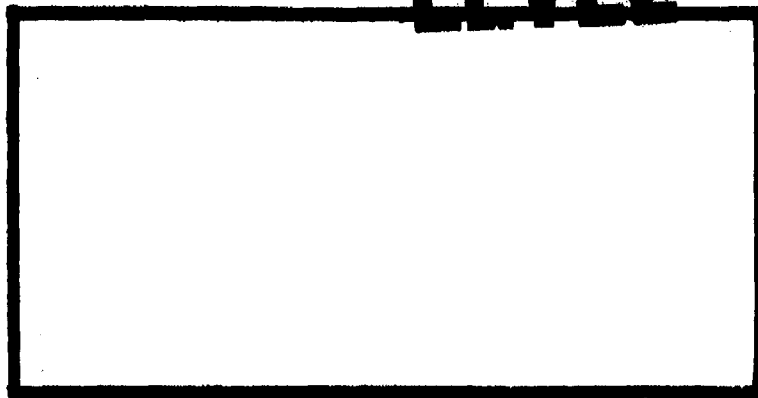


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9 Masters thesis

6 A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE OF THE  
UNITED STATES AIR FORCE ENLISTED  
PERSONNEL PROMOTION POLICY  
(1947-1980).

10 Francis J. Hall, GS-9  
Clark K. Nelsen, Captain, USAF

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The Air Force enlisted personnel promotion program which was adopted from the Army in 1947 was managed at the Base level. Commanders were authorized to promote to the extent of local vacancies. This thesis traces the development of airman promotion policy as it developed from decentralization to a highly centralized system under WAPS and TOPCAP. The development of time-in-grade and time-in-service requirements is documented. Quota control, promotion management, additional grades, title changes, and grade ceiling control are all traced. The trend toward centralization is the major theme of this study. The special promotion policy for the Air Force Band is explained as well as an analysis of promotion policies for Physician Assistants while they were in the enlisted ranks. WAPS and TOPCAP are explained. Emphasis is placed on the reasons for changes and the flexibility and responsiveness of the enlisted personnel system. The purpose of this study is to provide a documented history of airmen promotions which will be useful in developing and evaluating future policies.

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A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE OF THE UNITED  
STATES AIR FORCE ENLISTED PERSONNEL  
PROMOTION POLICY (1947-1980)

A Thesis

Presented to the Faculty of the School of Systems and Logistics  
of the Air Force Institute of Technology

Air University

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the  
Degree of Master of Science in Logistics Management

By

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June 1980

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This thesis, written by

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has been accepted by the undersigned on behalf of the  
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fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE IN LOGISTICS MANAGEMENT

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## Chapter I

### INTRODUCTION

#### Problem Statement

A major problem the United States Air Force faces today is retaining sufficient number of trained people in its technical career fields. In this regard, General Lew Allen, Air Force Chief of Staff, stated:

. . . To succeed, we need airman with technological sophistication and high professional standards . . . . We are beginning to lose good experienced people in critical areas, many of whom are impossible to replace in the short term (2).

General Bennie L. Davis, Commander, Air Training Command, expressed concern for this problem also while addressing the Association of Graduates at the Air Force Institute of Technology (AFIT) in November, 1979. He stated: "The Air Force must find a way to retain more of its technically trained people (7)."

The Air Force is losing skilled technicians, through increased voluntary separations and through promotions which move the technician away from his mechanical duties and into a management or supervisory position. Although there are other ways that technicians are lost, it is felt that identification of these two means will show a need for a reevaluation of the Air Force's airman promotion system and policies.



Nowhere is the problem of retaining trained personnel more critical than in the aircraft maintenance career fields. Over the past three years there has been a continual reduction in the number of second term maintenance technicians who reenlist. Records of the Air Force Manpower and Personnel Center (MPC), Randolph Air Force Base, Texas, show that reenlistment rates for second-term and career airmen in many aircraft maintenance specialties have declined each year since 1977 (1). This declining trend is reflected in Table 1-A. A more comprehensive analysis of this trend is shown in Appendix A. The Air Force Specialty Codes reflected in Table 1-A are avionic systems (32XXXX), aircraft systems maintenance (42XXXX), and aircraft maintenance (431XXX).

TABLE 1-A REENLISTMENT PERCENTAGES FOR AIRCRAFT MAINTENANCE SPECIALTIES									
AFSC	1977			1978			1979		
	1st	2nd	Career	1st	2nd	Career	1st	2nd	Career
32XXXX	23.4	65.7	94.2	28.8	55.2	93.1	32.6	51.0	88.4
42XXXX	37.9	77.5	95.2	41.8	68.5	95.2	35.8	61.1	92.6
431XXX	36.7	70.0	95.7	36.4	63.3	93.5	41.2	56.6	91.3

The reenlistment percentages contained in Table 1-A can be misleading because they are derived by dividing the number of reenlistments by the total number eligible to reenlist. Therefore, they do not reflect the actual retention rate the Air Force is experiencing because technicians considered

ineligible to reenlist are not considered in these percentages. Actual retention is computed by dividing the number of reenlistments for a given year by the total number of airmen in that particular year group. Table 1-B shows that retention rates in these maintenance specialties for second-term airmen declined significantly (14.9 percentage points) over the three year period. At the same time, reenlistment rates of second-term airmen declined a nearly equal amount (14.7 percentage points) as indicated in Table 1-A.

TABLE 1-B RETENTION PERCENTAGES FOR AIRCRAFT MAINTENANCE SPECIALTIES (1)									
AFSC	1977			1978			1979		
	1st	2nd	Career	1st	2nd	Career	1st	2nd	Career
32XXXX	15.6	60.2	61.5	17.7	50.0	60.6	22.4	45.1	57.6
42XXXX	22.1	70.1	62.4	20.3	61.1	65.3	21.3	52.5	69.0
431XXX	21.2	61.4	63.5	17.4	55.1	68.1	16.8	48.5	67.8

Further inspection of Tables 1-A and 1-B shows that while the number of second-term airmen leaving the Air Force increased, the number of first-term airmen retained did not increase proportionately to fill the vacancies left by the exodus of second-term airmen. According to Lt. Col. Gerald D. Desch, this has resulted in the undermanning of numerous AFSCs (8:3).

The concern for the loss of technically trained and experienced personnel expressed by General Allen and General Davis is understandable. Table 1-C shows that reenlistment of second term aircraft maintenance technicians has declined from 72 percent in 1973 to 57 percent in 1979, a total of fifteen percentage points. This represents an experience loss to the Air Force of at least eight years for each technician who leaves the service.

TABLE 1-C							
AIRCRAFT MAINTENANCE TECHNICIAN (431XXX)							
REENLISTMENT PERCENTAGE RATES (8)							
YEAR	73	74	75	76	77	78	79
1st Term	20	31	40	39	36	36	31
2nd Term	72	73	75	69	70	63	57
Career	97	97	97	92	95	93	91

In addition to the technical skills lost due to voluntary separations, more skill and experience is lost in the aircraft maintenance career fields as the technician who does reenlist moves up the career ladder into a supervisory or management position. To understand how this happens it is necessary to understand the current grade/skill progression of airmen who are in a technical career field.

## Overview

Career progression in a specific Air Force Specialty (AFS) begins when an airman is being recruited. At this time he is given a series of aptitude tests. One of these tests is the Armed Services Vocational Battery (ASVAB). This exam is administered to all new recruits who have had no prior military service experience. The ASVAB indicates an individual's potential for training or assignment in a variety of Air Force skills. Based on the aptitude scores attained, and Air Force requirements, an airman is selected for duty in one of four aptitude areas: general, administrative, mechanical, or electronic (44:5-1).

In each of these four general areas there are many Air Force Specialties (AFS). Each of these specialties is identified with an Air Force Specialty Code (AFSC). This code is a combination of numbers (digits) suffixed with a single letter. An example of an AFSC is 43151A. The first three digits of this code identifies a particular AFS. In this example the digit 431 specifies an aircraft maintenance technician. The fourth digit identifies the skill level, or level of qualification within the AFS. The fifth digit identifies the category of aircraft, in this example tactical fighters, and the letter "A" identifies this specific tactical aircraft as an A-7 (42:A21-1-A22-2).

The skill level qualification within an AFS may be one of five different levels: (1) The helper, or 1-level, identifies personnel initially classified in an AFS when

entering the Air Force or when retraining. (2) The semi-skilled, or 3-level apprentice, identifies airmen who have obtained basic knowledge within an AFSC but who lack the experience and proficiency to perform job tasks without supervision. (3) The skilled, or 5-level journeyman, identifies airmen who have, through experience and training, shown proficiency in their AFSC and who can be reasonably expected to perform on the job without direct supervision. (4) The advanced, or 7-level supervisor or technician, identifies airmen who have gained a high degree of technical knowledge in their AFSC and who have acquired supervisory capability through training and experience. (5) The superintendent, or 9-level, identifies airmen who through experience, training, and performance have shown management and supervisory ability to fill positions requiring broad general (and sometimes technical) knowledge. Superintendents plan, coordinate, implement, and direct work activities (44:1-2).

The Air Force has three specific requirements airmen must satisfy to qualify for skill level upgrading. These requirements are career knowledge, job proficiency, and job experience (47:1-1). The Air Force has an on-the-job training (OJT) program designed to satisfy the requirements for career knowledge and job proficiency. The requirement for job experience is satisfied when airmen satisfactorily perform duty in their AFS for a minimum specified time period. This time period may vary depending upon the particular AFS and skill level.

An airman is generally advanced from skill level one to skill level three in one of two ways. First, if he is sent to technical school he is awarded a 3-level upon successful completion of the end-of-course exam. Second, if he is sent directly to a directed duty assignment he must complete the specified OJT program for his specific AFS. Then to be awarded a 3-level, he must also successfully complete the specified Career Development Course (CDC) or apprentice knowledge Test (AKT).

After being awarded a 3-level, the airman continues his OJT and works toward obtaining a 5-level. This is important to him because he must be awarded the 5-level before he is eligible for promotion to E-4/senior airman. Certain grade restrictions also apply to the awarding of skill levels. Award of 7-skill level AFSCs is restricted to airmen in grades E-5 and above. Award of 9-skill level AFSCs is restricted to airmen in grades E-7, E-8, and E-9 (44:6-5). Therefore, both skill level and grade are an important part of an airman's career progression.

Both skill level and grade complement each other in making up the enlisted force organizational structure. As shown in Figure 1-A, the enlisted force organization is a three-tier structure. The first, called the trainee-apprentice tier, is composed of grades E-1 through E-4/senior airmen. Airmen in this tier may possess skill levels 1, 3, or 5. These individuals progress from trainee to trainee-apprentice to trainee-apprentice-technician. Learning the

skills of their career fields and developing professional military skills are the primary responsibilities of individuals in these grades (73:1-1).

SUPERVISOR-MANAGER TIER			
E-7 MANAGER SUPERVISOR	E-8 MANAGER SUPERVISOR	E-9 MANAGER SUPERVISOR	
TECHNICIAN-SUPERVISOR TIER			
E-4 SUPERVISOR TECHNICIAN	E-5 SUPERVISOR TECHNICIAN	E-6 SUPERVISOR TECHNICIAN	
TRAINEE-APPRENTICE TIER			
E-1 TRAINEE	E-2 APPRENTICE TRAINEE	E-3 APPRENTICE TRAINEE	E-4 APPRENTICE APPRENTICE TRAINEE

Figure 1-A  
THE ENLISTED FORCE ORGANIZATION

The technician-supervisor tier, composed of E-4/sergeant through E-6, calls for increasing supervisory duties and correspondingly decreasing technical duties. Performing technical tasks and providing technical, as well as general military, supervision are the primary responsibilities assigned to personnel in this tier (73:1-1). Technicians in this tier may possess skill levels 5 or 7.

The supervisor-manager tier is made up of airmen of grades E-7, E-8 and E-9 all of which may possess 9-skill level AFSCs. The primary responsibility of personnel in these grades is effective supervision and management of personnel and resources. Little emphasis is placed on technical proficiency in this tier. The primary concern is on management roles and supervisory responsibilities. Even in the attainment of the 9-skill level emphasis is away from technical knowledge and proficiency. Advancement from the 7-skill level to the 9-skill level requires no additional technical training (47:1-4).

Management Roles Erode  
Mechanical Skills

Under the present system, if a senior non-commissioned officer (NCO) is in a technical career field such as aircraft maintenance, his technical proficiency is difficult to maintain. This is because of the fact that his prescribed primary responsibilities are supervision and management of personnel and resources. Specific NCO responsibilities strictly prohibit a chief master sergeant (CMSgt) or a senior master sergeant (SMSgt) from being a technician. AFR 39-6 says, for the grade of CMSgt, ". . . Although thoroughly trained in the technical aspects of their AFSC, they are managers with supervisory responsibilities, not a super grade technician [73:2-1, 2-2]," and for SMSgt, "The SMSgt is a supervisor and a manager, not a super grade technician [73: 2-1, 2-2]."



This shift away from hands-on technical duties to supervisory and managerial duties begins just about the time a technician becomes fully qualified in his skill. A 7-level Technical Sergeant may spend 57 percent of his time in a supervisory role. A 9-level Master, Senior Master, or Chief Master Sergeant technician may spend as much as 91 percent of his time not working on equipment, but directing others (45:17).

A basic theory of the airmen promotion policy for mid-level NCOs is to promote those who show potential for greater supervisory responsibilities (68:2). Hence, promotion is not primarily based on technical skills or experience, but largely on one's ability and desire to manage. Under this promotion system it is essentially impossible for a technician to remain a technician (31). To survive for a career, the technician must move into a supervisory or management role by obtaining promotions. His technical skills could then deteriorate or disappear. He may or may not want to supervise, yet he has no choice if he wants a career that exceeds twenty years. There is an implied condemnation of the career technician. He is thought of as being of little potential value to the Air Force if he does not want to become a manager (31).

In regard to the emphasis on managerial ability in the Air Force promotion system an individual identified as a Military Airlift Command (MAC) Non-Commissioned Officer (NCO) wrote the following to the editor of the Air Force Times:

There is an fundamental flaw in the way the Air Force is managing its middle level NCOs . . . Proliferation of leadership and management schools have led thousands of mid-level NCOs to believe that their destiny is to lead and manage but not to perform the skills for which they were trained . . . . But then who can blame these NNOs? They know one of the prime requisites for promotion to the super grades is an impressive job description. The term "technician" in a job description is anathema to advancement.

In these times of increasingly complex and sophisticated weapons, we must have only the most highly trained and competent personnel maintaining them. We must reduce the emphasis placed on teaching everyone to be leaders and managers. Our people must be allowed to practice the technical skills they were trained to perform. This way, they can gain valuable experience and use it to its fullest potential.

The stigma generally attached to those who actually perform maintenance tasks must be eliminated. Only then will the Air Force begin to use its people in the most effective manner (26).

Under the current promotion policy, even if a technician does not move into a management position through promotion, his skills are eventually lost to the Air Force because he will be discharged from the service after 20 years if he has not advanced beyond the rank of staff sergeant (74:3-4). This is due to the high year of tenure policies established by AFR 39-29 which reflects the Total Objective Plan For Career Airman Personnel (TOPCAP). High year of tenure for additional grades can be seen in Table 1-D.

TABLE 1-D	
HIGH YEAR OF TENURE (TOPCAP)	
<u>Grade</u>	<u>Year</u>
E-5	20
E-6	23
E-7	26
E-8	28
E-9	30

Under TOPCAP, airmen are involuntarily separated in order to make room for a younger force. However, the wisdom of such a policy as it pertains to the technical career fields of the Air Force is questionable. Richard Cooper states that the emphasis on a first-term intensive force has resulted in policies requiring career enlisted personnel to assume supervisory responsibilities. He suggests that the Air Force's needs would be better fulfilled if larger numbers could remain in the service as career technicians (5:26). This, of course, would result in fewer new recruits that could be brought into the service each year. However, estimates show that technicians during the entirety of their first four years of military service are on the average far less productive than a technician with four years of experience (5:308). Therefore, if retention of experienced maintenance technicians is improved, and more of these technicians are allowed to remain on active duty as career technicians, the need for training would be reduced significantly. This would result in substantial cost savings and would allow technicians to spend more of their time performing technical duties. In this regard, former Secretary of Defense Melvine Laird said:

It is in our interest to reduce personnel turnover, because experienced people are more productive than new people; and smaller proportions of our force will be employed in receiving and conducting training (24).

## Summary

The loss of skilled technicians in the Air Force's maintenance career fields has grown substantially over the last three years. Much of this loss is attributable to increased voluntary separation of second-term and career technicians. In addition, skill is being lost as technicians are promoted into managerial or supervisory positions, thus spending less time performing mechanical duties. As voluntary separation of skilled technicians increases, the need to train new recruits increases also, thus requiring the skilled technician to spend even more of his time in supervisory or training role.

The goal of the Air Force in structuring its personnel force is to obtain the optimum ratios of youth to experience and careerists to noncareerists. Generalization and specialization must be weighted in terms of needs and cost effectiveness. The Air Force must provide a force with a balance in the skills, education, knowledge, and grades necessary to respond to changing requirements (48:1-2).

The requirements for education, knowledge, and skill in the aircraft maintenance career fields have changed because of the advancements in aircraft technology. Aircraft and other associated weapon systems are becoming increasingly complex and technically sophisticated. Because of these changes and the problems the Air Force is currently experiencing retaining skilled technicians, the writers of this

thesis believe that a thorough study of the current airman promotion system is needed to determine its adequacy in meeting the technical needs of the Air Force.

#### Related Research

This thesis is part of a three-year research plan, concerning the United States Air Force Enlisted Personnel Promotion Policy, conducted by graduate students at the Air Force Institute of Technology. The goal of the combined effort is to formulate recommendations for a Career Promotion Program for enlisted personnel in the aircraft maintenance career field. Figure 1-B shows the plan for conducting these studies.

Captain Edward A. Richter and Captain David C. Tharp (36:17) conducted the study on comparison with systems of other organizations. The objective of their research was to systematically identify, investigate, and analyze the similarities and differences between the current enlisted career progression system for aircraft maintenance of the Air Force with those of the Army, Navy, a civilian industry, and a friendly foreign Air Force.

Captain Gary W. Pierce and Captain Erika A. Robeson (33:12) explored the attitudes of personnel concerning the current personnel progression system and attempted to determine if these attitudes support or contradict the assumption that changes to the current system are needed. They investigated the following questions:

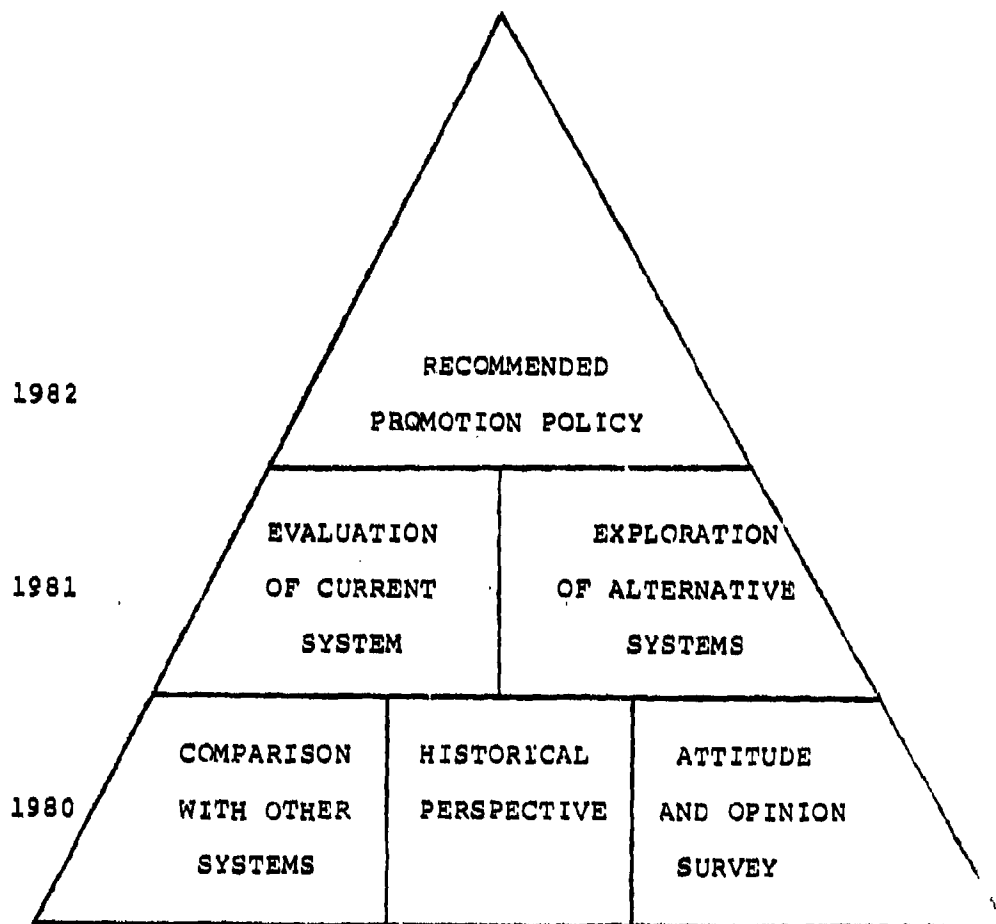


Figure 1-B

THREE-YEAR STUDY PLAN ON  
PROMOTION POLICY FOR  
MAINTENANCE CAREER FIELD

1. What are the perceived roles of the technicians and the supervisor/manager in the United States Air Force?
2. What is the perceived status of the technician and the supervisor/manager under the current career progression system?
3. What are the attitudes toward the transition from technician to supervisor/manager?
4. What is the perceived adequacy of technician skill level?
5. What are the attitudes toward the concept of a career technician?
6. Do these attitudes and opinions indicate that any changes to the current career progression system should be considered?

#### Objective

This historical study is to provide a documented reference that details the policy of early promotion programs and identifies changes as changes occurred. This historical document will be useful for reference purposes in responding to numerous questions concerning past promotion policy and for providing the reasons that changes to promotion policies were or were not made.

This study will begin by describing the initial airman promotion policy in 1947 when the Air Force became a separate service. After establishing what the initial promotion policy was in 1947, major or significant change will be traced from that time to the present (1980).

## Research Methodology

This research effort is organized around two time-oriented areas; historical and current. In dealing with the historical approach to the airman promotion policy and process, it was necessary to accomplish a comprehensive search of available historical and current documents. Air Force regulations and manuals and various other Air Force, legislative, and congressional studies and reports were reviewed for applicable content.

This information was gathered from headquarters United States Air Force, Enlisted Force Structure/MPXXF; and Headquarters United States Air Force Personnel Promotion Policy/AFMPXOP. Other information was obtained from Headquarters Air Force Manpower and Personnel Center (AFMPC), Enlisted Retention/MPCMM, and Airman Assignments Branch, Directorate of Personnel Resources and Distribution, Randolph Air Force Base, Texas. In addition, various other historical books and journals obtained from the Albert F. Simpson Air Force Historical Library at Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama, were searched for pertinent historical information. The research methodology was divided into three areas for study: decentralized promotion, centralized promotion, and special promotion opportunities in selected specialties.



## Chapter II

### DECENTRALIZED PROMOTION (1947- 1967)

The United States Air Force came into being as a separate service on 18 September 1947, under provisions of the National Security Act of that year (46). The Air Force continued to use many of the policies and practices of the Army, even to the extent of adopting Army regulations as its own (34). This was true in the case of the enlisted promotion policies contained in Army Regulation 615-5, "Appointment and Reduction of Noncommissioned Officers and Privates, First Class," 23 September 1946 (75) which was used until 1950 when the Air Force issued its own regulation "Enlisted Personnel, Promotion and Demotion of Airmen," AFR 39-30 (49).

#### The Original Enlisted Promotion System

The Air Force Enlisted Promotion System which was inherited from the Army in 1947 was decentralized. The system was managed at base level and authorized commanders to promote to the extent of local vacancies, AR 615-5 stated:

Appointment of all noncommissioned officers and privates, first class, in the Army Air Force . . . will be made by the commanding officers of groups, separate or detached squadrons, and separate units or detachments (75).

Promotions were authorized to fill vacancies in the unit's manning allotment. The allotment was determined by the War Department and provided guidance for determining the rank structure of each unit. Each commander receiving an allotment of grades could suballot definite proportions of his overall allotment to his subordinate commanders (9). This period has been referred to as the era of the first sergeant's "black book" and the commander's "favorite son". While this type of promotion authority could be used as a leadership device by the commander, there were inequities and management problems.

One management problem was the top-heavy noncommissioned officer (NCO) corps resulting from World War II. During the war, rapid personnel turnover created frequent vacancies and almost unlimited opportunities for promotion (35). The Army Air Force contained thousands of NCOs who had advanced from lower grades with less than four years service. Many of these men transferred to the Air Force in 1947 creating a rank-heavy structure of career minded NCOs who blocked the advancement of lower grade airmen. This top-heavy force, often referred to as the World War II "hump", caused promotions to be very slow during this period (9:9).

In 1948 an interim policy and program was established to provide opportunities for advancement for Air Force enlisted personnel. To implement this program, major air commands were allocated a total of 762 master sergeant (E-7)

and 1521 technical sergeant (E-6) vacancies. It was intended that enough vacancies be provided to allow promotion for those men who were best qualified and most deserving and had been previously denied promotion solely because of overages in the grades of master sergeant (E-7) and technical sergeant (E-6) (72).

The local vacancy requirement, which had been a prerequisite for promotion, was deleted in 1949. Commanders were given the authority to waive the requirements of a vacancy to appoint to the grade of corporal (E-3) well-qualified and deserving personnel who had completed 14 months service as privates first class (E-2) and who were being denied promotion owing to lack of vacancies (70). The minimum service time criterion was reduced to 12 months by the end of the year (71).

#### The First Air Force Regulation

The first distinct Air Force regulation concerning enlisted personnel promotions was issued in March of 1950. Promotion authority remained decentralized. Major air commanders could delegate authority to group commanders to promote in all grades. Authority to promote to the grades of corporal (E-3) and private first class (E-2) could, at the discretion of the major air commander concerned, be delegated to squadron commanders. A significant change from past

practices was the creation of minimum time-in-grade (TIG) requirements for promotion eligibility. Table 2-A shows minimum time required at the next lower grade (49:4).

TABLE 2-A	
MINIMUM TIME-IN-GRADE REQUIREMENTS FOR PROMOTION UNDER AFR 39-30 24 March 1950	
For Promotion to	Required TIG
E-2, Private, First Class	4 months
E-3, Corporal	8 months
E-4, Sergeant	18 months
E-5, Staff Sergeant	24 months
E-6, Technical Sergeant	36 months
E-7, Master Sergeant	48 months

Grades between E-3 and E-7 inclusive were defined as non-commissioned officers (NCOs) (49:1). These new tenure requirements marked the first management action initiated to control promotion progression (35:16).

The Air Force continued to operate under budgetary limitations in the first half of 1950. From a low of 305,827 in June 1947, personnel strength had risen to approximately 416,000 at the end of 1949. But, in the early months of 1950, budgetary restrictions forced the strength figures downward again; some installations were closed and many programs curtailed. On 25 June 1950, the North Korea Communist Army crossed the 38th Parallel and invaded the Republic of South Korea. The United Nations Security Council hurriedly

branded North Korea an aggressor and dictated the use of force to repel the invasion. On June 27th, President Truman decided to use U. S. air and naval forces to carry out the Security Council mandate (46:16,17).

Personnel ceilings were suspended and Air Force enlisted strength nearly doubled. Promotion opportunity was almost unlimited. Time-in-grade requirements were waived and individual personnel progressed from grade to grade averaging almost six months between promotions (2:9). Commanders were authorized to establish two zones of consideration for the promotion of airmen. The primary zone included personnel who were recommended and who had met time-in-grade requirements. The secondary zone included personnel who fulfilled all of the requirements for promotion except for time-in-grade. Personnel in both primary and secondary zones were considered simultaneously for promotions on a best qualified basis (50:2).

An Air Force Letter concerning temporary promotion of airmen, published in July 1951, contains the first reference to quota control and Air Force Specialty (AFS). Temporary promotions to grades above private first class (E-2) were controlled by allocation of promotion quotas to major air commands by the Director of Military Personnel, Headquarters USAF. Airmen had to be classified in the AFS commensurate with the grade to which promotion was contemplated. Time-in-grade requirements were drastically reduced for temporary promotions (51:2).

While personnel strength did not decrease as severely after the Korean War ended 27 July 1953 as it had after World War II, accelerated promotions further compounded the problem of force imbalance. The "hump" created in World War II continued and severe imbalances in some specialties occurred when manpower requirements were adjusted to accommodate a large peacetime force. Manpower officials documented requirements for a larger force structure. However, increased use of contractor services in maintenance and support areas reduced military authorizations. Thus, enlisted manning imbalances occurred in numerous career fields (35:18).

In 1952, the Air Force adopted new titles for the enlisted grades. Private (E-1) became "basic airman," private first class (E-2) became "airman third class," corporal (E-3) became "airman second class," and sergeant (E-4) became "airman first class." It has been suggested that the new blue suits, the upside-down insignia, and even the new titles indicate that the new U. S. air arm borrowed heavily from the British air forces. Another concern was the loss of the "ancient and honorable" title of "buck sergeant." In effect, the new AF system demoted the E-4 from the NCO to the airman ranks (4:4).

#### Quota Control

A quota control system became part of the regulation in 1953 in an attempt to control manning imbalances. The first Air Force regulation which dealt only with promotion of airmen, AFR 39-29, stated:

Promotion to grades above airmen, third class (E-2) will be controlled by the allocation of periodic promotion quotas to major air commands by the Director of Military Personnel, Headquarters USAF [52:2].

A system was thus established by which promotion quotas were periodically allocated to the major commands who in turn could delegate the authority for promotion to lower echelons of command. The regulation specified that promotions would be limited to the quotas allocated for each grade and that a command-wide vacancy had to exist in the grade and AFS to which the airman was to be promoted. Assignment to grade E-1 was not controlled by quotas (52:2,4).

In addition to quota control, the 1953 regulation changed minimum TIG requirements, classified promotions as either permanent or temporary, and authorized commanders to designate acting NCOs when sufficient numbers of noncommissioned officers were not available. Promotion to grades E-2, E-3, or E-4 was permanent while advancement to the top three grades was temporary. In the latter case, eligibility for advancement to the permanent NCO grade was based on completion of specified periods of total active military service. These tenure requirements were: to staff sergeant, 8 years; to technical sergeant, 11 years; and to master sergeant, 14 years (35:19).

The new TIG requirements (1953) are given in Table 2-B.

TABLE 2-B

MINIMUM TIME-IN-GRADE REQUIREMENTS  
FOR PROMOTION UNDER AFR 39-29  
2 January 1953

For Promotion to	Required TIG
E-2, Airman, Third Class	4 months or completion of basic training
E-3, Airman, Second Class	6 months
E-4, Airman, First Class	8 months
E-5, Staff Sergeant	12 months
E-6, Technical Sergeant	14 months
E-7, Master Sergeant	16 months

The increased TIG requirements were more realistic in connection with the control of promotion allocations (23:9).

As a result of the large number of senior NCOs who remained in the service at the end of World War II, in comparison to enlisted men of lower ranks, and the almost unrestricted promotions to NCO grades during the Korean conflict, the Air Force was experiencing difficulty in balancing its enlisted force. This imbalance involved both the straight grade structure without regard to career fields or disciplines and the structure within certain career fields (34:10). The promotion regulation published in 1954 provided more control by restricting promotion authority for grades E-5, E-6, and E-7 to major commands while authorizing delegation of promotion authority for the lower grades to squadron level (53:1).



The elevation of promotion authority to major commands did not completely resolve the problem of inequities in promotion opportunities among the different commands. Lieutenant Colonel Raymond E. Brim, who was responsible for Airman Promotion Policy at Headquarters USAF from 1961 to 1965 wrote:

The percentage manning of major air commands was based on the priority of the units as set by the Operation Priority Units. This system resulted in some commands receiving larger promotion quotas since they were low on the personnel manning priority list (a higher number of vacancies), while commands with more important missions and a higher manning priority received fewer promotions (fewer vacancies) [3:13].

#### Promotion Management

To decrease the impact the command of assignment had on opportunities for promotion, the Air Force, in 1956, stipulated that promotions would be based on Air Force-wide vacancies rather than command vacancies. A promotion management system was also implemented to control promotions by specialty. Using a promotion vacancy list, the Air Force began to force the distribution of manning by reducing the surplus in many specialties. The absence of a vacancy prohibited promotion in overmanned AFSs and attrition served to balance force manning. This was the first effective management control system. However, it did not eliminate dissatisfaction as promotion in overmanned specialties was almost impossible (35:21,22).

Establishment of Grades  
E-8 and E-9

A major change in the enlisted structure occurred in 1958 when Public Law 85-422 set up two new grades: senior master sergeant (E-8) and chief master sergeant (E-9). It has been asserted that these "supergrades" were created to replace warrant officer grades. Coincidentally, the Air Force did phase out its warrant officers as it phased in its E-8s and E-9s. But, the Air Force says the transition was not a matter of simple substitution. It was not decided to discontinue warrant officers until nine months after Congress had created the "supergrades." The prime reason for retiring the warrant officer grades was that they amounted to an added layer of supervision between officers and NCOs. Since no new manning spaces were added for E-8s and E-9s, they had to be reshuffled from the enlisted ranks. The warrant officer spaces, which were tied to officer authorizations, were turned back to the commissioned officer grades (4:4).

The supergrades evolved from House and Senate Armed Services Committee hearings designed to establish a military career force compensation system which would reduce high personnel turnover and attract and retain highly qualified personnel for careers of "proper duration" (35:22).

The purpose of establishing the two new enlisted pay grades, E-8 and E-9, was to provide for a better delineation of responsibilities in the enlisted structure. For practical purposes the first two enlisted pay grades merely marked

a transition period for an enlisted man in the first term of service. Only five pay grades were used to provide delineation of some 275 different skills and skill levels in the enlisted work force.

This resulted in a situation wherein E-7s supervised E-7s who supervised other E-7s. Pay grades E-8 and E-9 were established to make it possible to distinguish properly between the different levels of responsibility and at the same time provide the necessary monetary recognition for the jobs being performed by those who held the grades. The legislation restricted the number of active duty enlisted members in pay grades E-8 and E-9 to 2 percent and 1 percent, respectively, of the total enlisted strength on active duty as of 1 January each year. Initially the Air Force established requirements of 9 months time-in-grade and 11 years total active service for promotion eligibility to chief master sergeant (E-9) and 24 months time-in-grade and 10 years total active service for senior master sergeant (E-8) (35:23).

It was the practice in the Air Force to allocate annual promotion quotas to the major air commands. The commands considered for promotion those airmen who were eligible according to time-in-grade, time-in-service prerequisites, and who successfully passed the USAF Supervisor's Examination. A specific number of quotas were designated for each nine-level AFSC. This process was intended to insure a

relative standard of manning among all career field specialities. After quotas were divided among all AFSCs, they were allotted as far as possible to all commands which had reported eligibles in the AFSC. Commands that did not have a sufficient number of eligibles to obtain a quota were allowed to nominate, for USAF board consideration, a specified number of their eligibles to compete for a portion of the AFSC quota retained by Headquarters USAF. This procedure was to insure that all airmen in the particular AFSC had an opportunity for promotion. (29:3).

#### Grade Ceiling Control

Grade ceiling control began in 1958 as a result of the rising costs in pay and allowances required to support large numbers of NCOs. The control restricted Air Force manning in grades E-4 through E-7 to 55 percent of the enlisted force. In 1960 grade controls were extended to include E-8 and E-9 grades and the ceiling was increased to 58.5 percent (23:9). The impact of grade controls can be appreciated by considering the total skill/grade requirement of the Air Force. Air Force manpower validation teams determined that approximately 70% of the airmen force should be in the top six grades according to skill/grade requirements. The difference between the Department of Defense limitation and the manpower requirement resulted in approximately 10% of the enlisted personnel being paid at a lower grade/skill level than that desired by the Air Force (2:16,17).

Some significant changes were published in the revised promotion regulation in 1959. Authority to promote to the new E-8 and E-9 grades was restricted to wing level on higher and minimum time-in-grade requirements were modified (53:4).

TABLE 2-C	
MINIMUM TIME-IN-GRADE REQUIREMENTS FOR PROMOTION UNDER AFR 39-29 4 March 1959	
For Promotion to	Required TIG
E-2, Airman, Third Class	11 weeks
E-3, Airman, Second Class	6 months
E-4, Airman, First Class	12 months
E-5, Airman, Staff Sergeant	18 months
E-6, Technical Sergeant	21 months
E-7, Master Sergeant	24 months
E-8, Senior Master Sergeant	24 months
E-9, Chief Master Sergeant	9 months

Since promotion progression was extremely slow in many specialties, a procedure for waivers to the requirement for an Air Force vacancy was established. Major commands were authorized to use up to 10 percent of their total quota to promote exceptionally well qualified (EWQ) eligible airmen with extensive time in grade. Specifically, the waiver extended to EWQ airmen in grade E-6 with more than six years in grade, in grade E-5 with more than five years in grade, and to those in E-4 with more than four years in grade. Provisions for delegation of promotion authority changed

again; major commands could delegate promotion authority for grades E-8 and E-9 to wing level, grades E-6 and E-7 to group level, and grades E-5 to squadron level. For the first time, selection board procedures were mentioned and selection folder contents were specified. While these references applied to supergrades, it was the first step toward standardizing local board procedures in the promotion directive. The authority to appoint acting NCOs was deleted and commanders were authorized to promote to fill a vacancy which was created as a result of a demotion. This provision applied to grades E-7 and below and provided commanders with an additional incentive for the outstanding performer during a period when promotions were closely controlled (35:25-27).

#### The Sixties

In 1960 several small changes occurred. The dual promotion system was terminated and all promotions became permanent. Promotion authority for grade E-5 was elevated from squadron to group level, TIG requirement for grade E-3 was increased to eight months, and TIG requirement for E-9 was decreased to six months. TIG requirements for E-2 was reduced to 8 weeks. Promotion to grade E-8 required 17 years time-in-service and E-9 required 20 years time-in-service. Specific dates were set upon which promotions were to become effective. Grades E-3 through E-5 had a promotion date of 1 February, 1 June or 1 October. Grades E-6 through E-9 were to be promoted on 1 June or 1 December (54:1 to 4).

The 1960 regulation also contained procedures on how selections to grades E-8 and E-9 were to be made. Promotion boards for these grades were to consist of three or more field grade officers and could also include nonvoting technical advisors. Selections were made once a year but promotions were made effective on two dates, 1 December and 1 June.

The 1960 regulation also required the major air commands to report the number of airmen in grades E-7 and E-8 who were eligible for promotion. Major air commands were also required to submit a report showing the numbers of airmen promoted to the various grades. The 1960 regulation also included a requirement for an airman to pass the USAF Supervisory Examination, AFPRT 28, before he could be considered for promotion to grade E-8 (54:5 to 7).

In 1961 skill level became a prerequisite for promotion. Grade E-9 required a 9-skill level, grades E-6 through E-8 required a 7-skill level, and grades E-5 and below required skill levels commensurate with the grade to which promotion was contemplated as indicated by AFM 35-1, Military Personnel Classification Policy.

The time-in-service requirement for promotion was changed drastically in the regulation published in 1961. Grade E-8 required 10 years time-in-service instead of 20 years. Time-in-service requirements were deleted for lower grades. The

TIG requirement for E-9 was increased from 6 months to 18 months. At the same time the active duty requirement was reduced from 11 weeks to 8 weeks for a basic airman to be promoted to grade E-2 (55:3.6).

A revised quota allocation system was implemented in 1962. A Promotion Distribution List was provided to each major command for each promotion cycle. Rather than specifying vacancies, this document identified the promotion opportunity in each Control AFSC. The opportunity in each speciality was expressed in one of three methods: as a percentage of the assigned eligible population at the next lower grade, unlimited (up to 100 percent), or EWQ. The major command could use up to 10 percent of its quota for EWQ promotions. The procedure of specifying the exact percentage of promotions by speciality would continue until the adoption of equal selection opportunity in 1972 (35:27,28). TIG requirement for promotion to grade E-9 was increased in 1962 from 18 months to 24 months (56:3).

The 1964 regulation authorized major air commanders to delegate promotion authority for all grades to a commander of any echelon of command. The Department of Defense further extended the grade ceiling control in 1964 to include the top six enlisted grades (57:1,3). Grade ceiling control had begun in 1958. Initially, the control restricted Air Force manning in the top four enlisted grades to 55 percent of the enlisted force; in 1960 this figure was increased to 58.5



percent; and in 1964 to 61 percent for the top six enlisted grades (9:14). The grade ceilings limit the number of promotions which the Air Force can make each fiscal year.

The enlisted personnel promotion system had not been centralized from its beginning until the middle 1960s. The Air Force had used various forms of quota control and changes in TIG requirements in an attempt to resolve the force imbalance caused by accelerated promotions during World War II and the Korean War. Promotions were made to fill vacant manpower authorizations so the promotion program was used as a management device to resolve grade and skill imbalances. The result for personnel in overmanned career fields was prolonged promotion stagnation. In many specialties, advancement was virtually frozen. Low promotion opportunity in many career fields coupled with almost unlimited advancement in others led to growing dissatisfaction with selection procedures (35:29).

In 1965, the Air Force continued strong quota management by implementing the Promotion Management List (PML), a control device similar to the Airman Promotion Distribution List of 1962. The list was used to control promotions to the grades of E-4 through E-7 within career field subdivisions. It was updated and published each cycle to inform promotion authorities and promotion board members of major air commands of those career field subdivisions where grade vacancies existed. Major commands were to insure that the limits specified in the list were not exceeded (58:1,2).

Promotion opportunity was expressed as a specified percentage for each AFSC by grade; or the AFSC was designated as EWQ which allowed some specialties to be manned in excess of authorizations. Each cycle, Headquarters USAF established a percentage of the major command quota which could be used to promote EWQ airmen (35:31).

The PML did not apply to grades E-3, E-8 or E-9. Promotions to E-3 were controlled by total number rather than AFSC. Since E-8 and E-9 selections only occurred annually, quotas were distributed to major commands based on the number of eligibles reported in each AFSC. The commands could delegate quotas to lower echelons or hold one selection board for the whole command. Commands that did not have a sufficient number of eligibles in a specialty to obtain a quota were authorized to nominate a specified number of their eligibles, within the AFSC, for consideration by the Headquarters USAF Central Selection Board. A proportionate share of the entire Air Force quota for each AFSC was retained for this centralized selection process to insure consideration of all eligible airmen (35:31-33).

Centralized Promotion for  
Grades E-8 and E-9

Since the inception of grades E-8 and E-9 it had been the practice of the Air Force to allocate annual promotion quotas to the major commands. The commands considered for promotion airmen who were eligible according to TIG and

time-in-service prerequisites, and who successfully passed the USAF Supervisor's Examination. From 1959 to 1964 there had been a gradual decrease in the number of annual promotions that could be made to each of the two senior grades. As the decrease in the number of annual quotas occurred, additional problems were encountered in the equitable allocation of quotas to the commands.

As annual promotion quotas decreased, there was an increase in the number of ASFCs requiring USAF Central Board consideration. Every major air command during the FY65 cycle had to screen and nominate airmen to compete for a certain number of promotion quotas controlled by the USAF central board. It seemed clear that a central board was essential to the senior grade selection system.

In May 1965, a letter was dispatched to all major commands requesting recommendations concerning centralization. In the replies, all commands except four recommended centralization. The dissenting commands were Strategic Air Command, Tactical Air Command, Military Air Transport Service, Air Force Logistics Command. The reasons furnished for not endorsing centralization were summarized as follows:

1. The desire to promote the "best qualified" within a command.
2. Under a decentralized system commands obtain a "fair share" of the quotas.

3. Centralization would lead to more inflation of performance reports.
4. Decentralization allows better selectivity by major air commands to meet mission requirements.

Some of the reasons for centralization as furnished by concurring commands included:

1. The best qualified airmen Air Force-wide will be selected for promotion.
2. Improve morale through Air Force-wide competition.
3. Centralization will insure more equitable promotion opportunity for eligible airmen.
4. Selection criteria will be standardized for all airmen.

The commands in favor of centralization outnumbered those against it. However, there was only a slight edge in the number of airmen represented; approximately 54% of the force in commands which were for centralization.

It appeared that the choice to centralize would be forced by the decreasing number of annual quotas. The main task of selection would fall upon a central USAF board since quotas allocated to most AFSCs would be too few in number to furnish individual commands (29:2-6). In 1966, a decision was made and implemented to centralize E-8 and E-9 selections at Hq USAF. The results confirmed the advisability of centralization for other grades in order to enable eligible airmen to compete on equal terms for all vacancies (23:10).

Monthly Incremental  
Promotions

Prior to 1967 promotions were made by cycle (one, two, or three cycles per year) depending on grade. This system frequently caused the AF to fall below its grade ceiling authorization between cycles. The 1967 World-Wide Airman Promotion Workshop developed methods for monthly incremental promotions that allow selected airmen to be promoted earlier. They also permitted the Air Force to take advantage of grade vacancies on a monthly basis rather than by cycle, thus having an effect of creating more promotions (23:11). Airmen were to be assigned promotion sequence numbers based on seniority. On the first day of each month, airmen would be promoted in order of their sequence numbers to the extent vacancies permitted. This procedure provided flexibility for personnel managers charged to control enlisted strength (35:35).

In April 1967, the Air Force created a top enlisted position. The one-of-a-kind job was Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force. It was to be filled by an E-9 chosen by command nomination and USAF board selection. The first CMSAF was CMSgt. Paul W. Airey, now retired. The CMSAF outranks all other enlisted men.

Also in 1967, officials decided it was not good to be calling the lower grades "third class" and "second class" airman. So, the titles were changed again. Airman, third class (E-2) became "Airman", Airman, second class (E-3)

became "Airman First Class" and, after 15 years, airman, first class (E-4) rose again as "Sergeant." Airman Basic had become the title for E-1s in February 1959. When E-4 was retitled "Sergeant" in 1967, the Air Force moved it back into the NCO ranks. From three NCO grades, the Air Force had moved to six (including the super grades) (4:4).

#### Summary

A summary of the history of U. S. Air Force enlisted grades is included in Appendix B. Upon separating from the U. S. Army in 1947, the Air Force continued the enlisted grade structure used by the Army Air Force. Five of the seven enlisted grades, Corporal through Master Sergeant, were NCO grades. In 1952 grade titles were redesignated and NCO grades were reduced to three. Two additional enlisted grades were added at the top of the enlisted grade structure in 1958. In 1967 the position of Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force was established. Also in 1967, grade E-4 was redesignated from Airman First Class to Sergeant and placed back into the NCO ranks. Additionally, the grades of E-3 and E-2 were changed from Airman Second Class and Airman Third Class, respectively, to Airman First Class and Airman (17:1).

## Chapter III

### CENTRALIZATION OF AIRMEN PROMOTIONS (1967-1971)

The late 1960's and early 1970's saw some major and very significant changes occur in the airman promotion system. The major change that occurred was the phasing out of the decentralized promotion board system for grades E-4 through E-7 and the adoption of the centralized Weighted Airman Promotion System (WAPS). This weighted factor promotion system and the events which led to its adoption will be addressed in this chapter.

The major factor which led to the adoption of WAPS was the growing discontent of airmen with the decentralized promotion board system. To understand why airmen were dissatisfied, a basic understanding of how that system functioned is necessary.

Prior to 1967, there were no directives which standardized promotion board procedures. Thus, major commands and bases were free to develop their own board procedures. Because these boards were not standardized, many airmen felt they were not getting equal consideration when being evaluated for promotion. Many of these airmen voiced their displeasure and changes were made in 1967 to standardize promotion boards.

The 1967 promotion regulation contained specific guidance on promotion board administration and standardized the following items: board composition; the use of panels; pre-board briefing of board functions and procedures; trial runs to familiarize members with the evaluation process and the contents of records; and, finally, the scoring method which used the "whole man" concept (59:7).

Although the whole man concept of scoring had been used previous to this time, this was the first time this concept had been formally defined.

When evaluating airmen for promotion, promotion boards must apply the "whole man" concept. To do this the board member must learn everything about the airman that can be obtained from his record, such as his manner of duty performance, breadth of experience, supervisory and leadership ability, seniority, education, favorable communications and decorations. These factors, however, must not be given a predetermined score . . . . Rather, the board member should consider all these factors together to arrive at a mental picture of the whole airman. Only then should he assess his record (59:1-2).

Once the board member had assessed the airman's entire record, using the whole man concept, he could then reduce his judgement to a numerical score using a scale of 0 to 10. One-half point increments were used to simplify the process. A composite score of each airman's record was then established by adding the scores of the three board members who assessed the record. If the three scores varied by more than two points; e. g., 5, 7, and 8, the airman's record was scored by another panel or the differences were resolved by the president of the board and the original panel. Airmen



were then aligned in relative order of merit within each AFS, based on composite scores (0 through 30 points). Those airmen achieving the highest scores, within the allocated quotas and the limits imposed by the promotion management list (PML), were selected for advancement (59:7-8).

The standardization of promotion boards was an important change but it did not significantly reduce the discontent of airmen. This discontent was largely due to small promotion quotas and perceived inequities in the allocation of promotion opportunities to the different AFSCs. This, plus the lack of feedback as to why airmen were not selected for promotion, caused increasing numbers of airmen to become unhappy with the promotion system.

This perceived inequity in quota allocation or promotion opportunity was intensified when the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) established control over the NCO grades for each of the services. This control began in FY 1958 by allowing only 55 percent of the total enlisted end strength to be in the top four grades. In 1964, OSD extended its control by establishing a specific grade ceiling annually for each of the top six grades. These ceilings once established were absolute and could not be exceeded (21). As a result, promotion quotas and promotion management were implemented to maintain grade structure within authorized limits and to maintain adequate skill and grades in each of the Air Force specialties (21).

Promotions were made to fill vacancies in each AFSC within the ceilings established. Accordingly, promotion quotas were established for each career field. Every airman who was eligible for promotion was considered in his Control Air Force Specialty Code (CAFSC) and he competed for promotion only with airmen who had the same CAFSC (54:10-12).

Opportunity for promotion was directly related to vacancies in each grade and specialty. To promote an airman to grades E-5 through E-9 in any career field subdivision, a grade vacancy had to exist in that career field subdivision (54:10-12). In those subdivisions where there were many vacancies because of high attrition or increased manning ceilings, promotions were liberal; where vacancies were few, promotions were restricted or even frozen. Attrition among the various career fields varied and at times attrition was very slow and promotion stagnation resulted.

This was especially true following the Korean War when a reduction in force caused many airmen to leave the Air Force. The problem of grade stagnation within selected specialties resulted because the attrition rate among specialties was not equal. Some AFSCs lost great percentages, and other AFSCs lost relatively small percentages. In addition, those airmen remaining for a career were largely the higher ranking NCOs. Thus, many AFSCs were rank top heavy. This, coupled with the grade ceiling limitations imposed by OSD, resulted in few promotion opportunities in many AFSCs (21).

The Air Force attempted to correct this imbalance by using the promotion control system mentioned previously. This system gave birth to the Promotion Management List (PML). The PML told each commander the exact percentage of eligible airmen which could be promoted in each AFSC during each promotion cycle. The promotion quotas contained on the PML were derived using an elaborate reporting system through which skill and grade vacancies and requirements for each AFSC were reported prior to each promotion cycle. Thus, the number of promotions which could be made were computed based upon forecast attrition and existing grade ceilings. These promotion quotas were then allocated to each unit in the Air Force based upon the number of vacancies and upon the number of eligible airmen which the units had assigned in the next lower grade (21).

This method of determining promotion quotas was not always effective. Changes in manning authorizations, failure to identify proper AFSCs in manpower documents, slippage in the procurement of new equipment and weapon systems, and changing personnel retention rates made accurate forecasting of vacancies difficult. As a result, imbalances were not easily eliminated and promotion stagnation continued (21). Consequently, the discontent of airmen also continued.

### Congressional Inquiries

The magnitude of this discontent revealed itself in the large numbers of inquiries airmen were writing to the Air Force and to their congressmen. Table 3-A shows from 1964 to 1966 that there were approximately 5,500 letters of inquiry written. Over 90 percent of these letters asked the question; "Specifically, why wasn't I promoted?" (22) However, complaints concerning PML controls and quota allocation were also numerous (22). The vast majority of these letters were written by airmen serving in the grade Airman Second Class (E-3) through Technical Sergeant (E-6) as shown in Table 3-B. (This would be expected because at the time these were the grades with the greatest stagnation.) The percentage of inquiries by career field can be seen in Appendix A.

TABLE 3-A CONGRESSIONAL INQUIRIES (22)	
Year	Number
1964	1,670
1965	1,694
1966	2,127

TABLE 3-B

PERCENTAGE OF INQUIRIES BY GRADE  
 AIRMAN PROMOTION INQUIRY (22)

Grade	1966 Percentage	1967 Percentage
Airman Basic (E-1)	0	0
Airman Third Class (E-2)	5	5
Airman Second Class (E-3)	12	9
Airman First Class (E-4)	36	28
Staff Sergeant (E-5)	31	32
Technical Sergeant (E-6)	13	12
Master Sergeant (E-7)	2	10
Senior Master Sergeant (E-8)	1	4

The Air Force's initial reaction to these letters was to defend its promotion policy. A letter written on 6 July 1967 to the Deputy Chief of Staff, Personnel, HQ USAF, from the Chief of Personnel Standards Division, Directorate of Personnel Planning, contained the following:

It has been implied that we should change our promotion system to one similar to the Navy's. We do not agree. We think our "whole man" concept can stand on its own merits and results in the selection of the best qualified airman in each AFSC.

While we do not want to downgrade the significance of the number or nature of complaints, I think we should look at them in the context that the complainers are in a distinct minority ( $\frac{1}{4}$  of 1%) and many of the complaints are, in fact, inaccurate and without foundation . . . .

We believe we have a good system. Our promotion controls and management have played a major part in establishing credibility for our top six submissions to OSD. In short, our system works and it gets results. We intend to keep it and do the best we can to assure understanding at every level in the Air Force [76].

Air Force policy makers felt their system was adequate. However, because of the high numbers of complaints being received each day, and because of increasing pressure both internally and externally, a thorough evaluation of the promotion policy was directed by Headquarters USAF. A special committee was appointed in February, 1967, to consider alternative promotion policies (77). In addition, the Air Force's Human Resources Laboratory (AFHRL) was tasked to develop a model which would use weighted factors to determine an airman's promotion qualification (77).

Three months after the Air Force began its analysis of the Airman promotion system, the U. S. Congress on 22 May 1967 appointed a special subcommittee to review enlisted promotion policy. This action was also in response to the numerous letters of inquiry and complaint the Congress had received from airmen. Chairman of this special subcommittee was Congressman Alton Lennon of North Carolina.

On 2 August 1967 this special subcommittee was addressed by L. Mendell Rivers who was then chairman of the Armed Services Committee:

Our committee has received an enormous amount of mail from enlisted personnel about promotions. There has probably never been such a steady stream of mail and such a large volume over an extended period as on this one issue. A day hasn't passed this year without some mail on the subject and after a promotion cycle we have had as many as 42 letters in 1 day . . . . The letters go into great detail to explain . . . what is felt generally wrong with the promotion system. About 90 percent of the mail is from men in the Air Force.

. . . It is natural to assume that the letters come from chronic complainers; or from those who just don't have it and can't admit that to themselves . . . but what has impressed us is that the records often show that the individuals for long periods have been getting excellent and outstanding ratings, have been told by their supervisors that they are doing very good work, have been told that they are doing a level of work that would normally lead one to expect reasonable advancement.

The letters often reveal that the man's own superiors, his senior NCO and commanding officer and his squadron or higher commander - cannot understand why he has not been promoted [41:6323-4].

Thus, the Congressional subcommittee began its inquiry, and Chairman Rivers instructed them to make a detailed study.

I would like your subcommittee to review the operation of the promotion system in all of the services to see what improvements you might recommend to assure that enlisted men in all services get responsible and equitable promotion opportunities. As part of your deliberations, I would like to have your subcommittee consider whether statutory promotion procedures should be recommended for enlisted personnel. Our committee has been in the forefront in passing pay and fringe benefit legislation to promote career retention. The value of such legislation, however, would be considerably negated if men in the armed services could not look forward to fair and reasonable promotion opportunities when they are performing their duties in a capable manner. . . .

Nobody has a right to be promoted; but he does have a right to equal consideration with his fellow airmen. He has a right to be told honestly if he is not capable of promotion. He has a right to understand the system he lives by [41:6322-8].

The special subcommittee hearings on enlisted promotion lasted more than six months. On 20 March 1968, the subcommittee issued its report. This detailed report, which followed extensive hearings lasting from August to November 1967, identified two kinds of problems relating to airman promotions. The first, was the problem of insufficient numbers resulting from inadequate grade authorizations.

The other problem was identified as shortcomings in the selection process which resulted in promotion inequities (40:11074-5). The findings and recommendations presented by the subcommittee to the Air Force were aimed at resolving these promotion inequities in the selection process.

The subcommittee made the general recommendation that legislation not be immediately considered but that the service be given an opportunity to solve its problems administratively. The specific findings and recommendations the subcommittee gave to the Air Force were:

#### Congressional Findings

1. The criteria used by the Air Force's promotion boards were so nebulous as to call into question the equity of the selection process as a whole.
2. The promotion system in its present form could not retain the confidence of enlisted personnel.
3. The "whole man" concept used by the Air Force selection boards prohibited board members from giving set weight to various factors, and required the board to arrive at a judgement of the whole man.
4. The selection procedure required the subjective judgement of individual board members. Thus, resulting at times in overemphasis of peripheral factors such as outside education and community activities.



5. The principle tool in the whole man determination, the airman performance report (APR), was subject to inflation and had become an inadequate device to measure potential among a group of qualified candidates.

6. Inadequate use of technical testing resulted in insufficient emphasis on technical knowledge. The enlisted man was only required to take a skill knowledge test once for every two pay grades.

7. The promotion system was found to lack visibility. It was impossible to tell a man just why he was not selected or in what area he had to improve himself to enhance his future promotion opportunities (40:11074).

#### Congressional Recommendations

1. The subcommittee recommended that the Air Force revise its system to have uniform weighted criteria for all enlisted promotion boards, with maximum weights set for each of the various promotion factors.

2. It was also recommended that the Air Force establish provisions to more frequently test an airman's skill and to place greater emphasis on test results (40:11074).

As was mentioned earlier, the Air Force had begun its own study and evaluation of the airman promotion system three months before congressional hearings began. Thus, with the help of the AFHRL, the Air Force was developing a promotion system that incorporated measurable and weighted criteria. Therefore, simultaneously with the subcommittee

hearings, the Air Force was developing a promotion system that would be responsive to both the congressional recommendations and the desires of the enlisted force.

In April, 1968, one month after the congressional subcommittee delivered its findings and recommendations to the Air Force, a promotion conference hosted by the Air Staff was held. This conference had four objectives (78):

1. To determine the feasibility of implementing AFHRL's weighted factor promotion system, and the feasibility of providing with this system a means of supplying feedback to non-selected airmen as to why they were not promoted.

2. To review the feasibility of centralized promotion boards for grades E-6 and E-7.

3. To develop a promotion information program that would insure that all assigned personnel, officer and airman alike, understand the promotion system.

4. To upgrade the administrative and control procedures of the promotion system.

During the conference, all but one of the programs reviewed were considered feasible and desirable. The only program that was rejected was centralized promotion boards for grades E-6 and E-7. Rejection of this program was largely due to the internal and external criticism the promotion board concept had been receiving. In addition, the difficulty and cost of operating such a system was prohibitive (23:6-13).

Plans were thus made to proceed with implementing the weighted factor promotion system. The members of the conference were asked to review all administrative procedures and policies in general, to adopt or to modify such procedures to produce the best possible system for providing feedback to promotion candidates, and to insure that all personnel understood the promotion system (23:6-13).

#### WAPS Development and Implementation

Although promotions boards had been badly criticized, the Air Force still considered their use as a weighted factor in the promotion system being developed. The initial weighted promotion system used seven weighted selection factors: specialty knowledge test score, promotion fitness exam score, time-in-service, time-in-grade, decorations and awards, performance reports, and board evaluations.

The specialty knowledge test (SKT) was the same exam that was currently being used in the skill level upgrade process. During skill upgrade, each specialist was required to enroll in a career development course (CDC). CDCs were used in conjunction with on-the-job training (OJT) and were used as the primary source for most SKT questions. Under the new promotion system the SKT exam was to be administered annually to all eligible personnel (40:11075).

The promotion fitness examination (PFE) was designed to measure an individual's knowledge of general military subjects and management practices. The PFE exam would be

administered annually to personnel eligible for promotion consideration. For both the SKT and PFE exams, the percentile rating was used as the established score for that factor. These two tests were designed to insure that airmen were examined regularly on knowledge of their specialty as well as general military knowledge, and that such knowledge was properly emphasized in the selection process (40:11075).

Points for seniority were given for both time-in-service and time-in-grade. The time-in-service score was computed by multiplying total years of active federal military service by two. A maximum of 40 points were given for 20 years active service. Less than six months service counted as one point and over six months service counted as two points.

Time-in-grade was computed at the rate of one-half point per one full month in grade up to a maximum of 60 points for 120 months in grade. This was to assure consistent emphasis on seniority without overemphasis (40:11075).

Points for decorations and awards were assigned according to their order of precedence (61:3):

<u>Decoration</u>	<u>Point Value</u>
Medal of Honor	15
Air Force Cross	9
Distinguished Service Cross	9
Distinguished Service Medal	9
Silver Star	7
Legion of Merit	7
Distinguished Flying Cross	7
Airman's Medal	5
Soldier's Medal	5

<u>Decoration</u>	<u>Point Value</u>
Bronze Star	5
Meritorious Service Medal	5
Air Medal	3
Commendation Medal	3
Purple Heart	1

The airman's performance report (APR) score was computed by multiplying 15 times the mean overall evaluation received on the individual's APRs over the last five years, not to exceed a total of 10 APRs. The performance report was given the heaviest weight of all seven factors (initially 25%). In addition, because APRs had become inflated, the Air Force issued a change to the APR regulation on 1 July 1968. This change gave new rating guidelines aimed at controlling the inflation problem. The following rating guidelines were recommended for use in preparing the overall evaluation section of the APRs (40:11076):

<u>Overall Evaluation</u>	<u>Percent of personnel in any one grade that may be rated in this box or higher</u>
9	15
8	40
7	65
6	90
0-5	100

The seventh weighted factor was board evaluation. The board evaluation was to consider items not otherwise weighted such as educational level, self-improvement efforts (both in terms of formal education and technical knowledge), level of duty, favorable communications, and other pertinent data.

The weighted factor system limited the board evaluation to 18 percent of the total score thus eliminating total reliance on whole-man judgements which had proved so unsatisfactory in the past (40:11076).

The new weighted airman promotion system (WAPS) was approved by the Air Force for implementation prior to 23 July 1968 (40:11077). However, testing and revalidation of the system continued for almost two years before it became operational. One of the purposes of the continued testing was to determine the marginal effect of the board evaluation factor.

During a test phase in one of the major commands, comparisons were made between people promoted under the full system and those who would have been promoted if the board scores were removed. It was found that the results were essentially the same. Therefore, the board evaluation factor was removed from the WAPS eliminating much time and expense in the administration and operation of the system.

On 2 January 1970, WAPS became effective and governed promotions for grades E-4 through E-7. The factors and associated weights contained in the WAPS when it was made operational were:

<u>FACTORS</u>	<u>WEIGHTS</u> <u>(maximum)</u>
Specialty Knowledge Test (SKT) Score	95
Promotion Fitness Examination (PFE) Score	95
Time In Service (TIS)	40
Time In Grade (TIG)	60
Decorations	25
Airman Performance Reports (APR)	<u>135</u>
Total	450

Under WAPS, selections for grades E-4 through E-7 were made centrally at HQ USAF. Airmen were aligned in promotion priority by grade, AFSC, and total weighted factor score. Those with the highest scores in each AFSC were selected to fill vacancies forecast during the cycle and were placed on a selected list. The list was published alphabetically, with promotion priority sequence numbers established by seniority (61:4).

Each airman considered for promotion under WAPS but not selected received a promotion score notice. This notice showed his score for each of the WAPS factors, his total score, and the total score of the last airman who was promoted in his AFSC. The airman could then use this notice to identify areas for improvement for future promotion cycles (61:4).

Thus, under the WAPS, changes were made in the airman promotion system for grades E-4 through E-7 that were aimed directly at improving the system in many of the areas criticized by both military personnel and by the congress. Specifically, these changes improved promotion visibility by adopting a feedback system which allowed all airmen to see how they scored in relation to their contemporaries. In addition, subjective judgement was greatly reduced with the introduction of objectively scored SKT and PFE examinations, and the use of standardized weighted factors which insured consistent emphasis on the various areas of evaluation. The weighted objectivity of WAPS allowed airmen to see the

importance of each factor considered in the promotion process, and thus, they were better able to understand the basis on which selections were made.

One area of criticism that did not change at this time was the use of the promotion management list (PML). The PML was criticized by airmen but was considered by the Congressional subcommittee to be an acceptable management practice (40:11077). PMLs continued to govern promotion vacancies according to AFSCs and airmen continued to compete with other airmen in their specific AFSC rather than competing servicewide. The rationale here was that each airman was a specialist and he should compete for promotion with airmen in his specialty. As a result, promotion opportunities continued to vary from skill to skill (40:11077). This variation in promotion opportunity continued to be viewed by airmen as an inequity and remained a source of criticism.

When the Air Force was developing the weighted airman promotion system for grades E-4 through E-7, a similar system for grades E-8 and E-9 was also being considered. In August, 1971, after extensive research, representatives from the Air Staff, AFHRL, and HQ Air Training Command (ATC) met in conference to determine what action, if any, should be taken to improve the promotion system for grades E-8 and E-9.



A weighted system was not adopted for the senior grades at that time because a concensus could not be reached as to what weighted factors should be used. In addition, a world-wide survey showed that over half the senior NCOs favored the whole man board system (18). As a result, no changes were made and the whole-man promotion board system for E-8s and E-9s continued into the 1970's.

### Summary

Centralization of the airman promotion system was finalized with the development and implementation of WAPS. The adoption of a weighted factor promotion system provided the Air Force with a change responsive to its own needs as well as the needs of the enlisted man. This change brought objectivity and visibility to the promotion system. Objectivity was provided with the use of computer-scored examinations and other selection factors which were specifically weighted. This system provided much needed visibility and supplied that visibility by providing promotion score notices. These notices provided proof that the airman actually was considered and showed precisely how he scored and was ranked with his contemporaries. In addition, the airman could see precisely what areas he needed to improve in order to be competitive.

This improved visibility and objectivity coupled with more efficient administrative controls led to renewed confidence in and acceptance of the Air Force's airman promotion

system. Major Kustelski, who was the chief of the Promotion Management Branch when WAPS was implemented, summarized the new program this way:

With the WAPS the Air Force now has a unique airman promotion selection process that provides fair and equitable consideration for all eligibles to a degree impossible under any previous system (23:12).

## Chapter IV

### TOPCAP AND CENTRALIZED PROMOTION (1971 to 1980)

#### Background

As was explained in Chapter III, early in 1976 the Air Force began studies of alternative promotion systems in an attempt to improve the airman promotion program. These studies were later expanded to include the additional areas of enlisted force structure and the management of that structure. OSD provided the impetus for these studies by directing each service to develop new grade and career force determination and management methods within the context of a total long-range enlisted force management system (74:2-5). The system developed by the Air Force to manage its enlisted force is described in Volume III of the USAF Personnel Plan. This plan, which was approved by OSD on 17 May 1971, is called the Total Objective Plan for Career Airman Personnel (TOPCAP).

This chapter will describe TOPCAP and the changes which were made to the existing enlisted force management and promotion systems to implement TOPCAP. In addition, changes to the centralized airman promotion system which were not directly related to TOPCAP implementation will also be identified.

TOPCAP was designed to tailor the enlisted force structure to prescribed objectives. Once these structural objectives were obtained, TOPCAP's long-range management concepts were designed to maintain stability in that structure thus preventing imbalances and their associated problems. The central theme of TOPCAP is to provide airmen with valid and visible career objectives while providing the Air Force with a stable and viable enlisted force (74:1-3). The specific objectives of TOPCAP are (74:1-1):

1. Establish a stable career configuration for each enlisted occupation that combines to form a total force to meet peacetime as well as limited force expansion requirements.

2. Provide a baseline of active force capabilities for general mobilization.

3. Provide a visible career pattern that will enhance accession and retention of high caliber personnel.

4. Establish an integrated management system which provides:

- a. Equitable promotion opportunity for all airmen.
- b. A central process for regular and systematic progression through pay grades in each occupation.
- c. A basis for purposeful application of monetary incentives.

The realization of these four objectives depends on the TOPCAP objective grade distribution. That is, TOPCAP philosophy is applicable only to a force that is ideally structured

(74:3-1). The ideal force structure, under TOPCAP, specifies a career force objective of 202,800 and a total force objective of 450,000 to 500,000 airmen. This TOPCAP objective structure of career airmen will support the total force objective within a range of 50,000 (74:3-2). If the total force moves above 500,000 or below 450,000 a new stable career force size would be computed.

The TOPCAP structure of the enlisted force is divided into two major components based on category of enlistment and years of completed active service. Airmen with less than four years of active service, or those on their first enlistment, are considered first-term airmen. Those airmen having over four years who are serving on their second or subsequent enlistments are considered as career airmen (74:1-2).

In addition to these two components, under TOPCAP, the enlisted force was also structured by grade and skill level as shown in Tables 4-A and 4-B (43:A-8).

TABLE 4-A PAY GRADE/SKILL RELATIONSHIP		
Grade	Skill Level	Name
E-8, E-9	9	Superintendent
E-6, E-7	7	Superintendent/Technician
E-4, E-5	5	Journeyman
E-2, E-3	3	Apprentice
E-1	1	Helper

TABLE 4--B  
ENLISTED GRADE DISTRIBUTION  
WITHIN SKILL LEVELS

Grade	Skill Level		
	9	7	5
E-9	33%		
E-8	67%		
E-7		35%	
E-6		65%	
E-5			47%
E-4			53%

In the early years of Air Force history skill requirements were determined solely on operating experience. However, since 1959, requirements have been established using management engineering concepts. Management engineering uses workload measurement techniques to determine the skill level and total manpower requirements for each work center operating in the Air Force (43:A-6). This process of work measurement is also used to a limited degree in determining grade requirements. However, for the most part grade requirements in the Air Force have been determined from operating experience.

The overall TOPCAP enlisted force structure was developed to meet mission requirements and provide a high level of motivation for a force configured for a long-range objective of structural stability and systematic progression. However,

not until the career inventory is configured to the objective inventory does TOPCAP guarantee improved promotion opportunity. These ideal promotion opportunities are specified in Table 4-C.

TABLE 4-C TOPCAP TOP SIX GRADE STANDARDS			
Grade	Percent of Force	Phase Point	Opportunity
E-9	1.0	22.5 yrs.	60%
E-8	2.0	20.0 yrs.	75%
E-7	7.0	15.7 yrs.	84%
E-6	11.0	10.4 yrs.	90%
E-5	21.2	4.3 yrs.	90%
E-4	23.0	2.7 yrs.	98%

The percent of force designated in Table 4-C represents a percentage of the total end strength. The objective end strength for TOPCAP is 450,000 to 500,000 airmen. The percentages listed under "opportunity" in Table 4-C represent promotion opportunity of those airmen who continue through a promotion zone. Promotion zones under TOPCAP are shown in Figure 4-A. This figure shows that a year group of airmen enter a promotion zone to a particular grade and, during each year of that zone, some airmen attrit (voluntarily and involuntarily) from the service and some are promoted. Thus, the promotion opportunity percentage is developed by dividing the number remaining in the year group at the end of the zone into the number who have been promoted to a higher grade (64:3-5).

The years listed under "phase point" represent the average time-in-service required under TOPCAP to be promoted to the corresponding grade. For example, a senior master sergeant (E-8) can expect to have an average of twenty-two and one-half years active military service before being promoted to chief master sergeant (E-9). And a technical sergeant (E-6) can expect to have an average of ten and four-tenths years active service before being promoted to master sergeant (E-7).

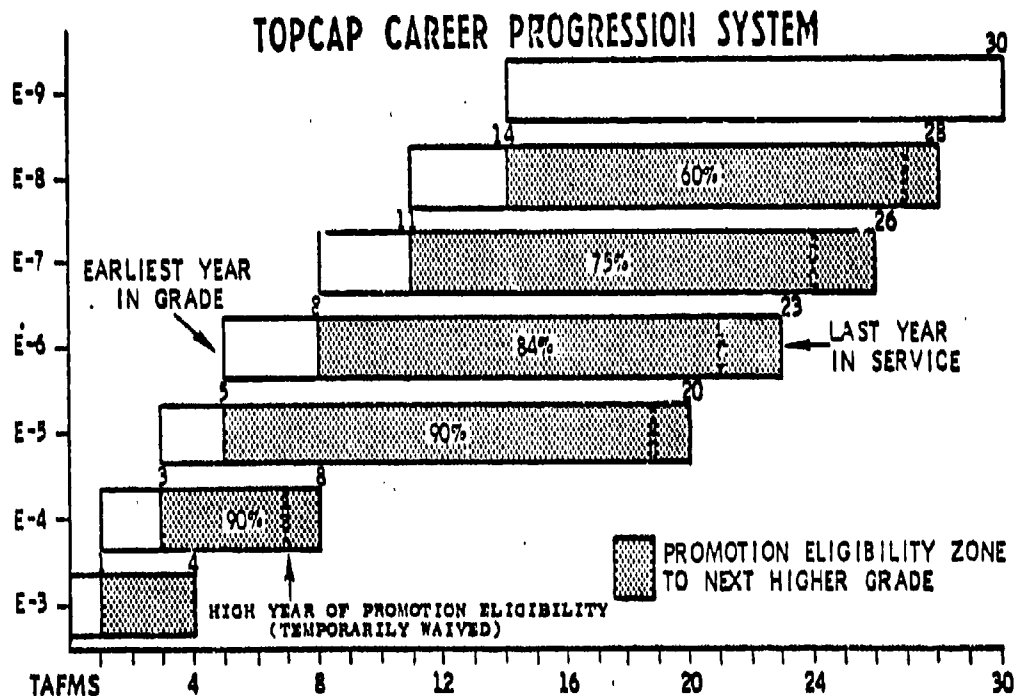


Figure 4-A



When TOPCAP was implemented in 1971, the existing airman force structure differed considerably from the TOPCAP objective force structure. In that year, the career force numbered 302,422 (43:E-2). Therefore, it was necessary to implement TOPCAP incrementally.

Success in achieving the objectives contained in TOPCAP is dependent on an orderly transition of the enlisted force towards the objective structure. Actions that would force the inventory toward the TOPCAP profile could have a negative impact on personnel, and also on the Air Force's ability to meet stated requirements (74:4-1).

Thus, a planned incremental application of TOPCAP was instituted to tailor the force structure toward the TOPCAP objective.

Adherence to various procedural and policy changes was necessary to tailor the force to the TOPCAP structural objective. These policy and procedural changes covered the full range of an airman's life cycle; that is, enlistment, re-enlistment, retraining, promotion, and separation. The changes made in these areas were not all made immediately, but were made as required to tailor the force over a period of years beginning in 1971.

#### Enlistment

Effective management of the procurement function was vital for TOPCAP implementation because it directly affected the requirements for programming, training, utilization, and separation. To provide more flexibility to the Air Force

in meeting its enlistment requirements, a 6-year enlistment was implemented on 1 September 1971. Prior to this time, only 4-year enlistments were authorized (43:B-1).

The 6-year enlistment option was adopted to provide recruiters with alternative methods of meeting requirements in hard-to-fill specialties. Initially, this program was applied to ten electronic and avionic specialties. The pilot program operated favorably and it was expanded to 87 AFSS during calendar year 1973 (43:B-1).

Later studies in this area showed that more emphasis should be placed in recruiting 6-year enlistees into high training cost AFSCs. Based on these studies, the 6-year enlistment option was limited on 1 September 1974 to high training cost and hard-to-fill AFSCs (43:B-2). Under the 6-year enlistment option, a nonprior service enlistee was guaranteed promotion from pay grade E-1 to pay grade E-2 upon successful completion of six-weeks basic military training. A 4-year enlistee had to complete six months active duty before being advanced to E-2 (66:7).

The number of nonprior service enlistees vacillated widely. One reason for this was that the procurement was a function of changing end strengths. To dampen these fluctuations it was necessary to stabilize end strengths and to have a consistent loss pattern. The TOPCAP promotion flow model, which was designed to simulate the changing structure of the airman force over-time, indicates that annual nonprior service procurement should stabilize between 85,000 to 87,000 by

FY 1980. To procure less than 75,000 could impair the Air Force's ability to sustain the career force objective. Thus, 75,000 was set as the procurement floor under TOPCAP (43:B-1).

### Reenlistment

The reenlistment program under TOPCAP centered on reenlisting the right number of airmen by AFSC into the career force. The number of first term airmen reenlisted was based on the 7 and 9 level skill requirements in each AFSC.

Under TOPCAP, the meeting of reenlistment objectives was sought by offering various incentives. These incentives included career and promotion visibility, improved standards of living, educational opportunities, and monetary inducements. Monetary inducements were used specifically to obtain a reenlistment goal in a particular career field subdivision (CFS). Variable reenlistment bonuses (VRB) were used in this regard. However, on 1 June 1975 the VRB was replaced by the selective reenlistment bonus (SRB). The primary difference between the two was that the SRB could be applied at any problem reenlistment point up to 10 years whereas the VRB could only be applied at the first reenlistment point (74:3-7).

For many years reenlistments were encouraged without regard to AFSC manning. This policy aggravated career force imbalances which had adverse impacts on promotion opportunities. Consequently, reenlistment controls were implemented

in July, 1974. These controls were brought about under a reenlistment management program called CAREERS (43:B-6).

CAREERS was designed to meet and sustain the Air Force's long-range requirements for career airmen in each specialty. This program precluded first-term airman reenlistments that would be surplus to career force requirements. However, airmen who did not possess an AFSC for which there was a requirement could qualify for reenlistment by retraining into another AFSC where a vacancy existed (43:B-6).

### Retraining

Before September, 1972, retraining was based on resolving grade manning overages and shortages. Tied to this was the promotion system that promoted on the basis of grade vacancies in each career field subdivision. Although this system was relatively easy to understand and manage, it did not satisfy all requirements for the following reasons:

1. Fluctuating grade authorizations in each AFSC often invalidated retraining actions.
2. Shortages would often exist or recur as retrainees were promoted or retired.
3. Retrainees blocked the promotions of qualified junior personnel already performing in the AFSC (43:B-7).

In September, 1972, the orientation of the retraining program was changed from grade manning to year group needs. At the same time, the promotion system was revised to no longer allocate promotions based on AFSC subdivision

vacancies but to giving the same promotion selection opportunity to each AFSC in each promotion cycle. These changes allowed the Air Force to retrain airmen by year group to satisfy skill level manning shortages without blocking promotion of junior personnel or causing future grade overages or shortages. In addition, the concept of retraining by year group insured that the right numbers of airmen would be in place to meet future grade and skill level requirements (43:B-7).

### Promotion

The basic principle of the TOPCAP promotion plan was to provide equal selection opportunity for all airmen regardless of AFSC. This principle also states that the average time for promotion to each grade should be the same for each AFSC. Under the equal selection concept, which was adopted in July, 1972, each competing AFSC received an equal percentage of the overall promotion quota without regard to manning. This represented a major change in promotion philosophy from the previous system which allocated promotion quotas on the basis of AFSC vacancies via the promotion management list (PML). As was mentioned in Chapter III, use of the PML in the airman promotion system remained an area of criticism after the WAPS implementation. However, with the adoption of the TOPCAP equal selection concept, this area of criticism was removed. TOPCAP's equal selection concept

became popular with the enlisted force because no AFSC was closed for promotion since each AFSC received the same promotion opportunity (10).

However, since promotions were no longer being made to fill AFSC grade vacancies, the problem of grade imbalances continued. This was because equal selection opportunity aggravated surplus conditions and often did not supply enough promotions to fill a shortage condition. However, the value of equal selection opportunity was considered sufficiently great to offset its adverse effects on grade imbalances. The Air Force's position was that the promotion programs should not be used to solve manning imbalances but should be used to advance airmen who demonstrated potential for increased responsibility by means of objective and visible systems (14).

More important than grade balance was skill level balance. TOPCAP's long-range career field configurations was based on skill level rather than grade. The use of skill level as the basis of an objective enlisted force was derived from the premise that an individual could perform a given task when he attained a particular level of skill not grade. Conversely, promotion of an individual did not change his ability to accomplish a given task.

Under TOPCAP, grades were essential to establish a leadership structure and to provide a basis for compensating an individual commensurate with his ability, experience, and

level of responsibility. Grades necessary to support promotions were distributed among career fields based on the needs of a career field to insure continuing equal promotion opportunity (43:B-11).

Traditionally, two grades were associated with each skill level with the exception of the lowest level, the helper, where only grade E-1 applied. However, manpower skill level requirements often exceeded external grade limitation constraints under the two grades per skill level relationship, particularly in the higher grades and skill levels. As an example, the 30 June 1974 9-skill level requirements were 19,293. Because of fiscal and legal constraint, only 15,968 airmen could be in grades E-8 and E-9. This meant that 3,325 authorizations had to go unfilled or had to be filled by E-7's who were qualified to perform duty at the 9-skill level (43:B-11). Therefore, in an attempt to accommodate skill level requirements under the TOPCAP objective plan, the grade/skill relationship was changed in January 1977 from a two to a three-grade per skill level relationship as shown in Table 4-D (10).

TABLE 4-D  
GRADE/SKILL RELATIONSHIP

Skill Level	Three Grades Per Skill
9	E-9 CMSGT E-8 SMSGT E-7 MSGT
7	E-7 MSGT E-6 TSGT E-5 SSGT
5	E-5 SSGT E-4 SGT E-3 ALC

It was thought that this change would provide a source of experienced NCOs sufficient to meet 100 percent of the skill level requirements identified in each AFSC. In addition, better utilization of the enlisted force, and improved opportunity for NCOs to excel by performing at a higher than usual skill level, were thought to be potential benefits of this change (32). However, after three years, the grade/skill relationship was changed back to the traditional structure of two grades per skill level. This change made in January 1980 was made because the change to three grades per skill level had created assignment problems and had not been effective in manning skill level authorizations (10).

One other aspect of the TOPCAP promotion program was high year of promotion eligibility (HPE). HPE was the maximum number of years of total active federal military service



an individual could possess and still be eligible for promotion. The high years of promotion eligibility for the various grades were (43:B-9):

<u>Grade</u>	<u>HPE</u>
E-4	7
E-5	19
E-6	21
E-7	24
E-8	27
E-9	--

These requirements were temporarily waived and to date (April 1980) have not been used. However, the option to use HPE does exist should the Air Force deem it necessary to obtain or preserve TOPCAP force structure.

#### Separations

The purpose of the TOPCAP separation program was to separate airmen from the active force according to the needs of the Air Force and the desires of the individual. The TOPCAP career profile established the basic standard for the Air Force loss management programs. These programs included reenlistment denial at the career entry point and reenlistment denial at the high year of grade tenure (HYT). These loss management programs allowed the Air Force the flexibility to achieve and maintain a desired career force profile and to prevent promotion stagnation (43:B-14).

Under TOPCAP's HYT the highest year of service that an airman could serve in a particular grade was (43:B-14):

<u>Grade</u>	<u>HYT</u>
E-3	4
E-4	8
E-5	20
E-6	23
E-7	26
E-8	28
E-9	30

There are currently (1980) two exceptions to these figures. The first is for grade E-4. When TOPCAP was adopted the HYT for grade E-4 was 20 years. It was decided to leave it at 20 years until legislation was passed enacting enlisted readjustment pay at which time it was to be lowered to eight years. It was projected that this change would occur in FY 1979. However, no legislation in this regard has passed and it appears that HYT for E-4's will continue to be 20 years for some years to come (10).

The second exception involves HYT for grade E-9. On 30 September 1977, the Chief of Staff approved a program which extended the HYT of a carefully selected group of chief master sergeants to 33 years of service (6). The purpose of the program was to provide added recognition and incentive to those chief master sergeants who clearly demonstrate superior performance. About 5 to 10 percent of all eligible E-9 are offered increased tenure. This equates to approximately 50 selections per year (6).

In addition to the HYT requirements, TOPCAP also had low year of tenure (LYT) requirements which were also designed to aid the Air Force in structuring the career force.

The LYT requirements were:

<u>Grade</u>	<u>LYT</u>
E-9	14
E-8	11
E-7	8
E-6	5
E-5	3
E-4	1

These requirements specify the earliest year that an airman is eligible for promotion to each respective grade (74:3-4). These requirements were not used when TOPCAP was first adopted in 1971. However, in 1972 LYT did become a requirement for airman promotion under AFR 39-29 (63:12).

#### Centralized Promotion Improvements

After the adoption of WAPS and centralized promotion for grades E-4 through E-9, airman complaints to HQ USAF and congressional inquiries were greatly reduced. In fact, by June 1971, correspondence concerning airman promotions had decreased by 70 percent (25:35). In addition, airman surveys and other feedback revealed strong airman support and acceptance of the new promotion system. However, to insure and to improve airman support, the promotion system has been periodically reviewed and revalidated. As a result, a number of changes have been made to the centralized system.

One of the first significant policy changes which impacted directly on the promotion opportunity of all airman was the removal of grade E-4 from WAPS. Effective with the 1 October 1971 cycle, all promotions to grade E-4 were made on a fully qualified basis (62:3). The previous policy had

been to promote to E-4 under both a fully qualified and a best qualified system. Under the fully qualified system Airmen were promoted to grade E-4 after 40 months time-in-service. However, airmen in grade E-3 could also compete for promotion to grade E-4 under WAPS or the best qualified system after eight months time-in-grade (TIG) (60:9).

Under the new fully qualified system, promotions to E-4 were not made at a specified phase point but were made as vacancies occurred Air Force wide. All E-3s meeting the eligibility requirements of 8 months TIG, the 3 skill level, and their commander's recommendation were placed on a master selection list in seniority sequence. Monthly promotions, based on quotas, were then announced from this master selection list (62:3).

This change increased the visibility of grade progression and was more cost effective. An analysis of E-4 advancement under WAPS revealed that selection opportunity exceeded 90 percent. Therefore, it was decided that the administrative, testing, data verification, and computer support costs associated with WAPS were not warranted for grade E-4 (25:34).

In 1972 more modifications to the promotion system were made. The first change was a promotion incentive for outstanding basic military training graduates. Under the change, an airman basic was promoted to airman (E-2) when he completed basic military training (BMT), provided he was in the top fifteen percent of his class. Otherwise, the

airman basic had to complete four months active duty before advancing to grade E-2 (63:3). This change to the promotion system proved to be of little value as an incentive. In addition, the short duration of BMT made selection of the top fifteen percent very subjective. As a result, the program was terminated in 1974 (64:4).

Another change that occurred on 20 July 1972 involved WAPS scoring. Prior to this change, WAPS specialty knowledge test (SKT) and promotion fitness examinations (PFE) were scored in one point centile rankings with a maximum score of 95 percentile. Under this method of scoring, the difference of only one answer often resulted in the gain or loss of a significant number of points. This seemed unfair and was confusing to airman who had been accustomed to tests being scored with the percentage of correct responses. Because these problems existed the method of scoring was changed to a percentage correct method (63:4). As a result of this change, the weights given to the SKT and PFE factors were changed from 95 to 100 points as shown in Table 4-E.

TABLE 4-E	
WEIGHTS AND FACTORS USED IN WAPS	
Factors	Weights
Specialty Knowledge Test (SKT) score	100
Promotion Fitness Examination (PFE) score	100
Time-In-Service (TIS)	40
Time-In-Grade (TIG)	60
Decorations	25
Airman Performance Reports (APR)	135
TOTAL	460

With the percentage method of scoring, scores which included a decimal were rounded up or down to the nearest whole percentage point. However, even this was looked on as an inequity because some airmen gained and others lost. As a result, the method of scoring was changed once again to include SKT and PFE scores rounded to two decimal places (69:25).

The next major changes to the airman promotion program came in the years 1974 through 1976. Only one significant change occurred in 1974 and that change involved an accelerated promotion program for physicians assistants. This change will be discussed in Chapter V. Other changes during this time period include decentralization of grade E-4 promotions, implementation of E-4 below-the-zone promotions, conversion from semiannual to annual E-6 and E-7 WAPS cycles, and the adoption of a new weighted promotion system for E-8s and E-9s.

The change to decentralize E-4 promotions came in October 1975. Prior to this change E-4 promotions had been removed from the competitive system since the quotas had permitted better than 90 percent of the eligibles to be selected for promotion. From that time to October 1975, promotions to E-4 were made on a fully qualified basis and selections were made according to a date of rank (DOR) cutoff established by AFMPC (37). Therefore, E-3s were being promoted on a fully qualified basis, the same as were E-1s and E-2s. Promotions to E-2 and E-3 were being managed at base

level; whereas, E-4 promotions were being handled centrally at AFMPC. Promotion managers recognized that costs could be eliminated by including E-4 promotion management with the promotion management of the lower grades. Thus, the change was made.

Shortly after promotions to grade E-4 were decentralized, another change that affected E-4 promotions was made. On 1 March 1976, the Air Force implemented a competitive system for below-the-zone (BTZ) promotion to the grade of sergeant (E-4). This change permitted accelerated advancement to grade E-4 by as much as six months. All the BTZ promotions were made at the expense of the primary zone quota. In other words, local commanders were authorized to use ten percent of the normal E-4 quota to award selected E-3s the grade of E-4 six months early (65:5).

Airmen selected for BTZ promotion were chosen by a central base selection board which met monthly. This board was composed of a recorder and a minimum of three, but not more than nine members. The board president had to be in the grade of Colonel (O-6) or higher. The remaining members were NCOs of grade E-7 or higher. This board was to meet with the objective of selecting only truly outstanding individuals for early advancement. It was emphasized by the Air Force that only exceptional and deserving E-3s were to be considered for BTZ promotion (20). Board members used the whole person concept in their evaluation. Scoring used no weighted factors.

Each nominee's appearance, military bearing, knowledge of mission, current events, supervisory or NCO responsibilities, and communicative skills were evaluated and compared with the other eligibles (65:5).

The impact of the E-4 BTZ program has been favorable and no significant changes have been made to the program since its inception to the present (1980). BTZ promotion to E-4 was widely accepted by both airmen and commanders because it provided an element of competition, linked promotion with performance, and increased the commander's role in the promotion of his subordinates. Prior to this time, the commander's role in the promotion process was only to defer or withhold promotion if he thought an airman was underswing (64:2).

The next major change to the promotion system came in 1976 when WAPS promotion cycles for grades E-6 and E-7 were changed from semiannual to annual. This change was implemented to reduce the workload at central base personnel offices (CBPO's). By reducing the workload, significant management improvements in the operation of the program resulted (66:19).

The last major change to effect the airman promotion system occurred in 1977. At this time, the E-8 and E-9 promotion system was changed to incorporate weighted factors in the selection process. A weighted promotion system for senior NCOs was not adopted earlier because of difficulties encountered in developing a reliable weighted system for the senior



grades. These difficulties occurred because the airman performance report (APR) in the senior grades had become greatly inflated which rendered the APR relatively useless in discriminating top performers. Another difficulty arose in the development of objective examinations. The Air Force's identification of senior NCOs as managers rather than technicians prevented the use of specialty knowledge tests. However, these problems were eventually resolved and the Air Force with the help of the Air Force Human Resources Laboratory (AFHRL) developed a promotion system that combined the best features of WAPS (objective, quantifiable, visible) and selection boards (judgment, assessment of potential). These features were combined to produce a two-phased selection system (66:4).

The first phase involved the use of weighted factors much like those being used for the middle grades under WAPS. However, there were some significant differences in the weighted factors used. The major difference was the use of Air Force supervisory examination in place of the SKT and PFE. The new model also included professional military education (PME) as a weighted factor. The other factors and associated weights utilized in the model are shown in Table 4-F (66:23):

TABLE 4-F  
SENIOR GRADE WAPS WEIGHTS AND FACTORS

Factors	Weights
USAF Supervisory Examination (USAFSE)	100
Airman Performance Reports (APR) score	135
Professional Military Education (PME)	35
Time-In-Grade (TIG)	60
Time-in-Service (TIS)	25
Decorations	25
TOTAL	380

Points awarded for completion of the USAFSE were computed as a percentage of correct responses. Points for APRs were computed by summing all APRs for the past five years, not to exceed ten, multiplying by fifteen and then dividing the product by the number of APRs used. For professional military education, twenty points were given for the Senior NCO Academy and fifteen points for the Command NCO Academy. Method of completion, whether by residence or by correspondence, had no bearing on the points given. Points for decorations were assigned based on the decorations order of precedence up to a maximum of twenty-five points. Time-in-grade provided one-half point for each month in the current grade, based on date of rank (DOR), up to ten years. Time-in-Service provided one-twelfth point for each month of total active military service, up to twenty-five years (66:23).

The second phase of this promotion system consisted of a central evaluation board at HQ AFMPC. This board used the whole-person concept, which was explained in Chapter III, to evaluate each airman. A board member's subjective evaluation of an individual's record was converted to a numerical score ranging from six to ten. An over-all board score was then computed by summing the scores of the three panel members who evaluated the record. This number was then multiplied by fifteen (66:5).

Selection for promotion was accomplished by placing airmen in relative order of merit within their AFSC. This order of merit was based on the combined board score, which could range from 270 to 450, and the weighted factor score, which had a maximum of 380 points. The promotion quota, which was the same for each AFSC, was then distributed. Airmen with the highest scores in each AFSC were selected for promotion within the limits of the quota (66:5).

After the selection process was complete, each airman who was evaluated received a score notice. This notice provided each weighted factor score, board score, board score distribution, total score, score required for selection, and relative standing within AFSC. Thus, the new weighted system for senior NCOs combined the best features of WAPS: objectivity and visibility; and the best features of board evaluations: judgement on unquantifiable factors such as breadth of experience, job levels, and assessment of potential.

One additional change to the airman promotion system made in February 1978 should be mentioned. This change had to do with SKT exemptions. SKT exemptions were given to provide promotion equity to airmen in a retraining or reclassified status. SKT exemptions for promotion to grades E-5, E-6, and E-7 were valid for 12 months or until the airman became fully qualified in his new AFSC, whichever came first. Airmen who were SKT exempt competed separately by career field with their scores derived from the remaining five WAPS factors (67:5).

From the change involving SKT exemptions to the present (1980), only minor changes have been made in the airman promotion system. One of these changes involved the promotion policy for Air Force band members. This change is addressed in Chapter V. Other changes are considered minor refinements and have not been addressed. Thus, this chapter concludes with the Air Force using a long-range force structure management system which was designed to provide grade and skill stability and, at the same time, provide consistent and predictable promotion opportunity. This management system, the Total Objective Plan for Career Airmen Personnel (TOPCAP), incorporates a centralized weighted factor promotion system for both its med-level and senior NCOs. Both of these promotion systems have recently undergone revalidation by the AFHRL. This revalidation process did not identify any areas of weakness in the present promotion systems, thus no major changes are forthcoming (11).

## Summary

Numerous modifications to the centralized promotion system were made after its adoption in 1970. Many of these modifications were minor and were made to improve promotion management and administrative efficiency. In addition, changes were made in order to implement TOPCAP and to structure the enlisted force to the TOPCAP objective. To accomplish this, changes were made that altered enlistment, reenlistment, retraining, promotion, and separation policy. One of the most significant of these changes was the adoption of equal selection opportunity which became the basic principle of the TOPCAP promotion plan. Other changes to improve the promotion system and to make it more acceptable to airmen were made independent of TOPCAP implementation. One of the most significant of these changes was the adoption of weighted factors in the senior grade promotion system.

## Chapter V

### SPECIAL ENLISTED PROMOTION POLICIES

Airman promotion policy is formulated to provide equitable promotion opportunity for each airman regardless of specialty. Exceptions to this policy are made in unique and special circumstances that clearly warrant deviation. These exceptions are held to a minimum and are reviewed periodically to insure their continuing applicability and need (27:1). The Physician Assistant (PA) program and the USAF Band are examples of unique situations where special enlisted promotion policies have been used.

#### The Physician Assistant Program

The Air Force established the PA specialty in 1971 and implemented a two-year training program to produce NCOs who were qualified to assume many of the duties previously performed by general medical officers (19:1). A shortage of medical officers had been experienced within the Air Force due to the end of the draft, a critical nationwide shortage of physicians, and major changes in medical education. The shortage restricted the capability of the Air Force to provide adequate medical care to Air Force members and their families. To fill the void, the Air Force and the civilian

community established a new health care specialist, the PA. They were trained to provide primary medical care and were used to relieve physicians of certain routine aspects of patient care.

The criteria for selection of PAs included: (1) three years active service but not more than sixteen years; (2) Grade E-4 through E-9; (3) AQE score (general): Minimum 60. 80 desirable; (4) Education: High school graduate - - mandatory - - 60 semester hours of college credit desirable; (5) AFSC: 90XXX or 91XXX; (6) Experience: One year experience in direct patient care (16:16). Airmen selected for training were required to complete two years training at the USAF School of Health Care Science at Sheppard AFB, Texas (39:1).

The responsibility of direct patient care, the extensive and costly training, and the shortage of PAs and physicians in the civilian community made it necessary for the Air Force to take extraordinary steps to protect its trained resource (38:1). A special program was approved to provide PAs with accelerated career progression, additional prestige, and salaries competitive with the civilian community. The enlisted personnel promotion regulation published in 1974 established the promotion program for PAs. If serving in a grade below E-7, they were promoted to E-7 upon graduation from training provided they had at least 6 years total active federal military service. Personnel with less than 6 years

were advanced to the grade of E-6. Promotion to E-8 and E-9 was made on a fully-qualified basis upon completion of 11 years and 14 years service, respectively, provided the individual met all eligibility requirements (64:9).

Evaluation of Grade Alternatives for Physician Assistants

The Air Force considered several alternatives before deciding to make PAs noncommissioned officers: (1) Retain in the enlisted structure; (2) Commissioning in the Biomedical Sciences Corps (BSC); (3) Use Nurse Clinicians/Practitioners; (4) Warrant Officers; (5) All civilian. The Air Force thoroughly evaluated the advantages and disadvantages of each proposal and determined that retention of PAs in the enlisted force was the most acceptable alternative consistent with stated personnel management principles and planned utilization of PAs (30:1-5). The evaluations are summarized in the following paragraphs to show how and why the PA policy developed.

The advantages of retaining PAs in the enlisted structure included: (1) It was consistent with Air Force management concepts; (2) It posed no utilization problem if the PA position was phased out; (3) The accelerated promotion program to grades E-7 and above, coupled with professional pay helped overcome pay disparity among the services; (4) It provided a logical career progression pattern. The disadvantages were



considered to be: (1) It would not give the Air Force PA the same status as the Army and Navy PAs (Warrant Officer); (2) It may result in retention problems; (3) It may not fully satisfy PAs, their wives, and some Congressmen.

The advantages of commissioning in the BSC were considered to be: (1) The PAs would have increased status and greater patient acceptance; (2) It was not against Air Force officer management principles and concepts; (3) It would provide a system for procuring PAs from civilian sources just as other health professionals were obtained. The disadvantages were: (1) The position of PA in the hierarchy of health professions had not been firmly established; (2) Although PAs would work only under the direct supervision of a physician, and would be utilized solely as a technician, they would progress to the officer field grades and having senior officer PAs was not considered economical personnel management; (3) Commissioning would require additional officer authorizations and adversely affect the officer/airman ratio; (4) It was one of the most expensive alternatives; (5) PAs who were then in training varied greatly in age, grade, service, and education . . . waivers would be required to commission many of them; (6) Some might refuse commissions for personal reasons.

The advantages of using Nurse Clinicians/Practitioners would have been: (1) It would shorten the time required to produce trained personnel; (2) It would provide increased status and patient acceptance; (3) It would make it possible

to enlarge the job responsibility of the physician assistant. The disadvantages were thought to be: (1) There would be a loss of trained personnel from a critical resource skill; (2) It would require additional officer authorizations; (3) It was one of the most expensive alternatives; (4) It would result in mingling persons with widely varied training during the transition period; (5) Nurses were overly trained for PA input.

The advantage of making PAs Warrant Officers would have been to establish comparability with Army and Navy Programs. Army and Navy PAs were Warrant Officers. Standardization was an important issue for many people and there was considerable pressure for the Air Force to appoint PAs as Warrant Officers (15:1). Congressional members and Department of Defense officials expressed the conviction that the services should adopt a common grade structure (12:1). The disadvantages of making the PAs Warrant Officers were: (1) Air Force policy discontinued the selection of Warrant Officers in 1959 and none had been appointed since; (2) The Air Force had gone on record before Congress stating that the Warrant Officer program was being deliberately phased out; (3) Warrant Officer grades were not consistent with Air Force management concepts and would impose an unnecessary overlap and layering of supervisors/specialists in the force structure; (4) A Warrant Officer program for Air Force PAs could establish a precedent

for reopening the program to other Air Force personnel; (5) It would require additional officer authorizations adversely affecting the officer/airman ratio.

The advantages of making PA positions civil service were: (1) It would resolve the grade disparity problem; (2) It would provide salaries roughly equivalent to Warrant Officers and senior enlisted personnel; (3) It would facilitate dealing with patients and co-workers; (4) It would be easier to manage within Civil Service career development patterns. The disadvantages were: (1) It would create severe limitations on overseas assignment capability; (2) It would limit flexibility of working hours, i. e., overtime; (3) It may escalate personnel costs; (4) There would be no guaranteed retainability; (5) Civil Service could not compete with contemporary civilian salaries for PAs; (6) There was a lack of trained input.

The Air Force elected to retain PAs in enlisted status pending evaluation of the role and responsibilities of PAs and determination of the cost-effectiveness of the program. It was felt that several years experience would be needed to determine what the real capabilities of PAs were. If the PA position became a recognized health professional in the future, it should be commissioned and if not, it should be categorized as a highly trained technician and given comparable rank and pay (16:13).

The Enlisted Personnel  
Physician Assis-  
tant

An appropriate grade structure for PAs was a recurring issue within DOD from its implementation in 1971 until 1977 when it was decided PAs should be commissioned in the Bio-medical Services Corps. Many PAs were dissatisfied with their status. This was expressed through numerous letters and Congressional complaints. The PAs perceived a lack of acceptance among professional peers. They also complained about nurses with an Associate Degree being commissioned and about the cost of continuing education which their specialty required. Less retired pay than Warrant Officers or commissioned officers was another area of concern for the PAs (12:20).

The special promotion policies also caused some dissatisfaction among enlisted personnel in other Air Force career fields. The special promotion consideration given to PAs seemed unfair to them. Complaints resulted in congressional inquiries. One master sergeant complained to his Senator that this special program was grossly unfair and prejudicial to the other enlisted personnel of the Air Force. He said that the Weighted Airman Promotion System had been sold to the enlisted force as a truly equitable promotion system in which airmen compete with each other based on skill and knowledge. He stated that the special program for a small group of

personnel was unjustified and that the air traffic controllers working for him were as deserving of special recognition as the PAs were (38:10).

By 1977 the Air Force was again considering the alternatives for the special enlisted personnel promotion policy. The enlisted PA program life-cycle costs were the highest of all options (\$20.7 million) annually. It cost \$35,000 to train one PA and professional pay was \$100 per month. Medical specialists selected for training had to be replaced. Low retention beyond 20 years service would escalate retirement costs due to the high turnover rate. There was no career advancement after attaining E-9 at 14 years of service. Finally, the PA was over-qualified for enlisted status based on acquired and continuing education (12:19,20).

The Air Force had elected to retain PAs in enlisted status pending evaluation of the role and responsibilities of PAs and determination of the cost effectiveness of the program. Studies conducted by the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Health & Education), the Rand Corporation, and the General Accounting Office concluded that the military PAs do significantly extend the capabilities of the general medical officer. Based on these studies and the Air Force experience it was determined that the PA program would have a continuing and important role in the Air Force's medical services (12:1).

### Commissioning PAs

The extended reviews of the PA program led to the conclusion that a PA commissioning program would be in the Air Force's best long term interests. The PAs were well qualified since they had to complete an AMA approved program and be certified by a National Board of Examiners. They were true health professionals who by formal training, experience, and certification were qualified to perform many of the duties formerly undertaken only by physicians. Officer's salaries would make PA compensation competitive with the civilian sector after an extended period of time. The status of PAs was no longer uncertain. They were accepted members of the medical care team and were expected to remain as a part of the Air Force medical personnel inventory. Air Force PAs equated their training, experience, and duties on the same level as other health professionals who were commissioned and they were dissatisfied with their lower status. A final consideration for deciding to commission PAs was the intentions of other services. The Coast Guard and Public Health Service indicated that they would favorably consider a commissioning program if the Air Force decided to commission PAs. The Army was putting together a plan that would allow for interservice transfers to augment its PA program. If the program was implemented, the Air Force expected a number of interservice transfer applications from its PAs because of the higher Warrant Officer grades in the Army (28:6-8).

Promotion to temporary first lieutenant would be on a fully qualified basis. Promotion to Captain and subsequent grades was to follow the Biomedical Services Corps guidelines for promotion. The implementation phasing to commission PAs planned for building the PA force to 450. There were 319 practicing enlisted PAs at the time of implementation. Phase-in of commissioned PAs was programmed over a six-year period to provide FY78 enlisted students two years to complete training and four years to acquire a degree for commissioning. Commissioning was not to be mandatory. Those not electing commissioning were required to serve a minimum 4-year payback in enlisted status following their PA training. Approximately 80% of enlisted PAs had degrees so it was assumed 80% would transition to commissioned status each year.

The Enlisted Personnel Promotion Regulation published 28 February 1979 contains provisions for the transitional period between enlisted and commissioned PAs (13:10). After the transitional phase, this special enlisted promotion policy will have served its purpose and will end since all PAs will be commissioned.

#### The Air Force Band

The USAF Band is a unique organization which must compete with other Services' bands and the civilian sector in recruiting fully qualified professional musicians. In recognition of this special need, special promotion authority has been granted. This exception to normal airman promotion

policy is made because (1) the other Services provide similar special enlisted promotion authority for their principal bands, (2) other viable alternatives for financial inducement are not available, and (3) the recruiting of a fully qualified professional musician saves training costs and time.

Since the USAF Band is under the Military Airlift Command (MAC), the Commander, MAC, is authorized to promote, on a unit vacancy basis, only those airmen who are fully qualified, full-time performing musicians (including instrumentalists and vocalists) in the Band. Promotion authority for grades E-7 and below may be delegated to the Commander, 76 Airlift Division.

Individuals must possess Control and Duty AFSC 872XO to be considered for promotion. Specific promotion prerequisites are as follows: (1) Promotion to grades E-8 and E-9; Airmen must possess the cumulative years of service as required by AFR 39-29 and must complete the Senior NCO Academy Course. All other time-in-service (TIS) and time-in-grade (TIG) requirements are waived. (2) Promotion to grade E-7; Airmen must complete the Command NCO Academy Course. All TIS and TIG requirements are waived. (3) Promotion to grade E-2 through E-6; All TIS and TIG requirements are waived. (4) Promotions to grades E-6 through E-9 may not be made more than one grade at a time. In addition, promotions to these grades are to be made on a unit vacancy basis. (5) Promotions to grade E-2 through E-5 may be made more



than one grade at a time. (6) Airmen promoted to E-4 will automatically be designated E-4 NCOs and will wear the chevron of the E-4 NCO. It is strongly recommended that all performers be encouraged to complete Phase I of NCO PME prior to their promotion to E-5. This will aid them in the development of supervisory and leadership skills. (7) The commander may prescribe other requirements for promotion selection purposes deemed appropriate.

Personnel assigned to the Air Force Band whose principal duties involve other than full-time musical performance in the band (i.e., support personnel) must compete for promotion under normal Air Force promotion policies. The special promotion authority for the Band is a major deviation from normal promotion policy and is a particularly unique and sensitive personnel management action. Rigid compliance with all procedures is required (27:1-3).

#### Summary

The Air Force enlisted personnel promotion policy is designed to give each airman an equal opportunity for promotion. Special circumstances may warrant deviation from the usual promotion policies, but exceptions are major deviations from normal policy and are sensitive personnel management actions. Continual review, periodic justification and rigid compliance to all procedures is essential.

## Chapter VI

### SUMMARY

Numerous changes have been made to the airman promotion system since 1947. Despite these changes the basic promotion policy has not changed. From 1947 to the present that policy has been to promote those airmen who have demonstrated potential for increased responsibility. The promotion system used to implement this policy evolved over the years from a subjective decentralized to an objective centralized selection system.

Originally all airman promotions were made at base level. Airman were evaluated by promotion boards which used the whole man concept to judge merit and ability. This system of promotion received much criticism in the mid 1960s because of its subjectivity and because airman did not receive any feedback concerning why they were not selected for promotion. This lack of visibility and the subjective evaluation of promotion boards contributed to much dissatisfaction with the system. As a direct result of this dissatisfaction, changes were made to bring more objectivity and visibility to the promotion system.

The major change that produced objectivity and visibility was the centralization of promotions in 1970 under the weighted airman promotion system (WAPS). The weighted

factors contained in the WAPS model were used initially only for promotions to grades E-4 through E-7. However, in 1976 the use of weighted factors were extended to the E-8 and E-9 promotion system.

WAPS provided objectivity through the use of weighted promotion factors. In addition, it provided promotion visibility by supplying a promotion score card or listing from which all airman could evaluate their performance. This listing not only showed relative standing but was tangible evidence that each airman had in fact been considered for promotion. Thus, WAPS had brought centralization, objectivity, and visibility to the airman promotion system which relieved some of the discontent among airmen. However, much of the dissatisfaction was due to inequitable allocation of promotions caused by promotion quotas, grade and skill imbalances within specialties, and the Air Force's practice of promoting to fill vacancies within AFSCs. This discontent remained after WAPS implementation and was not eliminated until 1972 when, under TOPCAP, the Air Force adopted equal selection opportunity (ESO). With ESO, the same percentage of eligibles were promoted within each AFSC. As a result, equity was added to objectivity and visibility to produce a promotion system that was acceptable to both the enlisted force and the Air Force. That same system has been used by the Air Force from its inception to the present (1980) with

only minor changes being made. These changes were aimed at improving management and administrative efficiency and have not changed the basic elements of centralization, promotion equity, objectivity, and visibility.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A  
REENLISTMENT AND RETENTION RATES  
1977-1979

REENLISTMENT RATE  
1977

AFSC	FIRST TERM		SECOND TERM		CAREER				
	ELIG	REENL %	ELIG	REENL %	ELIG	REENL %			
321XXX	455	99	21.8	156	96	61.5	240	229	95.4
322XXX	103	39	37.9	29	25	86.2	41	35	85.4
324XXX	224	77	34.4	78	37	47.4	229	216	94.3
325XXX	568	149	26.2	117	80	68.4	258	241	93.4
326XXX	458	64	14.0	112	78	69.6	295	287	97.3
328XXX	1255	288	22.9	257	176	68.5	844	789	93.5
32XXXX	3063	716	23.4	749	492	65.7	1907	1797	94.2
423XXX	1797	765	42.6	515	405	78.6	985	944	95.8
426XXX	1421	468	32.9	433	338	78.1	849	798	94.0
427XXX	469	167	35.6	139	99	71.2	181	177	97.8
42XXXX	3687	1400	37.9	1087	842	77.5	2015	1919	95.2
431XXX	4108	1507	36.7	1305	914	70.0	3032	2901	95.7

REENLISTMENT RATE  
1978

AFSC	FIRST TERM		SECOND TERM		CAREER	
	ELIG	REENL %	ELIG	REENL %	ELIG	REENL %
321XXX	229	72 31.4	157	81 51.6	174	160 92.0
322XXX	70	18 25.7	29	23 79.3	46	44 95.7
324XXX	166	98 59.0	116	53 45.7	183	174 95.1
325XXX	427	102 23.9	101	64 63.4	218	201 92.2
326XXX	276	60 21.7	84	49 58.3	234	219 93.6
328XXX	840	229 27.3	153	83 54.2	691	641 92.8
32XXXX	2008	579 28.8	640	353 55.2	1546	1439 93.1
423XXX	1190	458 38.5	468	339 72.4	763	717 94.0
426XXX	628	287 45.7	311	205 65.9	783	753 96.2
427XXX	526	234 44.5	331	216 65.3	429	410 95.6
42XXXX	2344	979 41.8	1110	760 68.5	1975	1880 95.2
431XXX	2523	918 36.4	1357	859 63.3	2816	2633 93.5



REENLISTMENT RATE

1979

AFSC	FIRST TERM		SECOND TERM		CAREER	
	ELIG	REENL %	ELIG	REENL %	ELIG	REENL %
321XXX	409	110 26.9	121	65 53.7	177	161 91.0
322XXX	113	30 26.5	22	12 54.5	64	56 87.5
324XXX	295	176 59.7	88	41 46.6	193	167 86.5
325XXX	322	87 27.0	83	49 59.0	214	190 88.8
326XXX	503	161 32.0	104	57 54.8	258	227 88.0
328XXX	922	271 29.4	198	90 45.5	651	575 88.3
32XXXX	2564	835 32.6	616	314 51.0	1557	1376 88.4
423XXX	1658	582 35.1	462	310 67.1	932	856 91.8
426XXX	992	379 38.2	296	157 53.0	819	767 93.7
427XXX	835	286 34.3	204	121 59.3	482	445 92.3
42XXXX	3485	1247 35.8	962	588 61.1	2233	2068 92.6
431XXX	3261	1018 31.2	1133	641 56.6	2906	2654 91.3

RETENTION RATES  
1977

AFSC	FIRST TERM		SECOND TERM		CAREER				
	YR. GROUP	REENL %	YR. GROUP	REENL %	YR. GROUP	REENL %			
321XXX	750	99	13.2	171	96	56.1	447	229	51.2
322XXX	160	39	24.4	29	25	86.2	67	35	52.2
324XXX	301	77	25.6	89	37	41.6	384	216	56.2
325XXX	762	149	19.6	121	80	66.1	398	241	60.6
326XXX	778	64	8.2	122	78	63.9	411	287	69.8
328XXX	1843	288	15.6	285	176	61.8	1216	789	64.9
32XXXX	4594	716	15.6	817	492	60.2	2923	1797	61.5
423XXX	3135	765	24.4	577	405	70.2	1549	944	60.9
426XXX	2354	468	19.9	474	338	71.3	1261	798	63.3
427XXX	838	167	19.9	150	89	66.0	267	177	66.3
42XXXX	6327	1400	22.1	1201	842	70.1	3077	1919	62.4
431XXX	7085	1507	21.2	1488	914	61.4	4567	2901	63.5

**RETENTION RATES  
1978**

AFSC	FIRST TERM		SECOND TERM		CAREER	
	YR. GROUP	REENL %	YR. GROUP	REENL %	YR. GROUP	REENL %
321XXX	475	72 15.2	171	81 47.4	327	160 48.9
322XXX	126	18 14.3	31	23 74.2	59	44 74.6
324XXX	227	98 43.2	123	53 43.1	299	174 58.2
325XXX	600	102 17.0	112	64 57.1	328	201 61.3
326XXX	524	60 11.5	101	49 48.5	339	219 64.6
328XXX	1319	229 17.4	183	83 45.4	1022	641 62.7
32XXXX	3271	579 17.7	721	353 50.0	2374	1439 60.6
423XXX	2432	458 18.8	534	339 63.5	1177	717 60.9
426XXX	1300	287 22.1	342	205 59.9	1086	753 69.3
427XXX	1082	234 21.6	368	216 58.7	617	410 66.5
42XXXX	4814	979 20.3	1244	760 61.1	2880	1880 65.3
431XXX	5288	918 17.4	1558	859 55.1	3867	2633 68.1

RETENTION RATES

1979

AFSC	FIRST TERM		SECOND TERM		CAREER	
	YR. GROUP	REENL %	YR. GROUP	REENL %	YR. GROUP	REENL %
321XXX	632	110 17.4	138	65 47.1	295	161 54.6
322XXX	146	30 20.5	25	12 48.0	87	56 64.4
324XXX	365	176 48.2	98	41 41.8	332	167 50.3
325XXX	499	87 17.4	92	49 53.3	297	190 64.0
326XXX	769	161 20.9	117	57 48.7	368	227 61.7
328XXX	1323	271 20.5	227	90 39.6	1008	575 57.0
32XXXX	3734	835 22.4	697	314 45.1	2387	1376 57.6
423XXX	2795	582 20.8	535	310 57.9	1261	856 67.9
426XXX	1682	379 22.5	341	157 46.0	1075	767 71.3
427XXX	1378	286 20.8	244	121 49.6	660	445 67.4
42XXXX	5855	1247 21.3	1120	588 52.5	2996	2068 69.0
431XXX	6054	1018 16.8	1322	641 48.5	3917	2654 67.8

APPENDIX B  
HISTORY OF U. S. AIR FORCE  
ENLISTED GRADES

PAY GRADES	1947	1952	GRADE TITLES 1958	1959	1967	1976
*Special	--	--	--	--	Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force (Apr 67)	
E-9	--	--	Chief Master Sergeant (Sep 58)	***		
E-8	--	--	Senior Master Sergeant ** (Sep 58)			
E-7	Master Sergeant					
E-6	Technical Sergeant					
E-5	Staff Sergeant					
E-4	Sergeant	Airman First Class (Apr 52)			Sergeant (Oct 67)	Sergeant Senior Airman (Jun 76)
E-3	Corporal	Airman Second Class (Apr 52)			Airman First Class (Oct 67)	
E-2	Private First Class	Airman Third Class (Apr 52)			Airman (Oct 67)	
E-1	Private	Basic Airman (Apr 52)			Airman Basic (Feb 59)	

\* Basic Pay Rate for this grade established by Section 263, Title 37 U.S.C. in May 69

\*\* First Promotions to SMSgt 1 Sep 58

\*\*\* First Promotions to CMSgt 1 Dec 59

APPENDIX C  
AIRMAN PROMOTION INQUIRY

PERCENTAGE OF INQUIRIES BY CAREER FIELD  
 FROM 1 JANUARY 1966 THROUGH  
 NOVEMBER 1966 (22)

CAREER FIELD	PERCENTAGE
First Sergeant 01	.136%
Intelligence 20	.616%
Photomapping 22	.273%
Photographic 23	.684%
Safety 24	.410%
Weather 25	1.301%
Aerospace Control Systems Operations 27	4.246%
Communications Operations 29	2.808%
Communications- Electronics Systems 30	6.575%
Missile Electronic Maintenance 31	1.301%



CAREER FIELD	PERCENTAGE
Armament Systems Maintenance and Operator 32	6.575%
Training Devices 34	.479%
Wire Communications Systems Maintenance 36	2.397%
Intricate Equipment Maintenance 40	.410%
Aircraft Accessory Maintenance 42	3.013%
Aircraft Maintenance 43	12.054%
Missile Maintenance 44	.479%
Munitions and Weapons Maintenance 46	1.575%
Motor Vehicle Maintenance 47	1.232%
Metalworking 53	1.506%
Civil Engineering Mechanical/Electrical 54	2.945%
Civil Engineering Structural/Pavements 55	1.780%

CAREER FIELD	PERCENTAGE
Civil Engineering Sanitation 56	.342%
Fire Protection 57	1.575%
Fabric, Leather and Rubber 58	.821%
Marine 59	.00%
Transportation 60	6.164%
Supply Services 61	1.712%
Food Services 62	4.794%
Fuel Services 63	.136%
Supply 64	9.521%
Procurement 65	.342%
Accounting and Finance, and Auditing 67	.821%
Data Systems 68	.958%
Administrative 70	7.054%
Printing 71	.273%
Information 72	.136%

CAREER FIELD	PERCENTAGE
Personnel	2.123%
Special Services 74	.479%
Education and Training 75	1.027%
Band 76	.205%
Air Police 77	5.136%
Special Investigations 82	.273%
Medical 90 & 91	2.534% .136%
Aircrew Protection 92	.547%
Dental 98	.547%
Recruiter 99120	.684%
Military Training Instructor 99128	.479%

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