appreciate the intricacies of how Congress works. With this kind of information, commanders (and anyone interacting with congressional stakeholders) would be better postured to advocate for the right program or issue at the right time. This kind of change is fundamentally one of leadership. Both Air Force and SAF/LL leadership must be engaged and moving in the same direction.

Along similar lines of understanding Congress better is getting to know the members better. Since members spend so much time back in their home districts, many have sparse living accommodations in the Washington, D.C. area. Further, many do not bring their families with them, instead allowing them to live back home. SAF/LL should attempt to capitalize on this fact and increase member outreach. The only time members see an Air Force legislative liaison should not be when the Air Force needs something or has something to report. As stressed throughout this paper, legislative affairs is all about relationships. The Air Force needs to build these now in the spirit of good faith, approaching that relationship from the perspective of a partnership.

Although they do not necessarily commute like the members do, SAF/LL should set for itself the same goals with committee staff members. These men and women are dedicated professionals doing what they think is best for the country. They are in service to the United States in much the same way as those who wear the uniform (incidentally, some staff members also still wear the uniform in reserve status). SAF/LL should foster relationships with these members in a professional yet personal way, outside of work hours, and outside of the daily grind and back-and-forth. The message here is simple – members, staff members, and military members all have something in common; they are all working toward the common good, but more importantly they are people. In that regard, relationships matter.

Another area that requires further emphasis is the timing of Congress. Timing is something Undersecretary Donovan emphasizes if

one hopes to influence or inform decisions made in Congress. During his time working on Capitol Hill, he often saw when services were late to need on requested information. A service would process an answer to an inquiry through the normal staffing process, thereby completely missing the opportunity at hand.

Just as shifting perspectives applies to more than just SAF/LL, so too does improving timing of responses. SAF/LL, of course, is the primary focus as it is the point of contact for the service when Congress needs something. SAF/LL members must be empowered to respond quickly to requests for information, bypassing the laborious staffing process when needed. This should fall within their judgment, which requires hiring the right kind of people to SAF/LL. The rest of the headquarters staff must also be able to respond in a timely fashion, should SAF/LL require more expertise or further information on a given topic.

The Air Force needs to embrace a bureaucratic sense of urgency. I suspect this would serve the Air Force well in other areas, too, and deserves further exploration. The Air Force appears to have become more likely to accept risk operationally while at the same time becoming bureaucratically risk-averse. This risk aversion can lead to legislative paralysis with symptoms like late responses to Congress, incomplete information provided by headquarters staff to SAF/LL, and lack of creative approaches to messaging Congress. To begin to address the needed sense of urgency, the Air Force needs to empower its staff officers to make decisions and execute the Air Force's legislative strategy. This type of thinking is embedded in the Navy's culture through its fundamental organization and purpose when at sea. While at sea, ship captains operate under initial guidance but are trusted to understand

their current conditions and get the job done.[5] The Air Force, however, is used to operating with almost continual oversight and guidance, and this is reflected in its bureaucracy. The final recommendation for improving the Air Force's legislative strategy deals primarily with finding and fostering the right kind of legislative expertise.

Legislative expertise sounds obvious, but history shows it does not always seem to be a high priority. The loss of focus on building legislative expertise is understandable as the day-to-day functions of SAF/LL and the rest of the Air Force tend to draw attention. Building legislative expertise begins with hiring the right kind of people for the position, but also fostering their growth and learning throughout their time in position. The Air Force attempts to do this now to some extent but could improve.

As discussed earlier, Navy OLA interviews all personnel before they are hired into the office. SAF/LL should implement this step immediately. Adding interviews to the hiring process will certainly complicate the overall permanent change of station or permanent change of assignment cycles run through the Air Force Personnel Center. The sheer importance, however, of the legislative liaison positions means special procedures can and should be used, championed by senior Air Force leadership if the need arises. When looking to implement an interview process, the Air Force should work with Navy OLA to glean its best practices. At a minimum, SAF/LL needs to ensure incoming portfolio managers have good written and verbal communication skills, an ability to work in gray areas with little guidance, critical thinking, and, most importantly, enthusiasm for the job. SAF/LL should not simply be a place for high-performing officers to work while they await greater things — the job is too important for that. While SAF/LL should

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[5] Donnithorne, *Four Guardians*, 50.

not tell commanders of the Air Force major commands whom they should and should not hire to serve in their legislative liaison (MAJCOM/LL), major commands should be encouraged to mirror SAF/LL hiring practices whenever practicable. This would help ensure the same caliber of legislative liaison works major-command-specific issues.

SAF/LL currently accomplishes minimal training for its new portfolio managers, likely due to lack of time to have a proper training program or sufficient on-the-job training. Sending new hires to the Government Affairs Institute course(s) is a great first step. SAF/LL, however, should expand in-house training and orientation efforts at a minimum. If possible, SAF/LL should go further and work with assignment teams to add changeover time between portfolio managers so there is time not only to learn the job but also start building relationships as soon as possible. Barring that, however, SAF/LL should consider some kind of "wingman" portfolio where a secondary or backup portfolio manager accompanies new members on some of their first meetings to ensure they have a grasp on the programs and the people involved. Bottom line, SAF/LL needs to rethink how it approaches ensuring incoming hires know what they need to know; the first step is defining what that is.

A move the Air Force is already making is an important part of building a cadre of legislative experts in the service. Specifically, adding a special-experience identifier (SEI) to those who have successfully completed a legislative-affairs assignment is a way to track those who have done well. It is important to note that not everyone who has been assigned to a legislative-liaison position should receive this identifier. Instead, SAF/LL should make a case-by-case determination for each member on whether he or she has earned the SEI. SAF/LL should consider those who excelled in the position, built good relationships with their Capitol Hill counterparts, and who have shown an interest in the field. Importantly, quality-cut SEI determinations should also be applied

to major-command and combatant-command legislative liaisons. Although they have a different portfolio makeup than their SAF/LL counterparts, these legislative liaisons have had to do many of the same tasks, often geographically separated from Capitol Hill, meaning they are accomplishing these jobs well even while handicapped by distance. It is, therefore, just as important to ensure that only the right people are getting coded for the job. Again, at the time of writing, SAF/LL is already moving out on this recommendation, but leadership should ensure it does not fall by the wayside.

The final piece to building a cadre of legislative experts is to encourage continued research and contact. SAF/LL should immediately create and foster a Legislative Alumni Network. Designating members with an SEI is a step in the right direction, but this has more to do with personnel tracking and assignments. While that is important, it does not solve the problem entirely. Even if a superstar with a legislative SEI is brought back at a later point in her career, she may not have thought about legislative affairs at all in the intervening years — a wasted opportunity. Part of the decision on whom to bring back to SAF/LL later in their career should be based on continued interest in the field.

The Air Force should first encourage those with legislative experience to maintain contact with those on Capitol Hill with whom they have already worked. This often happens unofficially and sometimes with trepidation for fear of getting out in front of SAF/LL. The Air Force, however, should encourage those who have successfully completed legislative assignments to maintain contact and continue to build those relationships. As discussed, staff members tend to work on Capitol Hill for a long time. Therefore, it is not unreasonable to expect them to be in similar positions if a graduated legislative expert comes back to SAF/LL. This goal ties back to a previous recommendation; treat everyone with respect, build relationships, and maintain those relationships down the line.

SAF/LL should create a community website or forum with controlled access where alumni can share experiences and ask questions. Additionally, SAF/LL's research team should post much of the material they share with SAF/LL internally to this page. There is an element of trust in this concept that material will remain close-hold, but it will keep those legislative experts "plugged in" even as they move on to other jobs throughout the Air Force.

Not only will creating an alumni network help the Air Force if and when these members return to a legislative position, but it will also create a cadre of military professionals who think strategically and critically and communicate the nuance of congressional relations to their peers, subordinates, and even commanders. A legislative alumnus, properly engaged, would be an invaluable resource to any base commander across the Air Force.

Culture change is not easy, nor should it be. A service should not jump from priority to priority without critical thought applied to making sure it is the right move. The same thing goes for culture. Additionally, culture change may not even be the right phrase in this situation. The Air Force may simply have to come to culture acceptance – accepting that its culture is not centered on aircraft, alone. In the meantime, the Air Force and SAF/LL have things they can do to improve the service's engagement with Congress. These efforts to improve legislative strategy are compatible with both current Air Force culture, and also the future one if it embraces is "cutting-edge." Some of these efforts, such as encouraging continued contact with professional staff members, can be implemented quite easily. Others, such as adjusting the hiring practices, may take more time as it involved the service's personnel system. SAF/LL should move quickly to implement the changes within its control so it can begin to move in a better direction.

Final Thoughts

Understanding the stakeholders involved, specifically Congress

and the Department of Defense, is critical for any future legislative strategist. Without this common understanding, nuance may be lost when dealing with each other. Each service implements its legislative-affairs operations in different ways. Due to similar mission sets and reliance on technology, it is helpful to compare the Air Force to the Navy. There are differences between the two, and the Air Force should look to adopt best practices as appropriate. No one should put the Navy on a pedestal and try to copy its practices completely, as each service is different. But surely, they can learn from each other.

The Air Force's culture is a complicated one, as it adapts from one technological revolution to another. It was born out of the need to have air-minded advocates to embrace a new domain and way of war. No matter how much war stays the same, it was important to ensure those who could think in the third dimension naturally had a place to go — the Air Force. Over time, however, the service has become one of technological adoption, chasing the next great thing. This is due, in part, to a very practical need to operate in an unnatural domain, that is to say one needs technology to operate in it. With the addition of space and cyber, however, the service finds itself at a crossroads since it has tried to mesh these new domains or ways of employing forces into its existing construct. Any hope to effectively communicate with Congress must first start here — define what culture the Air Force wants moving forward.

Culture change, however, can take time, time the Air Force may not have if it wants to continue to build its relationship with Congress. The Air Force has already implemented some much-needed changes to include special-experience identifiers. At the time of writing, it is also studying whom it brings in for fellowships and the right timing for that opportunity. Both of these changes are important, but they need to go further to ensure the headquarters staff at a minimum has a better understanding of Congress and its operations and timing. The Air Force also needs to encourage those involved to build meaningful relationships

with those who work on Capitol Hill. Finally, the air service is missing a critical opportunity by not growing a cadre of legislative expertise after members leave their legislative positions. Not all of these recommendations will be easily implemented, but they are nonetheless a step in the right direction.

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