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26 MARCH 1973

⑨ Research paper,

⑫ 42p.

⑥ A CODE OF ETHICS FOR AIR FORCE OFFICERS

BY

⑩ COLONEL DAVID G. PALMER

UNITED STATES AIR FORCE

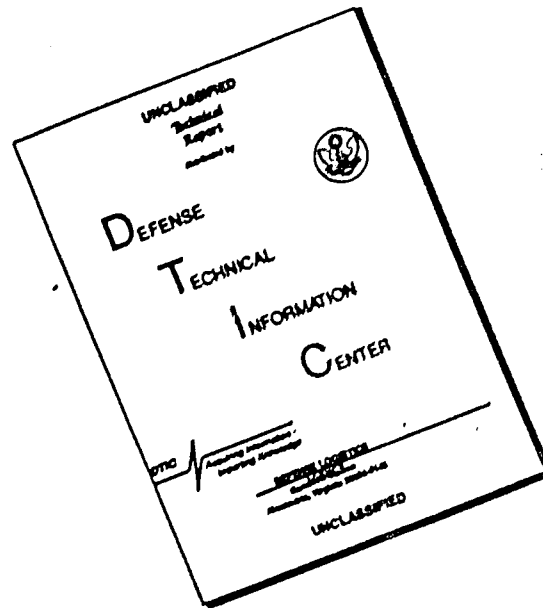
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USAF C RESEARCH PAPER

A CODE OF ETHICS FOR AIR FORCE OFFICERS?

A MONOGRAPH

by

Colonel David G. Palmer
USAF

US Army War College
Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania
26 March 1973

Distribution limited to U.S. Government Agencies only; Test and Evaluation (1 June 1973). Other requests for this document must be referred to Commandant, US Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, Pa. 17013.

ABSTRACT

AUTHOR: David G. Palmer, COL, USAF
FORMAT: Monograph
DATE: 26 March 1973 PAGES: 37 CLASSIFICATION: Unclassified
TITLE: A Code of Ethics for Air Force Officers?

✓ The US Air Force Personnel Plan lists the establishment of a code of ethics to enhance the image of career officers as one of its objectives. Three basic questions are considered: is a published code required; what should be the essential elements of the code; and, what would the publication of a code be expected to accomplish? Current official publications were examined for ethical guidance for Air Force officers. Congressional testimony of officers involved in the unauthorized bombing of North Vietnam in 1972 was reviewed for ethical conduct and attitudes. Traditional elements of the American officer's military ethic were assembled from a variety of official and unofficial, but generally accepted as authoritative, publications. Past and current attitudinal surveys were examined for trends in the perception of the public and the military of the prestige of the officer corps. The following conclusions were reached: Written ethical guidance is incomplete and unwritten codes are inadequate, resulting in uncertainty of standards among the officer corps; a written code would remove the uncertainty; the essential elements of the code should be the traditional ones, but added emphasis should be placed on first allegiance to the Constitution; an established code, if enforced, may be expected to improve internal and external prestige, but more importantly, promote higher standards of professional conduct among Air Force officers. It is recommended that a code of ethics be published, and a sample code is proposed.

PREFACE

It has become customary to introduce any treatise on military strategy with a quotation from Clausewitz. Similarly, it seems appropriate to preface this discussion of the professional ethical code of American military officers by acknowledging the admonition of our first Commander-in-Chief:

Do not suffer your good nature when application is made, to say YES when you should say NO. Remember that it is a public not a private cause that is to be injured or benefitted by your choice.

George Washington

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT.	ii
PREFACE	iii
INTRODUCTION.	1
Background.	1
Purpose	3
THE REQUIREMENT FOR A CODE OF ETHICS.	4
Professionalism	4
Existing Ethical Standards.	5
Breakdown of Professionalism - A Case History	9
Summary	20
ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF A CODE OF ETHICS.	21
A Proposed Code of Ethics for Air Force Officers.	24
WHAT TO EXPECT FROM A CODE OF ETHICS.	25
Survey Results.	25
The Code as a Standard of Conduct	28
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	30
Conclusions	30
Recommendations	31
FOOTNOTES	32
SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY	35

INTRODUCTION

The establishment of a code of ethics for career Air Force officers as a means of enhancing their professional image is an issue raised by the United States Air Force Personnel Plan.

BACKGROUND

The USAF Personnel Plan prescribes the approved concepts, goals, and qualitative objectives for total force personnel management and charts the course of action for the future. It is the basis and authority for establishment of overall personnel¹ policies.

A concept, as defined in the plan, is "A state of being or a condition which is desirable--an idealized characteristic² of the force being considered." The Air Force believes that the concept of professionalism will enhance the quality of the force, motivate individuals to excel in their jobs, and stimulate eligible civilians to seek a military career in the Air Force. A profession normally is identified by having a code of ethics and the conviction of those whom it serves that it has achieved professional status. Further, the Air Force envisions that only career³ military personnel would be identified as "professionals." Consequently, Concept Five of the plan states: "The career element of the force must be dedicated and disciplined, must conform to a set of ethical standards, possess a common body of knowledge,

and display a professional image perceived both internally and
4
exterrally."

A goal is a more specific statement of a portion of a concept. Concept Five is supported by two goals dealing with the portion regarding ethical standards and professional image:

Goal 5.2. To achieve a code of ethics which reflects the professional standard of conduct and fosters an internal system of self discipline for the career force.

Goal 5.4. To attain an image of a professional career force distinguishable from other elements of society by projecting common purposes and standards.⁵

An objective is a detailed expression of a portion of a goal, which is attainable, measurable, and achievable by specific actions of responsible Air Force managers. The objectives for the officer force are derived from and support the concepts and goals
6
stated for the total force. Objectives are grouped under broad functional areas such as Utilization, Education and Training, Procurement, and Sustainment. Sustainment refers to the psychosocial needs of Air Force personnel. One identified need is for officers to know their position in the structure and their expected standards of conduct, discipline and performance. In response to this need, Objective 384 is to: "Enhance the professional image
7
of career officers by establishing a code of ethics." The manager responsible for this objective has been charged to develop a standard or code which serves as a goal for achievement and a guide to professionalism.

As Objective 384 implies, the US Air Force does not have an official, published code of ethics for career officers. However, many would argue that there is a de facto code based upon tradition, customs of the service, the oath of office, Air Force regulations, and other government directives such as Executive Order 11222, 10 May 1965, Standards of Ethical Conduct for
8
Government Officers and Employees. Both official and unofficial
9
publications make reference to a "military code of ethics" or
10
"the Code of the United States Air Force."

PURPOSE

It appears that Objective 384 may be redundant; therefore, this paper will attempt to answer three resulting questions:

1. What evidence is there that an established (published) code of ethics for Air Force officers is required?
2. If a published code is required what essential elements should be included?
3. What would the publication of a code of ethics be expected to accomplish?

THE REQUIREMENT FOR A CODE OF ETHICS

PROFESSIONALISM

Since the Air Force ties the requirement for a code of ethics to the concept of professionalism we should consider whether it is generally accepted that an officer is a member of a professional body. The Department of Defense publication The
11
Armed Forces Officer and numerous other official manuals make it clear that the Military Establishment considers duty as a career officer to be a profession. Samuel P. Huntington supports this view in his comprehensive book, The Soldier and the State:

The modern officer corps is a professional body and the modern military officer is a professional man. This is, perhaps, the most fundamental thesis of this book. A profession is a peculiar type of functional group with highly specialized characteristics. Sculptors, stenographers, entrepreneurs, and advertising copywriters all have distinct functions but no one of these functions is professional in nature. Professionalism, however, is characteristic of the modern officer in the same sense in which it is characteristic of the physician or lawyer. Professionalism distinguishes the military officer of today from the warriors of previous ages. The existence of the officer corps as a professional body gives a unique cast to the modern problem of civil-military relations.¹²

Other references in civilian publications support the view that the concept of professionalism in the officer corps is accepted by the
13
general public.

Although definitions of a profession vary, it is generally agreed that one element of a profession is an ethic or code of conduct based on service to society. This code may be either written or unwritten depending, to some extent, upon the type of professional organization. Huntington classifies professional organizations as either associations or bureaucracies. The associational professions, such as medicine and law, usually possess written codes of ethics since each practitioner is individually confronted with the problem of proper professional conduct. Conversely, bureaucratic professions are characterized by a more general sense of collective professional responsibility and conduct. The diplomatic service and the military services fall in the latter category. This probably explains why the Air Force has not previously established a formal code of ethics.

EXISTING ETHICAL STANDARDS

Despite the absence of a formal code, ethical standards for Air Force officers do exist in both written and unwritten form. Therefore, a review of the guidance available, with particular emphasis on adequacy, is in order.

The Armed Forces Officer is not only a Department of Defense publication, but is also identified as Air Force Pamphlet 190-1. It is a guide to the philosophy, ideals, and principles of leadership in the United States Armed Forces. The officer is directed

to consider the meaning of his commission and the oath of office. Special emphasis is placed upon his duty to uphold the Constitution and serve his country faithfully. However, the style of writing is to present philosophical generalities rather than specifics. The chapter on military ideals is particularly turgid with admiring references to the great leaders of World War II, but no delineation of the qualities or conduct that made them great. One insight, however, is offered which is important in the context of this paper:

Fundamentally, the Code of Conduct, which was adopted for all members of the Armed Forces in 1955, was not a new set of commandants but rather the first clear, compact statement of those ideals on which American fighting men were supposed to have been guided since the beginning of the Republic.¹⁶

The Code of Conduct grew out of the uncertainty of the Korean War POW's as to where the line of duty begins and terminates. Prior to that war the United States had not found it necessary to spell out a standard of behavior for its captured fighting men. However, the enemy chose to exploit the prisoners for political ends and the public outcry over those few prisoners who failed to resist Communist pressures resulted in the Code. It was promulgated as Executive Order Number 10631, dated 17 August 1955. We shall see other instances where standards or ideals that were supposedly understood and accepted by military members were later codified in response to specific or general breaches.

Air Force Regulation 30-30, Standards of Conduct, is in this category. It implements Executive Order 11222 of 8 May 1965, prescribing Standards of Ethical Conduct for Government officers and employees. It further responds to the Code of Ethics for Government Service contained in House Concurrent Resolution 175,
17
85th Congress. Despite the broad implications of the titles, the regulation deals only with the possible conflict between private interests and official duties of Air Force personnel. The House Resolution and subsequent Executive Department directives were the result of a Congressional investigation that concluded that far too many Government employees had engaged in questionable or improper activities. Although the charter of the investigating commission was broad, the report and ensuing law is restricted to
18
conflict of interest.

Another Air Force Regulation dealing with personal conduct is AFR 30-1, Air Force Standards. It takes precedence over any conflicting publications and addresses rules, regulations, procedures, customs, traditions and practices. However, as General Ryan points out in the introductory letter, the regulation is a condensed summary of some of these. It does not attempt to give comprehensive, detailed guidance or examples. For example, Section E directs all personnel to observe Air Force customs and courtesies. Only two specific examples of courtesies and three of customs are given. However, included in the references for that paragraph is
19
the unofficial publication, The Air Officer's Guide.

The Armed Forces Officer also refers the officer to The Air Officer's Guide for information regarding customs and courtesies. This would seem to confer a mantle of authority upon this publication, and it has indeed become something of an institution throughout the Air Force. Although first published in 1948, The Air Officer's Guide is directly descended from the Officer's Guide originally²⁰ published for Army officers in 1930. Much of the material in corresponding, yearly editions is identical. The Officer's Guide had a predecessor in the Officers' Manual initiated in 1906 by James²¹ A. Moss. Moss stated in the seventh edition of the manual that his was the only known compilation of the "custome of the service"²² in written form. Therefore, there seems ample reason to accept the Air Officer's Guide as authoritative.

Unfortunately many explanatory remarks and references have been dropped over the years. For example, Moss explained that "custome of the service" received legal recognition in the 19th²³ Article of War. The 1949 issue of the Officers Guide clarified this, and reiterated that reference was made to this in the oath²⁴ of members of a court-martial. Although the Manual for Courts-²⁵ Martial, until 1969, included this recognition in the oath, neither the 1955 nor 1967 editions of the Air Officer's Guide reinforces the argument for adhering to customs with this reference. Much of the material is simply unsupported statements.

Additionally, some of the material is in error because of changes in regulations or practices that are not reflected in the book. While most are not serious, the section on Officers' Clubs is an example, they do cast doubt as to the validity of the remaining material. Since there is no official source of verification, it would not be surprising to find officers unable to give a definitive outline of an Air Force officer's professional code of ethics.

One custom that appears in all the editions of both guides is the following:

SANCTITY OF OFFICIAL STATEMENTS. An officer's official word or statement is ordinarily accepted without question. The knowledge that a false official statement is not only a high crime, but is contrary to the ethics of the military profession, has placed personal and official responsibility for an official statement on a high level.²⁶

It would not seem that such a flat statement could be taken lightly, nor that it could fail to be the cornerstone of every officer's professional code. However, the following case history shows that some officers did, in fact, overlook the importance of this particular element of professionalism.

BREAKDOWN OF PROFESSIONALISM - CASE HISTORY

All of the following information concerning this case has been extracted from the report, Hearings Before the Committee on Armed Services United States Senate, Ninety-Second Congress, Second Session

On John D. Lavelle for appointment as Lieutenant General on Retired List of U.S. Air Force and Matters Relating to Authority for Certain Bombing Missions in North Vietnam Between November 1971 and March 1972. The hearings were held on 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 18, 19, 22, and 28 September under the chairmanship of Senator John C. Stennis.

On 8 March 1972, a letter from an Air Force sergeant, Lonnie D. Franks, was referred to General John D. Ryan, Chief of Staff, US Air Force. This letter had been written to Senator Harold E. Hughes, a member of the Committee on Armed Services, and contained allegations of irregularities in some of the operational reports and of violations of the Rules of Engagement by members of the 7th Air Force. General Ryan dispatched the Air Force Inspector General to investigate the matter personally because of the seriousness of the allegations. The Rules of Engagement were essentially specific extensions of the President's policies in regard to prosecution of the air war in Southeast Asia. On 23 March 1972 the Inspector General confirmed the allegations. General Ryan summoned the commander of the 7th Air Force, General John D. Lavelle, to Washington on 26 March 1972. According to General Ryan, General Lavelle admitted that a limited number of strikes which had attacked military targets in North Vietnam had been inaccurately reported as "protective reaction." He also admitted that he ordered that aircrews could not report "no reaction" when they expended ordnance in North Vietnam. (Such a report would clearly indicate a violation

of the Rules of Engagement.) After his discussion with General Lavelle, General Ryan recommended that he be relieved of his command. General Lavelle requested, and was granted retirement²⁷ effective 7 April 1972.

The official explanation for General Lavelle's abrupt retirement was "personal reasons." Subsequently, the essential elements of the case were published in the press, with resulting pressure for a full investigation. The opportunity for the Senate Armed Services Committee to investigate the case was presented because the Air Force had recommended that General Lavelle be advanced to the grade of lieutenant general on the retired list. This nomination required the approval of the Senate.

The hearings established that:

- a. Some strikes were flown in violation of the rules of engagement which precluded attacks in North Vietnam except in response to attacks on reconnaissance aircraft or their armed escorts.
- b. The strikes were ordered by General Lavelle when he decided that certain military targets were menacing his air operations in Thailand and South Vietnam, e.g., MIG aircraft in the North Vietnam panhandle. He decided that they could be covered by a "liberal" interpretation of the rules of engagement. Subsequently, his superiors ruled that the attacks violated the rules of engagement.

c. The operational reports were falsified to indicate that the enemy had fired upon the aircraft first and in some cases to indicate a different target. These reports originated in the Intelligence Section at Udorn Air Base, Thailand. They were prepared in conjunction with the debriefing of the aircrews. Sergeant Franks, who worked in the section, had questioned his superiors on the propriety of the reports, but was told to prepare them as instructed.

d. An undetermined, but apparently large, number of officers were aware of the nature of the strikes and the reports. This included the aircrews, the wing commander and his operational staff, and the Deputy for Operations at 7th Air Force. However, General Lavelle testified that he was not aware of the false reports. In his view, the strikes could have been properly reported as "hostile action, enemy radar." Unfortunately, his order that enemy reaction must be reported was not interpreted in this manner by his subordinates.

e. General Lavelle had no need to see the false reports, which were designed for computer input, because he received a special report on the strikes directly from the wing commander. However, General Ryan and other superiors of General Lavelle did not learn the true

nature of the attacks because only the official, false reports were forwarded beyond 7th Air Force.

f. The key issues raised in the investigation were civilian control of the military and the veracity and completeness of information that is supposed to be flowing up the chain-of-command. Actually, they can be considered as different aspects of the single issue of civilian control.

General Lavelle met the question of civilian control of the military, a prime requisite of professionalism, head-on:

As the committee knows, a number of questions have been raised concerning the extent, if any, to which I may have exceeded my authority in conducting the air war under the existing rules of engagement and other operational directives communicated to me by my superiors. I fully understand and support the traditional U.S. principles with respect to civilian control of the military and I assure this committee that I have never knowingly violated those principles.

It was my opinion at that time and it still is that the actions which I took were consistent with the overall policies pertaining to protective reaction as they applied to air operations in Southeast Asia. My understanding was that the rules of engagement were designed to afford a degree of protection to the American fighting man exposed to attack from an enemy who was taking advantage of every rule of the game to maximize his opportunity to kill Americans. I interpreted the rules of engagement in a way which I felt would save American and South Vietnamese lives.²⁸

Throughout the hearings he maintained the position that his liberal interpretation of the rules of engagement did not constitute a disregard for civilian authority or purposefully exceed his own authority. Further, he emphasized his responsibility for the lives of the aircrews under his command, another part of the military code. It had been suggested that he could have ordered his aircrews to deliberately provoke enemy fire in order to legitimize his strikes. General Lavelle dismissed this as morally repugnant:

It was brought out during the testimony that had I elected to "troll", i.e. send an aircraft and crew into the area as bait to draw fire, the strikes would then have been considered authorized under the pertinent rule of engagement. Mr. Chairman, I just couldn't do this in the environment in which my crews were flying. Even if a tactic of trolling would have made these strikes legal with respect to the enemy, it would not have been morally right in that hazardous area, with respect to my crews.²⁹

In regard to the second issue, General Lavelle testified that he did not order false reports to be prepared, but that they probably resulted from misinterpretation of a spontaneous remark of his:

At no time did I intend to mislead my superiors concerning these missions. I did not lie about what I was doing, nor did I order any of my subordinates to misrepresent the truth. It is true that some reports were falsified at a lower echelon of command, which probably resulted from my failure to make clear my objectives and my interpretation of the pertinent rule of judgement.³⁰

He then gave his recommendation in regard to disciplinary action against the officers involved in filing the false, official reports:

The young men who made these reports were daily risking their lives for their country; they had been asked to fight an onerous war under morale-shattering handicaps which, as fighting men, they found difficult to understand. Under these circumstances I could not and would not recommend that they be disciplined and, as their commander, I have never suggested that the responsibility was other than my own. In my earlier testimony before the House Armed Services Committee I accepted full responsibility for those reports and I still do.³¹

In his testimony of 18 September 1972, General Ryan concurred that the main responsibility was General Lavelle's, as commander of the 7th Air Force. An exchange with Senator Hughes clearly revealed the ambiguous position of the subordinate officers and why they might be confused as to their true responsibilities and loyalties:

Senator Hughes. In something as delicate as this I cannot conceive of the Pentagon not giving specific orders to those people in command positions, such as the wing commander, to what they were doing clearly. You do not condone these violations, do you?

General Ryan. I certainly do not.

Senator Hughes. Then, General, where is the responsibility?

General Ryan. The responsibility, in my opinion, Senator Hughes, lies with General Lavelle.

Senator Hughes. Only? Despite every other officer down that chain of command, from General Slay, Colonel Gabriel, every pilot--

General Ryan. Yes, sir.

Senator Hughes (continuing). Violating the orders?

General Ryan. Yes, sir.

Senator Hughes. Admittedly, openly falsifying reports; and they have no responsibility?

General Ryan. I do not say they have no responsibility, I say that the main responsibility and the instigation of the whole thing rested upon the commander of the 7th Air Force.

Senator Hughes. . . . Then, please tell me what you mean.

General Ryan. The main responsibility for this situation in Southeast Asia stemmed from the commander of the 7th Air Force. I do not understand why some of the other officers did not come forward and tell me when I was there but I think the main responsibility rests upon the commander of the 7th Air Force.

Senator Hughes. You feel no action should be taken against any other man on the basis of the IG reports and your information than General Lavelle?

General Ryan. No punitive action is the way I feel, yes, sir.

Senator Hughes. In other words, that is an official position, that though every officer down the line disobeyed the rules of engagement set out by the President of the United States and the Secretary of Defense and Joint Chiefs of Staff, you are officially saying that there will be no reprimand to any of those officers?

General Ryan. I said in my opinion there should be none.

Senator Hughes. Why?

General Ryan. Because I think when you take into consideration the circumstances surrounding this particular situation, that they were, should I say, certainly not with malice aforethought committing a heinous crime.

Senator Hughes. They were with forethought falsifying reports of bombing records which were supposed to go to you, General.

General Ryan. Yes, sir.

Senator Hughes. For accurate information.

General Ryan. Yes, sir, and they were falsifying at the direction of the 7th Air Force Commander. The airmen at the wings were submitting the correct information in the . . .

Senator Hughes. Knowingly and wittingly and with premeditation they were preplanning bombing strike missions, with or without return fire or Rules of Engagement.

General Ryan. Yes, sir.

Senator Hughes. Which could deceive the entire command of military structure and yet they bear no responsibility, in your opinion?

General Ryan. I did not say they bore no responsibility. I said I am not recommending we take punitive action against them.

Senator Hughes. What responsibility do they bear, General, then? Describe for me their responsibility under these circumstances as an officer and a gentleman in the Air Force.

General Ryan. I think they should have apprised me of the situation when I was out there. I think they should have made known. . . I do not know for sure, Senator, whether they knowingly felt they were doing something wrong.³²

Turning to the question of the feelings of the lower ranking officers involved, we have the testimony of Captain Douglas J. Murray, the intelligence officer for whom Sergeant Franks worked. He indicated that the lack of secrecy involved in preparing the false reports (the procedure was outlined to the entire office force.) lent a sense of legality to the affair. In fact, the testimony of all officers subordinate to General Lavelle indicates that they felt that his orders justified their actions. Only Sergeant Franks indicated that he was seriously disturbed enough by the falsifications of reports to even question his superiors.

Sergeant Franks indicated that he finally wrote to Senator Hughes because he was unable to determine at what level the decision to falsify the reports was made:

It was from my level quite possible that the only people who were being tricked by our reports were the American public. I had no idea if Congress was being informed or the President was being informed; so basically I trusted Senator Hughes a great deal. So I thought he would handle the situation correctly.³³

In other words, he did not trust anyone in the military chain-of-command because all of those with whom he had contact were directly involved in the false reports.

The importance of strictly observing the element of the code that sanctifies an officer's official statements has been amply demonstrated. The integrity of the entire Air Force officer corps has been subject to question in the media and by members of Congress. General Ryan acknowledged the requirement to reaffirm our ideal and standard of integrity by dispatching the following message on 13 October 1972:

Ryan for Commanders

1. You should convey throughout your commands these points about integrity:

Integrity -- Which includes full and accurate disclosure -- is the keystone of military service. Integrity binds us together into an Air Force serving the country. Integrity in reporting, for example, is the link that connects each flight crew, each specialist and each administrator to the Commander-in-Chief. In any crisis, decisions and risks taken by highest national authorities depend, in large part, on reported military capabilities and achievements. In the same way, every commander depends on accurate reporting from his forces. Unless he is positive of the integrity of his people, a commander cannot have confidence in his forces. Without integrity, the Commander-in-Chief cannot have confidence in us.

Therefore, we may not compromise our integrity -- our truthfulness. To do so is not only unlawful but also degrading. False reporting is a clear example of a failure of integrity. Any order to compromise integrity is not a lawful order.

Integrity is the most important responsibility of command. Commanders are dependent on the integrity of those reporting to them in every

decision they make. Integrity can be ordered but it can only be achieved by encouragement and example.

2 I expect these points to be disseminated to every individual in the Air Force -- every individual. I trust they help to clarify a standard we can continue to expect, and will receive, from one another.³⁴

SUMMARY

The official written guidance provided to Air Force officers in regard to ethical standards and conduct is incomplete. Although it is supplemented by an unofficial code, the latter is ephemeral and subject to individual interpretation, e.g., Where does loyalty to an individual commander end? There is no clear, compact statement of ethics by which an Air Force officer is guided. Precedent within the government is to eliminate uncertainty of this sort by publishing a written code in the manner of the Code of Conduct for prisoners of war.

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF A CODE OF ETHICS

Since an officer enters his profession by taking an oath to uphold his country's Constitution against all enemies foreign and domestic, the elements of his professional code of ethics must support this oath. As a result of his oath, an officer's first
35
allegiance is to the Constitution. Secondly, a profession must maintain the respect of the public it serves. Therefore, the code must encompass ideals that the American society admires. Thirdly, the code should enhance the self-image of Air Force
36
officers and stimulate professional conduct.

The specific qualities associated with an officer's code of ethics are traditional, as is the case with the Code of Conduct. Professor Morris Janowitz points out in The Professional Soldier
37
that "Honor" is the basis of the officer belief system. General S.L.A. Marshall, the author of the Armed Forces Officer, observes that the Services recognize this fact:

They place such strong emphasis upon the importance of personal honor among officers because they know that the future of our arms and the well-being of our people depend upon a constant renewing and strengthening of public faith in the virtue of the corps. Were this to languish, the Nation would be loath to commit its sons to any military endeavor, no matter how grave the emergency.³⁸

Integrity is an aspect of honor that again affects the public respect and confidence which the Air Force must have.

If the integrity of its officers can be questioned, the worth of the entire organization is questioned, and the basis of public trust is destroyed.

Other ethical standards that bind the officer are rooted in Western moral and religious thought. This is the ethic of personal responsibility, honesty, loyalty and concern with human dignity. Added to these are the military virtues of humaneness or humanity, professional responsibility, and military fortitude. ³⁹

The Air Officer's Guide adds patriotism, discipline, frugality, ⁴⁰ caution, teamwork and being a gentlemen to the list. The Armed Forces Officer asserts:

The military officer is considered a gentleman, not because Congress wills it, nor because it has been the custom of people in all times to afford him that courtesy, but specifically because nothing less than a gentleman is truly suited for this particular set of responsibilities. ⁴¹

This requirement is recognized by Article 133, Uniform Code of ⁴² Military Justice. The Officer's Guide includes a tradition of ⁴³ unselfishness in its code.

All of these elements spring from the four original components of American military honor -- gentlemanly conduct, personal fealty, self-regulating brotherhood, and the pursuit of glory. It should be noted that the contemporary professional code repudiates the glory of war. Instead the historical achievements of the armed ⁴⁴ forces are the essential ingredients of military honor.

These elements must be assembled into a clear, compact statement of the ideals an Air Force officer is expected to measure up to. The code should exemplify his beliefs and provide guidance for his conduct and decisions. A proposed example follows. The statement did not originate with this author, but was selected as an example that includes the basic elements desired in an officer's code of ethics.

A PROPOSED CODE OF ETHICS FOR AIR FORCE OFFICERS

I will give my best effort, thought, and dedication to the performance of my duty and my mission. To this end, I will strive to improve my knowledge and practice of my profession.

I will exercise the authority entrusted to me by the Nation with fairness, justice, patience, and restraint, respecting the dignity and humanity of others and devoting myself to the welfare of those placed under my command.

I will conduct my private life as well as my public service so as to be free of impropriety or the appearance thereof. I will act with candor and integrity to earn the unquestioning trust of my fellow citizens and military juniors, seniors, and associates.

I will endeavor by my example to inspire physical and moral courage in others.

I will be loyal to my seniors and juniors, my unit and the Air Force, but I will place loyalty to the highest moral principles and the United States of America above loyalty to persons, organizations, and my personal interest.

WHAT TO EXPECT FROM A CODE OF ETHICS

SURVEY RESULTS

Can we expect the publication of a code of ethics to achieve the objective of enhancing the professional image of career officers? The Air Force surveyed 8,982 officers in the grades of second lieutenant through colonel on this question in May 1972. Over one-third (38.3%) believed that it would enhance the image. However, almost half (46.5%) thought that a code should be developed which sets forth the conduct expected of an officer. 45

Presumably this indicates that the related USAF Personnel Plan goal of achieving a code of ethics that fosters an internal system of self-discipline for career officers would be facilitated. Since a profession is characterized by self-regulation, the survey results are somewhat encouraging.

In the question of prestige we must consider the external, as well as, internal image. Janowitz declares that every profession assigns to itself a higher status than outsiders would be willing to concede. 46 The evidence in support of the public's opinion of the prestige of an Air Force officer is conflicting. A 1955 study prepared by Dr. George Gallup concluded that military officers had relatively low prestige because they ranked seventh on a list of nineteen occupations. However, some of the specific questions in the survey tended to give the opposite impression.

More than twice as many adults (47%) said that they would be pleased if their daughter married a career officer than said they would be displeased (19%). An overwhelming majority (74%) thought that most officers are more concerned, in performing their military jobs, with their duty than with their own
47
personal welfare.

One additional conclusion of the Gallup study pertains to the source of the public's attitude towards the military service. The primary source was information gained from personal experience and reports of people who had been in the service. The influence of the mass communication media appeared to be of secondary im-
48
portance. A May 1971 survey conducted for the Department of Defense showed continued high personal contact with the military
49
among civilian youths. This would argue that the real effect of a code of ethics on public prestige would not be felt until it was generally recognized by Air Force personnel as valid and operating effectively within the Air Force officer corps.

Dr. Gallup's study can be questioned as to the conclusions he drew from his data and to its application to the situation in 1973. In 1958 a study was conducted by Lieutenant Colonel Milton Frank, USAF, that indicated the prestige of a military career did not necessarily equate with admiration or respect for the Air Force or Air Force officers generally. Out of a list of nineteen selected terms, the survey group of college-educated men

and women selected "Executive" first, "Air Force General" second, and "Commander" third in order of prestige. One respondent explained this as follows, "I have great respect for an Air Force General, but when I think of what he has to go through to get⁵⁰ there, I just could not see it for my son."

It is difficult to judge the role of prestige in recruiting new officers. A May 1962 Air Force survey of 588 Officer Training School (OTS) trainees indicated that the prestige and status of Air Force officers was of major importance to sixty-one percent in⁵¹ their decisions to apply for the OTS program. However, in answer to a similar but different question, "Select the two most important reasons in your decision to join the Air Force instead of some other service," only one and six-tenths percent of 3,141 OTS⁵² trainees surveyed in November 1970 chose "Prestige." One interpretation might be that prestige of officers had dropped drastically. Another could be that prestige has dropped in importance as a career incentive. A third might be that the questions influenced the answer because only the two most important choices were allowed by the 1970 survey.

A University of Michigan 1970 report shows that in a survey of high school youth prestige was rated higher for a military than⁵³ a civilian job. The survey also showed that the stereotype of youth as anti-military is incorrect and that they see a military⁵⁴ career as a good opportunity to serve their country.

Another survey by the Human Researches Research Organization conducted in May 1971 reports that "recognition/status" was the most important life aim for only one percent of the respondents. Although it did not receive much endorsement for importance, thirty-seven percent rated "recognition/status" as a goal possible
55
to achieve in the military service.

The weight of the evidence appears to be that prestige is more important to public trust and to the self-image and conduct of the officer corps than to the recruiting of new officers. However, the recent surveys indicate a high regard for service to their country as a reason for joining the service among today's youth. Their responses also support General Ryan's contention that they are idealistic and want to serve a good cause. To attract them to the Air Force, he has stated, "We need to reveal the ethics of our profession -- we need to communicate what we are to
56
the youth of the country." An established, publicized code of ethics would facilitate this.

THE CODE AS A STANDARD OF CONDUCT

If the code is to achieve the goal of reflecting the professional standard of conduct and fostering an internal system of self discipline for the officer corps, it must be enforced. The very definition of a profession is that it is self-regulating. A code of ethics is a standard against which it measures and censures its members. There is ample administrative machinery

in the Air Force for enforcement of the code, ranging from a simple verbal reprimand to courts martial. Only if the code is enforced will it achieve its dual role of enhancing internal and external prestige, and promoting the highest professional conduct for Air Force Officers.

Navy Captain James B. Stockdale, a Vietnam POW, summed up the attitude and conviction that a viable, accepted code of ethics may be expected to produce. He was quoted in the Washington Post of 24 February 1973 as saying at a news conference:

We professional military officers have a responsibility the average citizen doesn't have. As servants of the Republic we had the responsibility to the men with us to maintain the military ethic to obey the code of conduct and to remain within the bounds of military law.⁵⁷

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CONCLUSIONS

The conclusions drawn from this paper will be provided as answers to the three questions posed in the Introduction.

1. An examination of the official, written guidance provided to Air Force Officers for ethical standards and conduct shows that it is incomplete. Although it is supplemented by an unwritten code, the contents of this code and its importance are subject to misinterpretation. The false reporting of bombing missions in 7th Air Force in 1972 shows that grave damage to the Air Force can result when officers are uncertain of their responsibilities. A written, official code of ethics would remove this uncertainty.

2. The basic elements of the code should be those traditionally associated with the American officer corps. Special emphasis should be placed on the officer's first allegiance to the Constitution. The elements should establish his professional ideals and provide guidance for his conduct and decisions.

3. An established code, if enforced, may be expected to improve internal and external prestige, but more importantly, to promote higher standards of professional conduct among Air Force officers.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. A code of ethics for Air Force officers should be published without delay.
2. The code should receive wide publicity within and without the Air Force. It should be emphasized in professional military education at all levels.
3. The code should be vigorously enforced with commanders taking appropriate administrative or legal action against those who fail to measure up to its standards.


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