

OTHER SHADES OF DIVERSITY:  
IDENTIFYING FACTORS THAT FACILITATE  
CRITICAL THOUGHT

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## APPROVAL

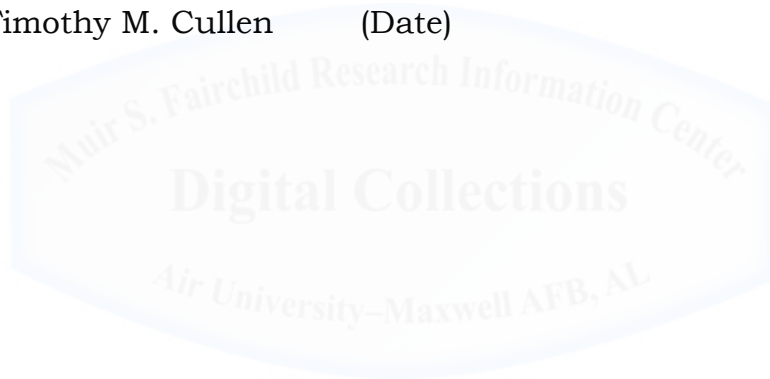
The undersigned certify that this thesis meets master's-level standards of research, argumentation, and expression.

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## DISCLAIMER

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



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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## ABSTRACT

This study explores the relationship between diversity and groupthink. In a 2011 *Air Force Times* article, the Vice Chief of Staff of the Air Force, General Philip Breedlove, said, "If there are all male Caucasians sitting around the table, you have groupthink." The intent of this paper is to investigate if demographic diversity is a major factor in avoiding groupthink. The author attempts to determine whether it is possible to have diversity of thought among a group of people of the same race and/or gender, specifically Caucasian male officers in the United States Air Force (USAF). He begins by researching recent USAF diversity initiatives and evaluating their effectiveness. The author then studies the groupthink phenomenon, paying particular attention to the role of diversity in formulating remedies and solutions. This is followed by case studies of two Caucasian male USAF officers, Lt Gen Pete Quesada and Col John Warden, who are well known for their critical thinking ability and their successful dissent against corporate air force norms. The overall objective is to provide recommendations on how strategy and planning teams can avoid groupthink by identifying individuals who possess the traits necessary to dodge this common phenomenon.



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## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

*Groupthink is the worst thing you can have when you have a problem...If there are all male Caucasians sitting around the table, you have groupthink.*

-- General Philip Breedlove  
*Air Force Times*

### **Inspiration for Research**

The School of Advanced Air and Space Studies (SAASS) uses an inter-disciplinary approach to educate military strategists. The school presents and debates a variety of theories, methods, and concepts drawn from various fields of study such as natural science, political science, history, economics, psychology, and business. The object is to develop an understanding of how and why these different fields contribute to an understanding of strategy. The final product is military officers capable of developing and articulating strategy through critical thought and effective communication.

It is a highly competitive process and great honor to be one of less than 50 personnel selected from across all United States military branches, as well as many international militaries, to attend SAASS each year. The selection board attempts to choose the most qualified candidates through a boarding process that reviews prospects' military records and writing samples. They search for proven performers from a diverse array of career fields who demonstrate the potential to complete the program. Although board members evaluate many criteria during the boarding process to "rack and stack" candidates, some potentially critical criteria are not evaluated.

The SAASS selection board does not consider a candidate's race, religion, or gender when making their recommendations. This fact

became evident during a faculty-sponsored social to congratulate and welcome SAASS Class XXIV at the beginning of the academic year in July 2014. While looking around the room some students commented on how the class was full of “white guys.” In fact, of the 46 students in SAASS Class XXIV only two are not Caucasian males. Of those two, one is a Caucasian female intelligence officer and the other is a fighter pilot from India. During a conversation with an officer who had insight into the selection process for SAASS Class XXIV and previous classes, he explained the board does not consider a candidate’s race, religion, and gender in the selection process. There have been boards in the past, however, where decision makers modified the alternate list. They moved minority and female candidates to the top of the list in an effort to provide more diversity to a class if a primary candidate declined attendance.<sup>1</sup> The discussion about the SAASS selection process and the demographics of SAASS Class XXIV, specifically the lack of gender and racial diversity, provided the inspiration for this research paper.

In an August 2011 *Air Force Times* article, Vice Chief of Staff of the Air Force General Philip Breedlove stated, “Groupthink is the worst thing you can have when you have a problem...If there are all male Caucasians sitting around the table, you have groupthink.”<sup>2</sup> This statement, while sounding plausible, is actually somewhat erroneous. General Breedlove’s comment implies that it is impossible to have cognitive diversity without representation from different races or genders. This implication suggests the primary question for this research paper. Is it

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<sup>1</sup> The officer’s identity is protected under Air University’s non-attribution policy because he made his comments while addressing SAASS class XXIV during an official speaking engagement. However, during this engagement when the officer explained the SAASS selection process and that previous alternate lists were modified to provide more diversity, the author specifically asked him to clarify his comments to ensure there was no misinterpretation. The officer confirmed the author’s understanding and commented that modifying the alternate list did not reduce the overall quality of the class because the difference in qualifications between the first and last alternate was minimal.

<sup>2</sup> Markeshia Ricks, “Promoting Diversity is Every Airman’s Job, 4-star Says,” *Air Force Times* 72, no. 6 (11 August 2011): 28.

possible to have diversity of thought among a group of people of the same race and/or gender? The research attempts to examine whether diversity of thought when developing strategy is achievable even among a group of people who share similar demographic traits, specifically, Caucasian male officers in the United States Air Force (USAF).

With regards to SAASS Class XXIV, the inspiration for this research, the demographic makeup favors Caucasian USAF males. By merely looking at a photograph of the class, it is understandably easy to conclude it contains very little diversity. A deeper investigation into each student's background, however, provides a broader perspective.

Although the class may not be diverse in terms of race and gender, it is diverse in many other areas. The students come from large cities and small towns all over the United States as well as other countries around the globe. They have different formal and informal educations, different professional military occupations, come from both traditional and single parent families, and enjoy different hobbies and interests. In other words, they have many dissimilar life experiences that shaped them into the people they are today. This wide array of life experiences provides an assortment of personalities and perspectives that, when operating as a group trying to solve a problem or develop strategy, can be helpful in avoiding groupthink.

### **United States Air Force Diversity**

There is little doubt that USAF leadership believes racial and gender diversity represent significant factors that positively contribute to a group or organization. Air Force Instruction (AFI) 36-7001 states, "Air Force capabilities and war fighting skills are enhanced by diversity among its personnel. At its core, diversity provides our Total Force an aggregation of strengths, perspectives, and capabilities that transcends

individual contributions.”<sup>3</sup> In recent years, the US Air Force placed an emphasis on trying to recruit and retain a diverse workforce that is representative of the general US population. Thus, the Air Force provides a broad definition of diversity, which includes demographic, cognitive, behavioral, organizational/structural, and global diversity.<sup>4</sup>

Although the definition is broad, the general focus of Air Force diversity appears to concentrate on the more easily measurable demographic diversity sub-category. The Air Force commissioned a RAND Corporation study to help it understand the causes for the low representation of minorities and women in the officer ranks. The primary concern of the study centers on the fact that although over the past 20 years “the representation of racial/ethnic minorities and women among Air Force officers has increased substantially,”<sup>5</sup> their representation decreases as rank increases. The report claims this pattern is “a cause of concern to Air Force leaders.”<sup>6</sup> The lack of racial, ethnic, and female representation in higher ranks also presents a challenge for developing service and military campaign strategy because strategists are predominantly field grade or flag officers.

While racial and gender diversity does not guarantee diversity of thought within strategy development teams, there is no doubt that the cultural and life experiences of group members can influence perspectives that provide highly valuable inputs to solving problems or developing strategy. The RAND study found the Air Force is currently meeting the expected levels of racial and ethnic diversity based upon those eligible for military service. Conversely, the Air Force is not

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<sup>3</sup> Air Force Instruction (AFI) 36-7001, *Personnel Diversity*, 20 July 2012, 4.

<sup>4</sup> Air Force Global Diversity Division (AF/A1DV). *United States Air Force Diversity Strategic Roadmap*, 12 March 2013, 5, <http://www.af.mil/Portals/1/documents/diversity/diversity-strategic-roadmap.pdf> (accessed 12 November 2014).

<sup>5</sup> Nelson Lim et al., *Improving Demographic Diversity in the U.S. Air Force Officer Corps* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2014), ix.

<sup>6</sup> Nelson Lim et al., *Improving Demographic Diversity*, ix.

meeting expectations for females.<sup>7</sup> This is an issue beyond the scope of this paper that the Air Force must address. Until the Air Force is able to successfully address this issue and increase the numbers, every effort must be made to include racial and ethnic minorities and female representation to reap the advantages these groups provide. Unfortunately, due to the low percentages of representation, qualified members from these demographics may not be readily available when required. Therefore, it is important that the Air Force and other military services explore avenues to benefit from cognitive diversity when developing strategy. This realization leads to further questions to explore in order to achieve diversity of thought on military strategy teams.

### **Roadmap**

Is it possible to have diversity of thought among a group of people of the same race and/or gender, specifically Caucasian male officers in the USAF? The focus of this study attempts to answer this primary question. Additionally, the study attempts to address two secondary questions. First, what are some relevant factors in a person's background that influence the traits that enable critical thought, the ability to effectively communicate, and confidently offer alternate perspectives in a group setting? This paper *does not* attempt to address how to build highly efficient strategy development teams. Instead, it *does* make an effort to explore factors and traits in individuals who tend to think "outside the box," and, when placed in a group environment, are able to communicate effectively and help avoid groupthink. Second, why and how should the USAF address the issue of identifying these types of individuals among teams consisting of similar demographics? The next three chapters attempt to answer these questions.

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<sup>7</sup> Nelson Lim et al., *Improving Demographic Diversity*, xii-xv.



Chapter 2 sets the foundation for the paper. Using primary and secondary sources, this chapter explores the history and current status of USAF diversity. The chapter also discusses the issue of groupthink. It will define the issue and discuss common causes and solutions to this phenomenon. Once the foundation is established, the next two chapters present case studies of two Caucasian male USAF officers well known for their critical thinking capability and successful dissent against the corporate air force norms of the time.

Chapter 3 offers the first case study of Lieutenant General (Lt Gen) Elwood Richard “Pete” Quesada. Primarily a staff officer in the beginning of his career, Lt Gen Quesada made significant contributions to tactical air power during the interwar and World War Two (WWII) era. During this period, many air power advocates and strategists, including those at the Air Corps Tactical School (ACTS), developed and promoted strategic bombardment as the proper use of air power. In the face of opposition, Lt Gen Quesada continuously presented the case for tactical air power and successfully demonstrated its use in WWII. This chapter explores Lt Gen Quesada’s early life, education, and military career in an attempt to identify factors that influenced his ability to think critically, to promote an unpopular agenda, and successfully implement his ideas.

Chapter 4 presents the second case study of Col John Ashley Warden III, another famous air force leader known for his ability to challenge widely-held beliefs. Recognized as the architect of the 1991 Gulf War air campaign, Col Warden’s USAF career spanned from the Vietnam War through the Gulf War. His experience in Vietnam significantly influenced Col Warden’s perspective on the proper use of air power to dismantle the enemy utilizing his five-concentric-ring theory. Even before his service in Vietnam, however, many factors in Col Warden's life influenced his ability to think critically and communicate his ideas. As with chapter 3, this chapter looks at Col Warden’s life in order to identify those factors.

The concluding chapter synthesizes the information presented in chapters two through four. This chapter analyzes Lt Gen Quesada's and Col Warden's lives in order to identify common factors that influenced their ability to think critically and not become victims of groupthink. With this information, the chapter then provides recommendations on how leaders of strategy development teams can search for these types of traits in individuals to provide diversity of thought and constructive dissent on their teams. The aim of this final chapter is to solidify the ultimate goal of this paper. That goal is to illustrate that even though there may be all Caucasian males sitting around a table, it is possible to avoid groupthink through encouraging and nurturing diversity of thought.

Although this paper focuses on USAF Caucasian male officers, broader applications exist. First, the traits identified in these officers exist in both military personnel and civilians. While much of the case study subjects' professional experiences are military, the influencing factors (home life, education, professional experience, etc.) apply universally. Second, positive dissent through critical thinking and diversity of thought does not help prevent groupthink only in teams developing strategy. It applies to any group trying to accomplish anything from solving a simple problem to developing innovative and new ideas. Finally, the factors identified in the case studies also apply across any race and gender. Many of the recommendations in this paper can be used to avoid groupthink among a group of African American male realtors just as they can among a group of Caucasian female navy officers.

## Chapter 2

### Diversity and Groupthink

*Our Nation derives strength from the diversity of its population and from its commitment to equal opportunity for all. We are at our best when we draw on the talents of all parts of our society, and our greatest accomplishments are achieved when diverse perspectives are brought to bear to overcome our greatest challenges.*

-- President Barack H. Obama  
*Executive Order 13583*

*A little knowledge of groupthink might be valuable for anyone who participates in a group that makes policy decisions...Sometimes it may even be useful for one of the members of the group to ask, at the right moment, before a decision is definitely made, "Are we allowing ourselves to become victims of groupthink?"*

-- Irving L. Janis  
*Groupthink: Psychological Studies of Policy Decisions and Fiascos*

Gen Breedlove's comment from the *Air Force Times* article mentioned earlier were made in the context of promoting demographic diversity within the USAF. The general, serving as the Air Force Vice Chief of Staff, addressed hundreds of airmen attending the Tuskegee Airmen Incorporated National Conference. During the conference, Gen Breedlove and the commander of Air Education and Training Command, Gen Edward Rice, challenged the crowd to help promote and create a more diverse air force. They claimed "promoting an Air Force that looks like America is the job of every airman—not just the brass."<sup>1</sup> Gen Breedlove contended the air force does a good job bringing in a diverse group of recruits but is weak on retaining them once they become airmen. He cited mentoring as one avenue to encourage minority and female airmen to remain in the air force. Gen Breedlove challenged the airmen in the crowd with the following comments:

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<sup>1</sup> Markeshia Ricks, "Promoting Diversity is Every Airman's Job, 4-star Says," *Air Force Times* 72, no. 6 (11 August 2011): 28.

We're not connecting in a way that motivates [people] to stay...Some of that is that we're not giving them a target up that says, "I can do that because someone who looks like me is doing it"...You must continue to challenge them just as you would challenge others...You have to continue to motivate them, press them and encourage them just as you would someone who looks like you. Don't give them a break.<sup>2</sup>

Gen Rice added to the challenge. He said, "Statistics tell us that in society, especially in minority communities, the awareness of the military and the awareness of the Air Force specifically, is declining."<sup>3</sup> Gen Rice said that a way to increase awareness in minority and other communities is for airmen to get more involved in these communities and make them conscious of the various opportunities and experiences that service in the Air Force offers.

In analyzing the comments and context in which Gen Breedlove and Gen Rice issued their challenges, it is not hard to conclude the targets of their diversity push centered largely on race and gender. This focus on race and gender coupled with Gen Breedlove's comments on race and groupthink generates a few questions. What is the US Air Force doing to increase diversity among its officer ranks? What is the focus of the Air Force's diversity initiative? Is this initiative working? Finally, is racial and gender diversity the answer to solving the groupthink dilemma to which Gen Breedlove refers? This chapter attempts to answer these questions by discussing research and findings on air force diversity and groupthink. The ultimate objective of this chapter is to answer ways in which diversity may avoid or minimize groupthink.

### **Air Force Diversity Initiatives**

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<sup>2</sup> Markeshia Ricks, "Promoting Diversity is Every Airman's Job, 4-star Says," 28.

<sup>3</sup> Markeshia Ricks, "Promoting Diversity is Every Airman's Job, 4-star Says," 28.

Until recently, many in the United States viewed the US Military as a path-breaking organization with regards to diversity and equal opportunity initiatives. Well before the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s, the US Military included both African Americans and women in its ranks. In fact, African Americans participated in every major US war. It was not until after WWII, however, that the military fought as the integrated force we know today.

In 1948, President Harry Truman issued Executive Order (EO) 9981 titled, “Establishing the President’s Committee on Equality of Treatment and Opportunity in the Armed Forces.” In the order he proclaimed, “It is essential that there be maintained in the armed services of the United States the highest standards of democracy, with equality of treatment and opportunity for all those who serve in our country’s defense.”<sup>4</sup>

EO 9981 represents a ground-breaking event in the history of US race relations. The order provided the spark that ignited the move to racially integrate units within the US military. EO 9981 declared that it is “the policy of the President that there shall be equality of treatment and opportunity for all persons in the armed services without regard to race, color, religion or national origin.”<sup>5</sup> Thus, the move to integrate the military happened six years prior to the 1954 case of *Brown versus the Board of Education of Topeka* declaring that racial segregation in public schools is unconstitutional. Nonetheless, integration does not constitute equal opportunity among military members. That battle is one the military still fights to this day.

While many viewed the military as a model for diversity through integration and equal opportunity in the past, today critics argue the

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<sup>4</sup> Executive Order 9981, Establishing the President’s Committee on Equality of Treatment and Opportunity in the Armed Forces, 26 July 1948, <http://www.trumanlibrary.org/9981a.htm> (accessed 27 December 2014).

<sup>5</sup> Executive Order 9981, 26 July 1948.

military lags behind society in embracing diversity. They cite the military's refusal to include women in certain combat roles, the delayed acceptance of openly gay members within the ranks, and the lack of minorities and women in senior officer ranks as areas where the US Military falls behind the rest of society and corporate America. One could convincingly debate either side of the argument of whether or not the military leads or trails in these areas. That debate is beyond the scope of this paper, however. The important issue to glean from the debate is the requirement for the US military to address diversity among its personnel. Like the rest of the US military, the air force claims it recognizes the importance of diversity within its ranks. So what is the US Military, and specifically the US Air Force, doing to address the diversity issue?

Diversity and equal opportunity have always been issues the military must address, especially with the issuance of EO 9981. The matter gained renewed interest and fervor in 2011. However, when President Barack Obama signed EO 13583 titled, "Establishing a Coordinated Government-wide Initiative to Promote Diversity and Inclusion in the Federal Workforce." President Obama instituted the order to promote the Federal workforce as an example of equal opportunity, diversity, and inclusion for others to follow. He wrote the following:

Our Nation derives strength from the diversity of its population and from its commitment to equal opportunity for all. We are at our best when we draw on the talents of all parts of our society, and our greatest accomplishments are achieved when diverse perspectives are brought to bear to overcome our greatest challenges...As the Nation's largest employer, the Federal Government has a special obligation to lead by example...To realize more fully the goal of using the talents of all segments of society, the Federal Government must continue to challenge itself to enhance its ability to recruit, hire, promote, and retain a more diverse workforce. Further, the Federal Government must create a culture that

encourages collaboration, flexibility, and fairness to enable individuals to participate to their full potential<sup>6</sup>

Although EO 13583 appears to only concern civilian government agencies, it also applies to the Department of Defense (DoD) and the military and civilian workforce of each military department.

President Obama's EO followed a final report submitted by the Military Diversity Leadership Commission (MLDC) in March 2011 titled, "From Representation to Inclusion: Diversity Leadership for the 21st-Century Military." In the 2009 Defense Authorization Act, the US Congress mandated the creation of the MLDC to evaluate and assess policies that provide opportunities for advancement and promotion of minority members of the US Military forces, to include minority senior officers. In the following extract from the report, the MLDC recognizes the military's leading role in diversity and inclusion but suggests room for improvement exists.

The Commission acknowledges that the Services have been leaders in providing opportunities for all servicemembers [sic] regardless of their racial/ethnic background or gender. Today's mission-effective force is a living testament to progress in the areas of military equal opportunity policies and related recruiting and management tactics. However, more needs to be done to address 21st-century challenges.

The Armed Forces have not yet succeeded in developing a continuing stream of leaders who are as demographically diverse as the Nation they serve...racial/ethnic minorities and women are still underrepresented among the Armed Forces' top leadership, compared with the servicemembers [sic] they lead...Without sustained attention, this problem will only become more acute as the racial/ethnic and cultural makeup of the United States continues to change.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Executive Order 13583, Establishing a Coordinated Government-wide Initiative to Promote Diversity and Inclusion in the Federal Workforce, 18 August 2011. <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/08/18/executive-order-establishing-coordinated-government-wide-initiative-prom> (accessed 7 October 2014).

<sup>7</sup> Military Leadership Diversity Commission (MLDC), *From Representation to Inclusion: Diversity Leadership for the 21st-Century Military* (Arlington, VA: MLDC, March 2011),



The MLDC proposed 20 recommendations with two overriding objectives. The objectives include (1) developing a demographically diverse leadership that better reflects the US public and the forces they lead, and (2) taking a broader approach to diversity that includes consideration of backgrounds, skill-sets and other personal attributes that positively contribute to enhancing the US military's performance.<sup>8</sup>

Even before the MLDC released its final report and President Obama signed EO 13583, the air force began implementing policies consistent with the MLDC's recommendations. In October 2010, Air Force Diversity Operations, later renamed the Air Force Global Diversity Division (AF/A1DV), released the *United States Air Force Diversity Strategic Roadmap: A Journey to Excellence*. In both this document and the updated version released in March 2013, AF/A1DV provides a definition for diversity that encompasses much more than demographic diversity.

The Air Force broadly defines diversity as a composite of individual characteristics, experiences and abilities consistent with the Air Force Core Values and the Air Force Mission. Air Force diversity includes but is not limited to: personal life experiences, geographic background, socioeconomic background, cultural knowledge, educational background, work background, language abilities, physical abilities, philosophical and spiritual perspectives, age, race, ethnicity, and gender. Diversity also is further subdivided into demographic, cognitive, behavioral [cognitive/behavioral in the 2010 definition], organizational/structural and global diversity.<sup>9</sup>

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xiii. [http://diversity.defense.gov/Portals/51/Documents/Special%20Feature/MLDC\\_Final\\_Report.pdf](http://diversity.defense.gov/Portals/51/Documents/Special%20Feature/MLDC_Final_Report.pdf) (accessed 27 December 2014).

<sup>8</sup> MLDC, *From Representation to Inclusion*, xiii-xiv.

<sup>9</sup> AF/A1DV, *United States Air Force Diversity Strategic Roadmap*, 12 March 2013, 5; Air Force Diversity Operations (AF/A1DV), *United States Air Force Diversity Strategic Roadmap: A Journey to Excellence*, 19 October 2010, 3, [http://www.usafa.af.mil/shared/media/document/AFD\\_140527.pdf](http://www.usafa.af.mil/shared/media/document/AFD_140527.pdf) (accessed 12 November 2014).



The strategic roadmap's definition is consistent with the MLDC's recommendation to take a broader approach to diversity. In taking this broader approach, AF/A1DV further divides the category of diversity into four subcategories that require further explanation.

One subcategory, demographic diversity, includes inherently or socially defined personal characteristics such as race, ethnicity, religion, gender, disability, socioeconomic and family status, and geographic origin. Organizational/structural diversity is another subcategory. This area deals with an organization's or institution's characteristics that affect interactions, both internally and externally (e.g. vertical or horizontal hierarchies). AF/A1DV explains that Service, Component, and occupational or military career fields within an organization is an element of organizational/structural diversity. A third subcategory, global diversity, takes international experience into account. It recognizes an individual's familiarity with different cultures and ability to speak foreign languages. The Air Force considers exchange officers and coalition and foreign national partners as globally diverse personnel. Cognitive/behavioral diversity is the final subcategory. This involves differences in working styles, personalities, and ways of thinking and learning.<sup>10</sup> Critical thinking, an important attribute in avoiding groupthink, is an aspect of cognitive/behavioral diversity. According to one commonly referenced definition, "Critical thinking is the intellectually disciplined process of actively and skillfully conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and/or evaluating information gathered from, or generated by, observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, or communication, as a guide to belief and action."<sup>11</sup> For the purposes of this paper, critical thinking is the primary

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<sup>10</sup> AF/A1DV, *United States Air Force Diversity Strategic Roadmap*, 12 March 2013, 18-19.

<sup>11</sup> Foundation for Critical Thinking, "Defining Critical Thinking," <http://www.criticalthinking.org/pages/defining-critical-thinking/410> (accessed 3 January 2015).

focus when referring to cognitive diversity. Therefore, the author uses cognitive diversity, diversity of thought, and critical thinking interchangeably throughout the document.

Although release of the 2010 roadmap occurred before the MLDC's final report and EO 13583, AF/A1DV updated the 2013 version to specifically address these and other initiatives throughout the US Government. The March 2013 *United States Air Force Diversity Strategic Roadmap* is "an action plan for the Air Force that directly supports the diversity objectives of the 2011 Presidential Executive Order (EO) 13583...the *2011 National Military Strategy*; the *Department of Defense Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan, 2012-2017*; Air Force Policy Directive (AFPD) 36-70, *Diversity*; and Air Force Instruction (AFI) 36-7001, *Diversity*."<sup>12</sup> The 2013 edition also sets policy consistent with the MLDC's first recommendation to develop demographically diverse leadership that better reflects the US public and the forces they lead. The roadmap identifies the roles and responsibilities of USAF personnel from the Secretary of the Air Force level down through the individual Airman. The responsibilities include educating and training personnel on the importance of diversity and mutual respect; ensuring personnel understand they are valued and have the opportunity to achieve their full potential; establishing diversity training, mentoring, and professional development as tools to help personnel with career progression; providing awareness in cross-cultural competencies that enhance organizational capabilities; and ensuring the availability of sufficient manpower and funding to sustain "effective outreach/recruiting programs."<sup>13</sup> AF/A1DV outlines five priorities with corresponding goals and actions aimed at *institutionalizing* diversity throughout the Air Force and enabling the

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<sup>12</sup> AF/A1DV, *United States Air Force Diversity Strategic Roadmap*, 12 March 2013, 4.

<sup>13</sup> AF/A1DV, *United States Air Force Diversity Strategic Roadmap*, 12 March 2013, 6.

ability to attract, recruit, develop, and *retain* a total force, both military and civilian, which is highly qualified, talented, and diverse.<sup>14</sup>

The first priority is *institutionalizing* diversity to achieve mission success. The objective involves developing structures and strategies “to equip leaders with the ability to manage diversity, be accountable, measure results, refine approaches on the basis of such data, and institutionalize a culture of inclusion.”<sup>15</sup> Air Force leaders are tasked to develop and sustain policies and procedures that ensure diversity and inclusion become institutional policies. The goals and actions address communicating leadership’s commitment to diversity and inclusion through policy statements, outreach programs, and strategic messaging, complete with talking points.<sup>16</sup> These efforts target both the current members of the Air Force and the public. The intent with current members is to reinforce the idea that leadership values and appreciates the advantages diversity in the force provides as well as establish policies that facilitate inclusion and equal opportunity for all members. There is also an effort to inform the public that the US Air Force is on the leading edge in regards to having a well-trained, well-educated, and well-respected diverse force. The objective is also to advise those in both high school and college, especially minorities, that the USAF is an excellent career choice that will allow them to reach their full potential professionally. Institutionalizing diversity leads to the next priority.

The second priority outlined in the roadmap is to attract “high-quality, talented, diverse individuals to consider service in the United States Air Force, in uniform or as civilian employees.”<sup>17</sup> The goals focus on aligning strategic outreach efforts to attract a force more reflective of society and developing policies and programs to identify and attract the

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<sup>14</sup> AF/A1DV, *United States Air Force Diversity Strategic Roadmap*, 12 March 2013, 4.

<sup>15</sup> AF/A1DV, *United States Air Force Diversity Strategic Roadmap*, 12 March 2013, 9.

<sup>16</sup> AF/A1DV, *United States Air Force Diversity Strategic Roadmap*, 12 March 2013, 9-10.

<sup>17</sup> AF/A1DV, *United States Air Force Diversity Strategic Roadmap*, 12 March 2013, 11.

best qualified applicants from a diverse group of candidates. The actions include leveraging, establishing, and expanding relationships in and outside the DoD, to include colleges, universities, trade schools, and other areas of opportunity to promote the Air Force in under-recruited geographic regions. This priority focuses on all aspects of diversity to include demographic diversity, but also places an emphasis on strategic capabilities such as language skills, cultural knowledge, and science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) competencies.<sup>18</sup> Establishing the proper policies, programs, and relationships is important for the third priority.

After implementing the appropriate measures to attract a diverse group of qualified individuals, recruiting them is the next priority in the strategic roadmap. The document states, “To ensure the Air Force can capitalize on high quality, diverse talent, recruiting strategies must allow the Air Force to recruit from all markets.” The recruiting goals focus on sustaining a robust strategic outreach program that facilitates recruiting candidates reflective of US society and implementing, enhancing, and sustaining recruiting strategies designed to draw from every segment of society. This involves continuing to leverage relationships with the various entities mentioned earlier and aligning the appropriate resources to ensure the Air Force is effectively reaching and recruiting from all segments of society.<sup>19</sup> While the first three priorities target new members for civilian and military service in the US Air Force, the first and last two priorities focus on the current members.

The fourth priority is developing a high-quality, talented, and diverse total force of active duty, Guard, Reserve, and civilian personnel after they join the USAF. The stated objective is to “create an effective life-cycle continuum that focuses on education, training, mentoring, and

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<sup>18</sup> AF/A1DV, *United States Air Force Diversity Strategic Roadmap*, 12 March 2013, 11-12.

<sup>19</sup> AF/A1DV, *United States Air Force Diversity Strategic Roadmap*, 12 March 2013, 13.

professional development to provide tools for personnel to navigate career progression while nurturing innovation, service and leadership.”<sup>20</sup> The goals are to promote diversity and inclusion and develop an Air Force team capable of operating effectively in a global environment through the foci of the life-cycle continuum.<sup>21</sup> In other words, the Air Force desires to develop a diverse group of highly-qualified airmen who recognize, understand, promote, and fully embrace the positive effects diversity offers in accomplishing the USAF mission across the globe. In addition, the USAF aspires to develop a diverse pool of candidates qualified to become future Air Force leaders. The next priority is vital to these goals.

The final priority addresses retaining the total force described above. This priority aspires to “achieve an inclusive environment that provides the total force with the opportunities to realize their full potential, and the ability to apply it in the service.”<sup>22</sup> The goals involve addressing quality of life issues that influence the retention of diverse and talented personnel and understanding and addressing factors influencing attrition among certain groups of Airmen. The latter especially focuses on those in the demographic diversity subcategory. A few actions directed to achieve these goals include conducting surveys, such as exit surveys of military and civilian employees, to identify issues and barriers affecting retention and making the appropriate policy changes to address these areas.<sup>23</sup>

The Air Force recognizes the detrimental effects on mission success caused by the issues and barriers affecting retention as well as the other four priorities outlined in the roadmap. The service professes, “Our efforts are ongoing, and we continue to analyze our processes to ensure

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<sup>20</sup> AF/A1DV, *United States Air Force Diversity Strategic Roadmap*, 12 March 2013, 14.

<sup>21</sup> AF/A1DV, *United States Air Force Diversity Strategic Roadmap*, 12 March 2013, 14-15.

<sup>22</sup> AF/A1DV, *United States Air Force Diversity Strategic Roadmap*, 12 March 2013, 15.

<sup>23</sup> AF/A1DV, *United States Air Force Diversity Strategic Roadmap*, 12 March 2013, 15-16.

we eliminate barriers to success. Our core values...along with a tradition of innovation, compel us to ensure that diversity remains a priority.”<sup>24</sup> A RAND Corporation study provides an assessment of the US Air Force’s commitment to attracting, recruiting, developing, and retaining a demographically diverse officer corps.

In November 2014, RAND released a report funded by the Air Force titled, *Improving Demographic Diversity in the U.S. Air Force Officer Corps*. Its authors state, “This report can be considered an approach to barrier analysis that identifies factors influencing the declining representation of minorities and women among senior ranks.”<sup>25</sup> Although the title references demographic diversity, the study does not include all the groups identified earlier in this subcategory. The study, like the majority of the Air Force’s diversity efforts, primarily focuses on the racial, ethnic, and gender aspects of demographic diversity.

The authors explain the Air Force asked them to assist in understanding some underlying causes for low representation of minorities and women among their officer ranks. In doing so, the study looked at current racial, ethnic and gender statistics in the USAF’s officer ranks and factors shaping senior leadership diversity. The latter includes research on the accession, retention, and promotion of African-Americans, Hispanics, and women. The research found that although representation among the studied demographics in the service increased over the last 20 years, the percentage for representation of women and racial and ethnic men and women decreases as rank increases (see figures 1 and 2).<sup>26</sup> These findings appear to show the Air Force performs well in addressing priorities one and two from the roadmap.

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<sup>24</sup> AF/A1DV, *United States Air Force Diversity Strategic Roadmap*, 12 March 2013, 4.

<sup>25</sup> Nelson Lim et al., *Improving Demographic Diversity in the U.S. Air Force Officer Corps* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2014), 1.

<sup>26</sup> Nelson Lim et al., *Improving Demographic Diversity*, ix, 1.



RAND found the Air Force is doing relatively well in the areas of attracting and recruiting demographic minority officers. The Air Force requires individuals to meet certain standards in order to be a commissioned officer. To become an officer one must typically obtain a bachelor's degree; meet age, citizenship, and health requirements; and successfully complete a commissioning program. Researchers found that although these requirements apply equally across all demographic groups, those meeting these requirements vary across the groups. "Overall, whites and other race/ethnicities [Asian Americans, Pacific Islanders, and Native Americans] meet eligibility requirements at around three to four times the rate of African Americans and Hispanics"<sup>27</sup> (see figure 3).

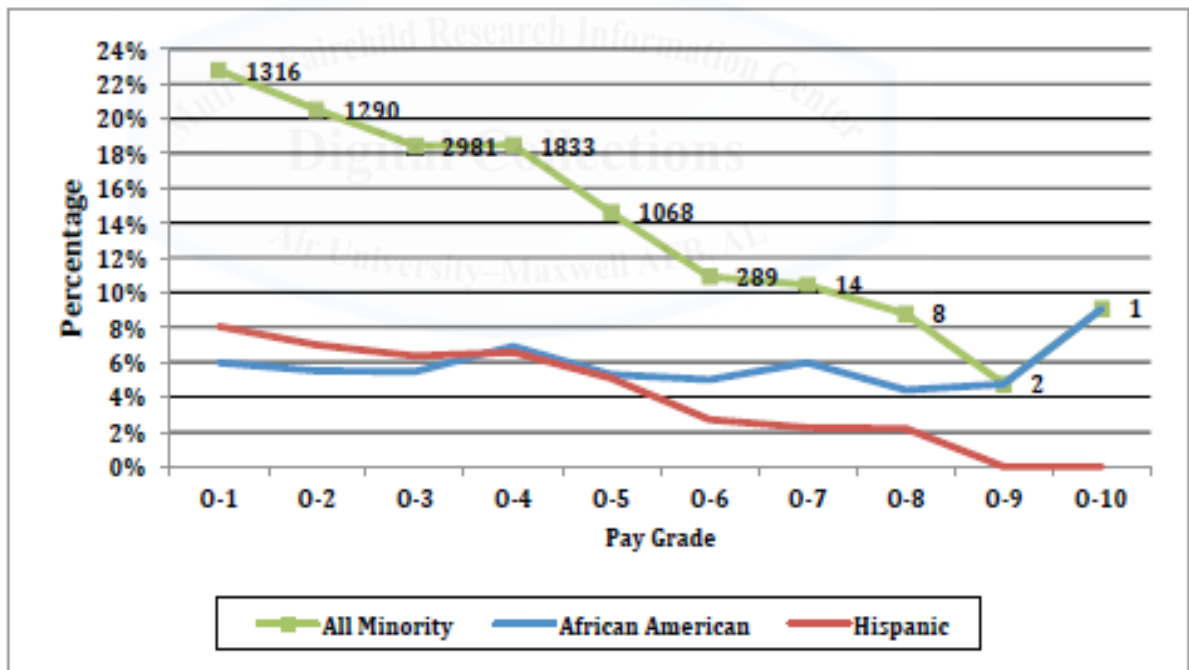


Figure 1. 2012 Percentage of Racial/Ethnic Groups by Grade  
Source: Nelson Lim et al., *Improving Demographic Diversity in the U.S. Air Force Officer Corps* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2014).

<sup>27</sup> Nelson Lim et al., *Improving Demographic Diversity*, xi.

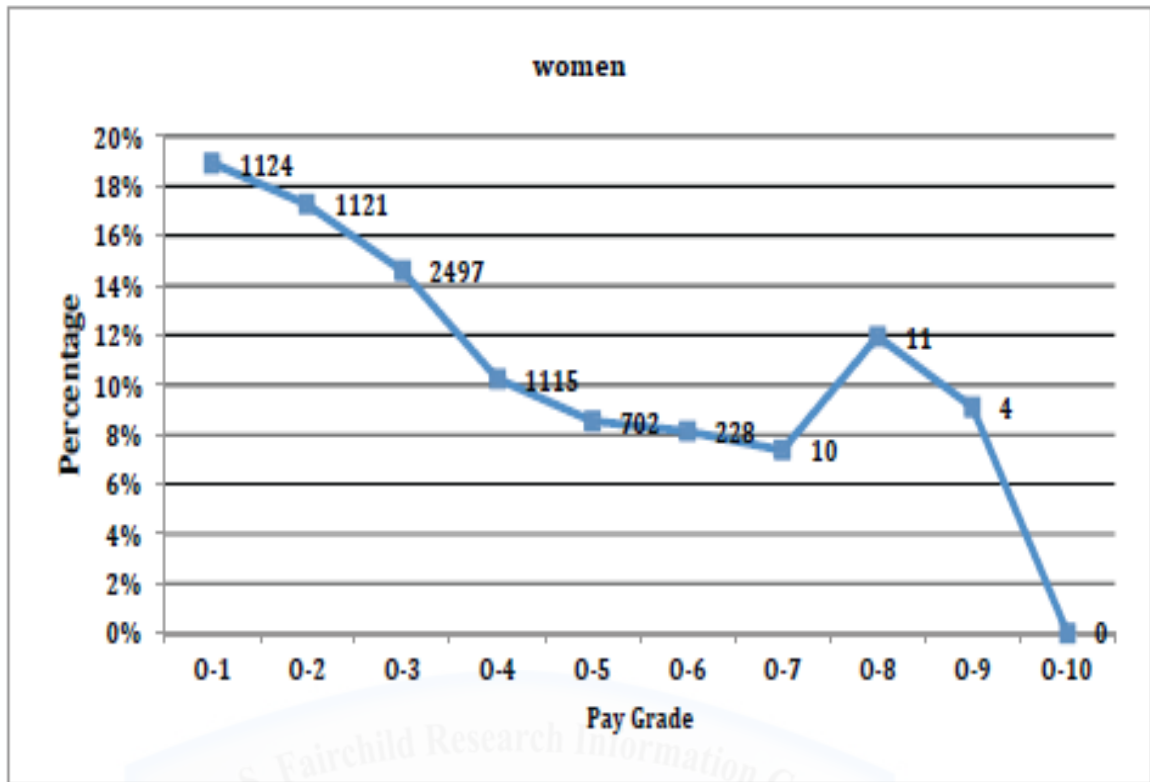


Figure 2. 2012 Female Officer Force Composition by Grade  
Source: Nelson Lim et al., *Improving Demographic Diversity in the U.S. Air Force Officer Corps* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2014).

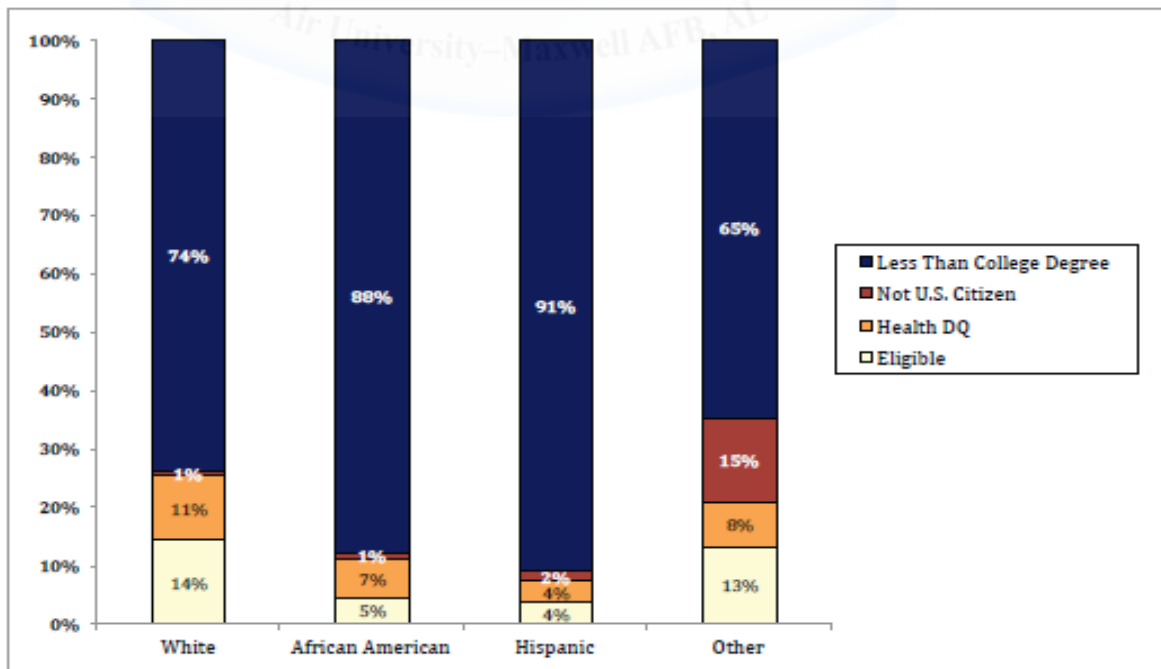


Figure 3. Disqualification Rates for Officers Requirements by Race/Ethnicity  
Source: Nelson Lim et al., *Improving Demographic Diversity in the U.S. Air Force Officer Corps* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2014).



Studying the 2011 accession cohort and taking the percentages of minorities eligible for a commission, the researchers conclude the “Air Force is matching the levels of racial/ethnic diversity expected [at the junior officer level] by the eligible population. Ultimately, this presents a challenge to the Air Force because it cannot control the education, health, and citizenship status of the U.S. population.”<sup>28</sup> The results for women are less gratifying.

Although gender diversity in accessions rose from 6 to 18 percent between 1975 and 2011, the Air Force is still underperforming in attracting and recruiting women to serve as officers. When comparing women to men, 13 percent of women are eligible for a commission as opposed to 9 percent of men. These numbers suggest there should be more female than male officers entering the service. A review of the 2011 cohort of line officers based on gender shows males represent 82 percent of newly commissioned officers compared to 18 percent of women (see figure 4). The expectation changes, however, when considering the desire to serve. Surveys show that men consider military service as an attractive career option at a ratio of three to one over women. Therefore, if the Air Force wants to attract and recruit a higher percentage of female officers, they must convince women that the military is a viable career option.<sup>29</sup> The Air Force has some work to do in this area. With an overview of the Air Force’s performance in attracting and recruiting racial and ethnic minorities and women, it is now appropriate to look at priorities four and five from the roadmap.

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<sup>28</sup> Nelson Lim et al., *Improving Demographic Diversity*, xii.

<sup>29</sup> Nelson Lim et al., *Improving Demographic Diversity*, 13-15.

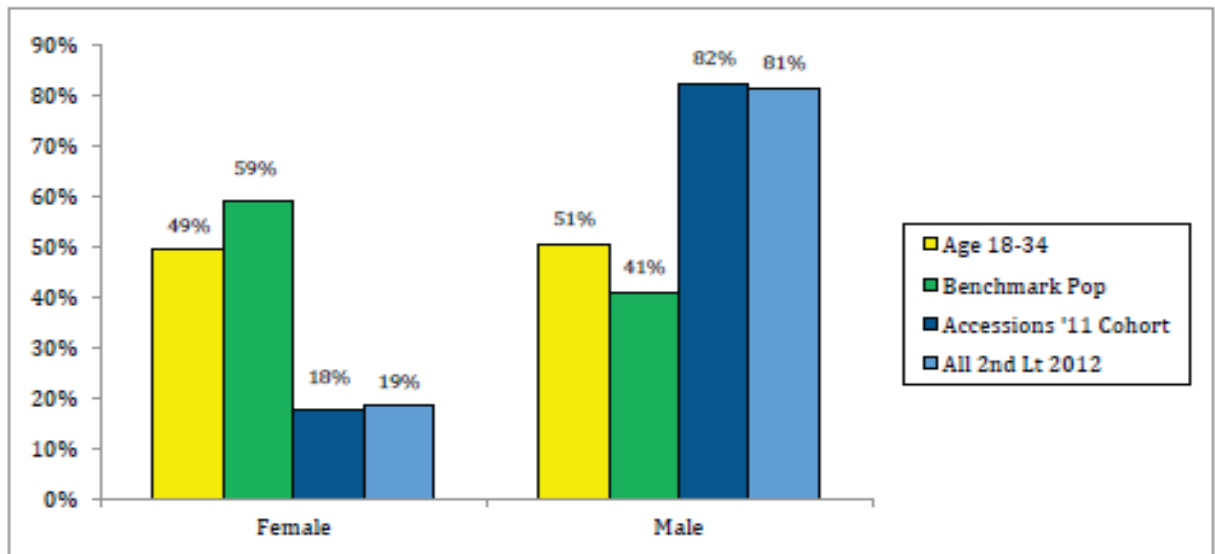


Figure 4. Gender Comparison of Air Force Line Officers and Benchmark Population  
Source: Nelson Lim et al., *Improving Demographic Diversity in the U.S. Air Force Officer Corps* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2014).

Since the Air Force promotes from within, the diversity among the group of young officers directly affects the diversity among senior officers. Therefore, if the pool of young officers is not diverse, one should not expect a diverse senior officer corps. The RAND study concluded, however, that the Air Force is doing a relatively good job of recruiting young officers. So why do the percentages of representation of racial and ethnic minorities and women decrease as rank increases? The study links accessions of young officers as the primary cause for the reduction of racial and ethnic minorities among senior officers.

Researchers explain there is little difference in retention between minority and white officers. A review of minority representation in line officer-accession cohorts from 1975 through 2011 demonstrates this. Figure five represents the Air Force's success in retaining racial and ethnic minorities and shows a close association between racial and ethnic diversity of accessions and racial and ethnic diversity of senior officers. The red horizontal lines reflect current minority representation for each rank. The blue lines display minority representation among the

accession groups that currently make up each pay grade.<sup>30</sup> The situation is different in regards to women.

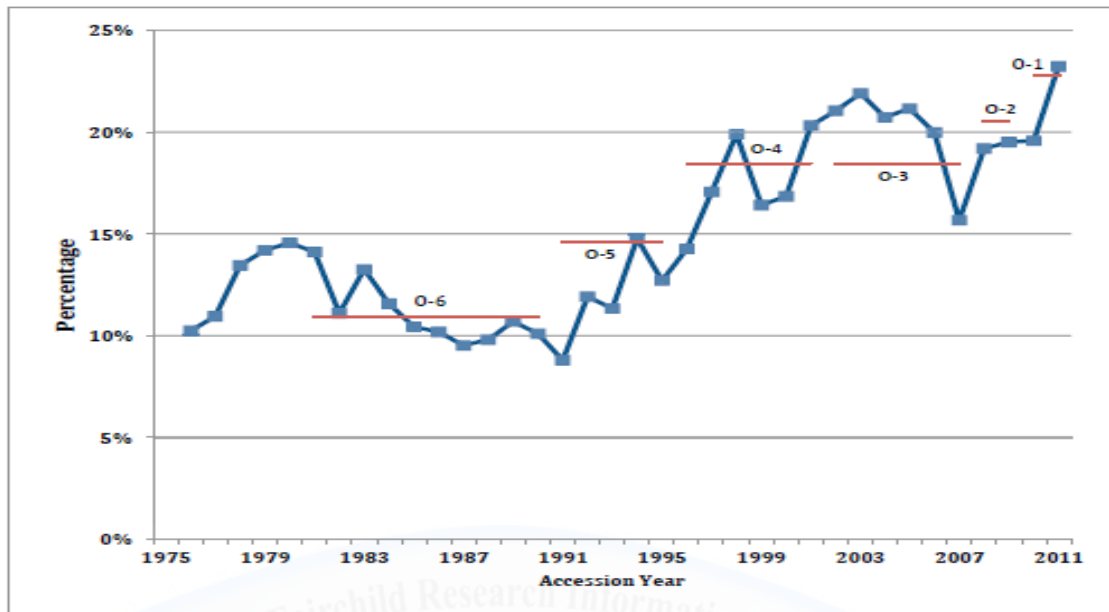


Figure 5. Minority Representation in Recent Air Force Line Officer Accession Cohorts and Current Grades, 1975-2011

Source: Nelson Lim et al., *Improving Demographic Diversity in the U.S. Air Force Officer Corps* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2014).

In most cases, the percentage of women represented in each rank is lower than the percentage in the corresponding year groups. RAND highlights the fact that the gaps in female representation grow significantly larger as rank increases.

17-18 percent of the 2008 and 2009 accession year groups were women. They represent 18.5 percent of all first lieutenants...The year groups that currently hold the grade of major were 15-19 percent women when they began their Air Force careers, but only 10 percent of all current majors are women...At the highest end of the line officer spectrum, 8 percent of colonels are women, but these 1981-1990 year groups comprised between 10 and 14 percent when they began. Therefore, women are significantly underrepresented in higher pay grades relative to corresponding year groups.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>30</sup> Nelson Lim et al., *Improving Demographic Diversity*, xiii, 22-23.

<sup>31</sup> Nelson Lim et al., *Improving Demographic Diversity*, 24.

Figure six graphically depicts these findings in the same manner as figure five does for racial and ethnic minority representation.

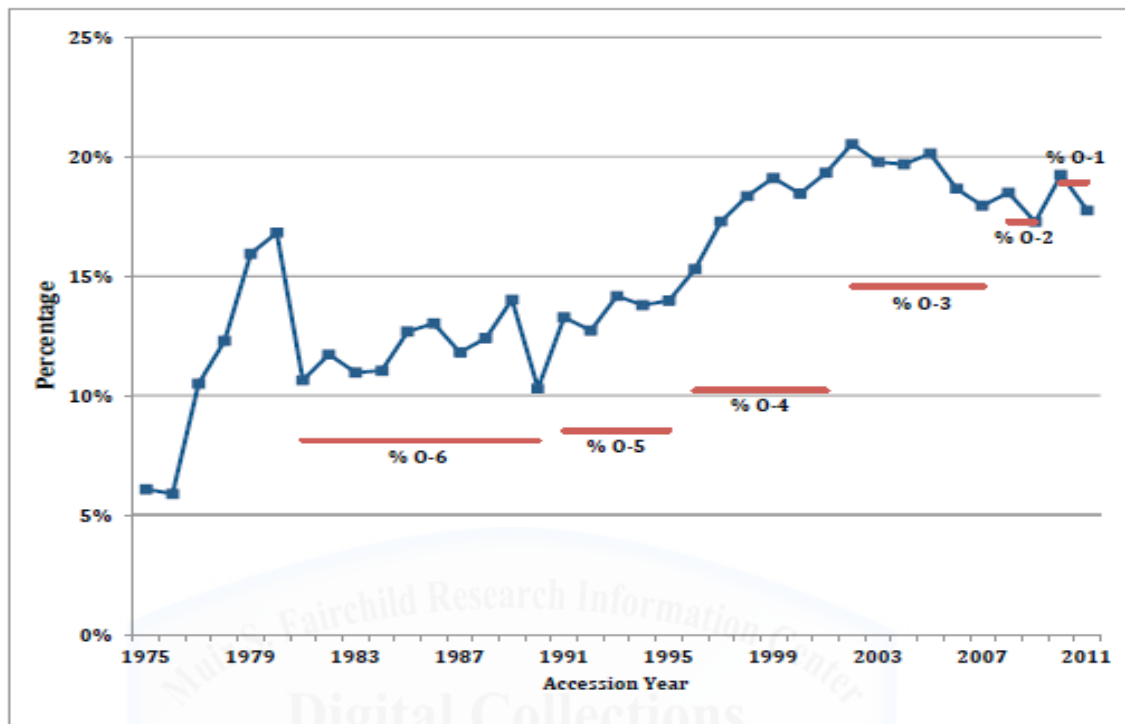


Figure 6. Representation of Women in Recent Air Force Line Officer Accession Cohorts and Current Grades, 1975-2011

Source: Nelson Lim et al., *Improving Demographic Diversity in the U.S. Air Force Officer Corps* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2014).

The study hypothesizes a factor in retaining women may be family decisions. In a comparison with similar family characteristics (i.e. marital status, children, elderly family member care, etc.), it appears differences in early career retention rates exist in the early career stages between men and women. The authors acknowledge much still remains unexplained, however, which leads to their final recommendations.<sup>32</sup>

RAND identifies three areas and provides recommendations in which the Air Force should take actions to improve demographic diversity in the officer corps. The first area is recruiting. The Air Force should use benchmarks to obtain a better picture of the population and

<sup>32</sup> Nelson Lim et al., *Improving Demographic Diversity*, xv, 25.

adjust recruiting goals accordingly. This will also allow Air Force leaders to improve and streamline recruiting efforts in areas such as recruiting manpower, advertising, and providing incentives to potential recruits. The second area is retention. This recommendation focuses heavily on women and the need to identify challenges and roadblocks affecting their retention. The report acknowledges that family statuses may be causal in this area “or it may be the result of other characteristics not available in the data used for analyses by the research team. Either way, further work is needed to identify what specific factors contribute to women’s lower retention, relative to men’s.”<sup>33</sup> Promotions are the third area in which the US Air Force should improve their practices. The study found that higher promotion rates exist in rated career fields (e.g. pilots, navigators, air battle managers, combat systems officers, and flight surgeons) where minorities and women are under-represented. Therefore, the recommendation is for the USAF to put forth a stronger effort to encourage qualified minorities and women to enter rated fields instead of fields with lower promotion rates. USAF leadership acted swiftly upon receiving these recommendations.

On 6 March 2015, the Secretary of the Air Force (SecAF), Deborah Lee James, sent an e-mail to the force titled, “2015 Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) Initiatives” to highlight three current initiatives aimed at improving diversity. They include: (1) the requirement for D&I development teams responsible for shaping career fields to meet future US Air Force needs; (2) a Promotion Board Memorandum of Instruction (MOI) that instructs every officer promotion and federal recognition board to ensure only the best qualified officers, who demonstrate a commitment to Air Force core values and a willingness to lead in a diverse and inclusive environment, are selected for promotion and recognition; and (3) a Career Intermission Program (CIP) to allow top performing Airmen

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<sup>33</sup> Nelson Lim et al., *Improving Demographic Diversity*, xvii.

the ability to transfer from active duty to the Individual Ready Reserve (IRR) for up to three years in order to address personal or professional issues and “alleviate some work-life concerns.” The SecAF also identifies six additional initiatives that are forthcoming in the near future. These include: (1) identifying high-quality enlisted personnel to attend Officer Training School (OTS) who have demonstrated the ability to lead and nurture in a diverse and inclusive environment; (2) implementing a Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) rated officer height screening initiative that will allow a 33 percent increase in ROTC females eligible for rated officer careers; (3) Instituting civilian hiring panels at increasing diversity in the senior civilian ranks. “The panels will consist of at least three individuals...will be diverse, and will include civilians with no prior military service;” (4) an initiative for US Air Force accession sources to more aggressively compete for top female talent and increase female officer applicants to represent at least 30 percent of the total applicant pool; (5) increasing post-pregnancy deployment deferments from six months to one year; and (6) developing a web-based career path and mentoring tool called “MyVector.” It “will be a one-stop shop for career management, development team support and robust mentoring.”<sup>34</sup>

It is apparent that attracting, recruiting, developing, and retaining diverse personnel is an important issue for both national and USAF leaders. One can also conclude from the RAND study, the SecAF’s e-mail, and Gen Breedlove’s comments concerning groupthink that, although the US Air Force has broadened the definition of diversity to include demographic, cognitive, behavioral, organizational/structural, and global diversity, there exists a strong focus on demographic diversity, especially racial and ethnic minorities and women. It is also safe to deduce that a large amount of work still remains in order to have

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<sup>34</sup> The Secretary of the Air Force (SecAF), to Airmen of the United States Air Force, e-mail, 6 March 2015.

demographic diversity among field-grade and flag officers in the Air Force. The results and recommendations of the RAND study are relatively new and the SecAF's D&I initiatives will take time to implement. Even if successfully implemented, they will take at least two or three decades to obtain the type of diversity among senior leaders that is representative of those they lead and the American public. Even if this is achieved, will more racial and ethnic minorities and women in the senior ranks of the officer corps, where operational strategy development occurs, prevent groupthink? The next section attempts to answer this question.

### **Groupthink**

In order to effectively address the influence of racial and ethnic minorities and women on resolving groupthink, it is important to develop an understanding of the issue.<sup>35</sup> This section explores the topic by defining groupthink, providing possible causes of and solutions to the problem, and identifying the types of individuals who are likely to succumb to the phenomenon. Upon developing an understanding of these factors, the author attempts to show that although demographic diversity may sometimes contribute to groupthink, cognitive diversity (i.e. critical thinking and diversity of thought) is the most effective means of avoiding groupthink. This is especially true when group leaders recognize the importance of, and have policies in place to identify and benefit from, cognitive diversity. One cannot accomplish this, however, without first understanding groupthink.

Irving L. Janis is the originator of the term groupthink. He first wrote a book on the topic in 1972 and revised a second edition in 1983 entitled *Groupthink: Psychological Studies of Policy Decisions and*

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<sup>35</sup> Unless specifically stated otherwise, demographic diversity refers to racial and ethnic minorities and women from this point forward in the paper.



*Fiascoes*. In the two books, Janis compares what he considers good and bad US policy decisions made by small groups. He describes how groupthink either caused the bad decisions (Bay of Pigs Invasion, the defense of Pearl Harbor, escalation of the Vietnam War) or was avoided in the good decisions (Cuban Missile Crisis and making the Marshall Plan). Janis explains that sometimes leaders consult a group of advisors or turn over issues to a group instead of an individual for various reasons. These may include seeking different perspectives or expertise in certain areas or to “counteract the limitations of individuals’ mental function.”<sup>36</sup> Sometimes even groups experience limitations in their mental functioning, however. One such limitation is a group’s susceptibility to groupthink.

Janis defines groupthink as “a deterioration of mental efficiency, reality testing, and moral judgment that results from in-group pressures.”<sup>37</sup> The central feature of groupthink is a “concurrence-seeking tendency” that interferes with critical thinking.<sup>38</sup> In his book, *Groupthink in Government: A Study of Small Groups and Policy Failure*, Paul ‘t Hart explains that concurrence-seeking is a necessary element when making decisions in small groups, especially when unanimity is required. Nevertheless, at some point in the decision-making process, discussion must stop and the group must make a decision. However, “concurrence seeking becomes excessive when it takes place too early and in too restrictive a way.”<sup>39</sup> From this logic, Hart defines groupthink “as a strong tendency for quick concurrence-seeking among members of decisions groups.”<sup>40</sup> Combining Janis’ and Hart’s definition, groupthink is an inability to effectively and sufficiently evaluate and analyze

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<sup>36</sup> Irving L. Janis, *Groupthink: Psychological Studies of Policy Decisions and Fiascoes*, 2nd ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1983), 2.

<sup>37</sup> Irving L. Janis, *Groupthink*, 9.

<sup>38</sup> Irving L. Janis, *Groupthink*, 9

<sup>39</sup> Paul ‘t Hart, *Groupthink in Government: a Study of Small Groups and Policy Failure*, Johns ed. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), 11.

<sup>40</sup> Paul ‘t Hart, *Groupthink in Government*, 22.



alternatives and objectives in making decisions due to premature concurrence-seeking within a group. This often leads to errors in decision-making and increases the likelihood of poor outcomes.

Seven major defects in groupthink decision-making contribute to inadequately solving problems. These include: (1) an incomplete survey of alternatives; (2) an incomplete survey of objectives; (3) a failure to reexamine the preferred course of action in search of nonobvious risks and drawbacks; (4) a failure to reevaluate initially rejected courses of action for nonobvious benefits or measures to address the issues that made the course of action undesirable; (5) the group makes little effort, if any, to consult with outside experts or find additional information to develop alternate courses of action or address the concerns of rejected courses of action; (6) the group displays selective bias by only showing interest in facts that support, and ignoring facts and opinions that do not support, their preferred course of action; (7) members spend little time exploring how their chosen course of action may be hindered by bureaucracy, political opponents, or common difficulties that hinder the best laid plans. As a result, the group fails to develop contingency plans for dealing with predictable setbacks that endanger the success of the selected course of action.<sup>41</sup> Many groupthink symptoms cause these decision-making defects.

In his study of policy decisions, Janis identifies eight symptoms of groupthink that fall into one of three major category types. Type I: Overestimation of the group, consists of two symptoms: (1) an illusion of invulnerability, shared by all or most group members, which creates an overoptimistic view and encourages extreme risk taking; (2) an unquestioned belief in the group's inherent morality, which causes the members to ignore many ethical or moral consequences of their decisions. Type II: Closed-mindedness, also encompasses two

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<sup>41</sup> Irving L. Janis, *Groupthink*, 9-10, 175.

symptoms: (1) a collective effort to rationalize in order to ignore contrary information that could cause members to reconsider their assumptions before committing themselves to policy decisions is one symptom; and (2) stereotyping enemy leaders as either too evil to negotiate with, or too weak or stupid to counter any risky attempts made to defeat the enemy.

Type III: Pressures toward uniformity, contains four symptoms: (1) a member's self-censorship of deviating from the apparent group consensus, thus displaying the member's inclination to minimize the importance of any doubts of, or counterarguments to, the group's decision; (2) partly as a result of self-censorship and the belief that silence confirms consent, a shared illusion of unanimity develops concerning the majority view of the group; (3) the group pressures non-conformists who express strong opposition to the group's stereotypes, illusions, commitments, or decisions, to conform, thus making it clear that loyal members do not dissent in such a manner; (4) members emerge as self-appointed "mindguards" who try to protect the group from adverse information that could interfere with their shared complacency concerning the effectiveness and morality of the group's decisions.<sup>42</sup>

Janis makes the assumption "that the more frequently a group displays the symptoms, the worse will be the quality of its decision, on the average. Even when some symptoms are absent, the others may be so pronounced that we can expect all the unfortunate consequences of groupthink."<sup>43</sup> A short look at President Johnson's decision to escalate in Vietnam and President Kennedy's decision to invade Cuba highlight these symptoms and also demonstrates the influence group leaders have on the symptoms.

The failure of President Johnson and his policy advisors to detect any of their false assumptions is partially accounted for by the group's

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<sup>42</sup> Irving L. Janis, *Groupthink*, 174-175.

<sup>43</sup> Irving L. Janis, *Groupthink*, 175.

tendency to seek concurrence at the expense of seeking information, critical appraisal, and debate. James Thomson, an East Asia specialist at the State Department and the White House during the Kennedy and Johnson administrations, wrote, "Through a variety of procedures, both institutional and personal, doubt, dissent, and expertise were effectively neutralized in the making of policy."<sup>44</sup> While President Johnson and the group often encouraged opposing views from "domesticated dissenters" like Bill Moyers, Johnson's close advisor, and Undersecretary of State George Ball, the dissenters' opinions were usually marginalized or ignored.<sup>45</sup> Janis explains that President Johnson repressed and eventually removed the most vocal dissident member, Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara, from his team of advisors to preserve group cohesion. Due to his constant challenging of group assumptions and norms, the President and other advisors viewed McNamara as a saboteur of the group's interests. This view, combined with McNamara's refusal to suppress his doubts concerning decisions in Vietnam and not becoming a "domesticated dissenter," resulted in President Johnson removing him from the group. Janis surmised, "Johnson regarded his in-group of policy advisers as a family and its leading dissident member [McNamara] as an irresponsible son who was sabotaging the family's interests...Once

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<sup>44</sup> James C. Thomson, "Why Did Vietnam Happen? An Autopsy," *The Atlantic*, 1 April 1968, <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1968/04/how-could-vietnam-happen-an-autopsy/306462> (accessed 18 March 2015).

<sup>45</sup> Irving L. Janis, *Groupthink*, 115. The domesticated dissenter is "unaware of the extent to which he is influenced by the majority, he has the illusion that he is free to speak his mind...Nevertheless, the domesticated dissenter repeatedly gets the message that there is only a very small piece of critical territory he can tread safely and still remain a member in good standing;" James C. Thomson, "Why Did Vietnam Happen?" "Despite the banishment of the experts, internal doubters and dissenters did indeed appear and persist. Yet as I watched the process, such men were effectively neutralized by a subtle dynamic: *the domestication of dissenters*...Simply stated, dissent, when recognized, was made to feel at home...Once Mr. Ball began to express doubts, he was warmly institutionalized: he was encouraged to become the in-house devil's advocate on Vietnam. The upshot was inevitable: the process of escalation allowed for periodic requests to Mr. Ball to speak his piece; Ball felt good, I assume (he had fought for righteousness); the others felt good (they had given a full hearing to the dovish option); and there was minimal unpleasantness."

McNamara was removed from the group...the members could once again enjoy complete unity and relatively undisturbed confidence in the soundness of their war policy.”<sup>46</sup> It is not hard to see the three types of symptoms in the group’s and President Johnson’s actions toward those who expressed opposing views. It is also easy to see the influence President Johnson had on the group. Group leaders significantly influence whether their teams fall victim to groupthink. In President Johnson’s case, he enabled group domestication of dissenters, and when domestication did not work, he removed the dissenter. There are other more subtle methods in which leaders influence the group decision-making process.

“Docility fostered by suave leadership” is one example.<sup>47</sup> This involves subtle leadership practices, which may or may not be intentional, that make it difficult for team members to question group consensus, suggest alternative solutions, or raise important issues. Leaders accomplish this by manipulating meeting agendas to limit opportunity for debate or by focusing attention to only one side of an argument without sharing opposing views.<sup>48</sup> In the following excerpt, Janis explains how President Kennedy fostered docility during the Bay of Pigs Invasion deliberations.

President Kennedy, as leader at the meetings in the White House, was probably more active than anyone else in raising skeptical questions; yet he seems to have encouraged the group’s docility and uncritical acceptance of the defective arguments in favor of the CIA’s plan. At each meeting, instead of opening up the agenda to permit a full airing of the opposing considerations, he allowed the CIA representatives to dominate the entire discussion. The President permitted them to refute immediately each tentative doubt that one of the others might express, instead of asking whether anyone else

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<sup>46</sup> Irving L. Janis, *Groupthink*, 118-119.

<sup>47</sup> Irving L. Janis, *Groupthink*, 42.

<sup>48</sup> Irving L. Janis, *Groupthink*, 42.

had the same doubt or wanted to pursue the implications of the new worrisome issue that had been raised.

Moreover, although the President went out of his way to bring to a crucial meeting an outsider who was an eloquent opponent of the invasion plan, his style of conducting the meeting presented no opportunity for discussion of the controversial issues that were raised. The visitor was Senator J. William Fullbright. The occasion was the climactic meeting of April 4, 1961...At the meeting, Fullbright was given an opportunity to present his opposing views. In a “sensible and strong” speech Fullbright correctly predicted many of the damaging effects the invasion would have on the United States foreign relations. The President did not open the floor to discussion of the questions raised in Fullbright’s rousing speech.<sup>49</sup>

From these comments, it appears President Kennedy welcomed expression of opposing views. However, he certainly limited the opportunity to consider and debate the merits of any dissent. Interestingly, it seems cognitive dissonance was a factor in this instance, the decision to proceed with the Bay of Pigs Invasion, and many other groupthink scenarios.<sup>50</sup> As a result, President Kennedy and his group of advisors suffered from many of the decision-making defects of groupthink. They learned from their mistakes, however, and successfully avoided these defects during the Cuban Missile Crisis.

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<sup>49</sup> Irving L. Janis, *Groupthink*, 42.

<sup>50</sup> Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), 382, 387, 406. The basic hypotheses of cognitive dissonance are: “1. The existence of dissonance, being psychologically uncomfortable, will motivate the person to try to reduce dissonance and achieve consonance. 2. When dissonance is present, in addition to trying to reduce it, the person will actively avoid situations and information which would likely increase the dissonance...[Cognitive dissonance] also predict[s] that discrepant information will not be given its due and [implies] that policies will be maintained longer than political calculations can explain...The central contribution of the theory of cognitive dissonance is the argument that people seek to justify their own behavior—to reassure themselves that they have made the best possible use of all the information they had or should have had, to believe that they have not used their resources foolishly, to see that their actions are commendable and consistent.”

During the infamous 13 days in October 1962, President Kennedy and his policy-making group, known as the Executive Committee, faced the unenviable challenge of dealing with Soviet nuclear-armed Intermediate-Range Ballistic Missiles (IRBMs) in Cuba. The members of the Executive Committee were essentially the same key people that deliberated over the Bay of Pigs Invasion the year prior. This time, however, they avoided many of the defective decision-making mistakes of their earlier deliberations. How is it possible that the same group of players avoided groupthink to successfully negotiate with the Soviets to remove their weapons from Cuba and avoid a nuclear exchange? They made a few very important procedural changes.

President Kennedy and the Executive Committee experienced a humiliating defeat, international relations nightmare, and domestic criticism as a result of the failed Bay of Pigs Invasion. Consequently, they were determined to avoid any further embarrassing policy decisions. Therefore, when faced with the Cuban Missile Crisis, President Kennedy instituted four procedural changes to prevent himself and the Executive Committee from accepting unchallenged arguments and proposals. One change involved defining the members' roles. President Kennedy set the expectation that every member must act as a general skeptic. They were not only expected to comment on areas in which they were experts, but to act as critical thinkers by examining policy problems as a whole and to actively challenge anything that did not make sense. The President also appointed Robert Kennedy and Theodore Sorensen as "intellectual watchdogs" responsible for ensuring thorough exploration of all matters of contention in order to avoid superficial analysis of the issues.<sup>51</sup> Robert Kennedy explained "nothing, whether a weighty matter or a small detail, was overlooked."<sup>52</sup> Likewise, Sorensen explained that the pressure of the

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<sup>51</sup> Irving L. Janis, *Groupthink*, 141.

<sup>52</sup> Robert F. Kennedy, *Thirteen Days: a Memoir of the Cuban Missile Crisis* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1999), 60.



situation was so overwhelming that the group could not afford to overlook any possible options or issues with their plans. He regularly woke up in the middle of the night pondering the previous day's deliberations. He attempted to poke holes in the group's assumptions and conclusions in an effort to develop better courses of action.<sup>53</sup>

Another change occurred in how the group conducted meetings. The Executive Committee threw out normal protocol in order to allow more open and frank conversation. They had no formal meeting agendas, departmental experts provided information and were questioned in detail concerning the basis of their conclusions, new advisors were brought in periodically to provide a fresh point of view, and visitors were deliberately queried for their inputs during group discussion.<sup>54</sup>

Conducting subgroup meetings to facilitate critical thinking is another change the group made. The subgroups independently worked on the same issues and then reassembled in the larger group to present and debate their proposed solutions. Finally, in order to prevent undue influence on the group, President Kennedy deliberately chose not to attend certain meetings, especially those in the early stages where the group was still working on developing a full range of alternatives.<sup>55</sup> Robert Kennedy said, "I felt there was less true give and take with the President in the room. There was the danger that by indicating his own view and leanings, he would cause others just to fall in line."<sup>56</sup> Janis credits these four procedural changes and other related changes in leadership practices that encouraged critical thought and debate as key factors in the Executive Committee's success in avoiding groupthink.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Theodore C. Sorenson, *Kennedy*, 6th ed. (New York: Bantam Books, 1966), 767.

<sup>54</sup> Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., *A Thousand Days: John F. Kennedy in the White House* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1965), 296-297; Irving L. Janis, *Groupthink*, 141-142.

<sup>55</sup> Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., *A Thousand Days*, 141-142.

<sup>56</sup> Elie Abel, *The Missile Crisis: John F. Kennedy's Finest Hour* (New York: Bantam Books, 1966), 60.

<sup>57</sup> Irving L. Janis, *Groupthink*, 142.

Following the examination of the Cuban Missile Crisis and the making of the Marshall Plan, Janis proposes nine preventative measures to help avoid groupthink, most of which address leadership actions. First, the group leader should make every member a “critical evaluator,” which encourages and allows the group to place a high priority on expressing objections and doubts. This can help counteract group pressure and premature consensus. Second, at the outset of group formation the leader of an organization should remain impartial to the process and not advocate for ideal solutions or recommendations they envision for solving the problem. This should provide an atmosphere of open inquiry and exploration of a wide range of alternatives. Third, the organization should make it a normal practice to set up several independent policy-planning and evaluation groups, each with different leaders, to solve the same issue. This practice encourages critical thinking, prevents group insulation by allowing for the challenge of information, and facilitates independently developed solutions. Fourth, when surveying the feasibility and effectiveness of courses of action, the group should divide into two or more subgroups that later reconvene into the larger group to tackle their differences. This effort may reduce premature concurrence-seeking and increase the chances for thorough examination of alternatives. Fifth, as appropriate and when feasible, each member should occasionally discuss the group’s deliberations with trusted associates outside of the group and report back their reactions. This allows the group to gain perspective on possible sticking points, bureaucratic roadblocks, or any other issues that can inhibit a course of action. Sixth, if a decision involves relationships with external organizations or rival nations, the group should spend a significant amount of time surveying the rival’s possible courses of actions and warning signals of the rival intentions. This allows for development of alternative plans or branches and sequels to the selected course of action. Seventh, the group should invite outside experts and qualified



colleagues within the organization to attend meetings on a regular basis in order to encourage or challenge the core members' views and assumptions. This action is beneficial in counteracting the group's false sense of complacency about risky decisions as well as providing alternative solutions. Eighth, at least one member should be assigned the role of devil's advocate, especially during meetings devoted to evaluating alternative policies or courses of action. This person purposefully challenges the group's assumptions, logic, and solutions. This person is key to the individual contribution of avoiding groupthink and is discussed later in the chapter. Finally, upon reaching consensus on the best alternatives, the group should open the floor for one last round of re-attacks to allow members to express and address any remaining doubts before making a final decision.<sup>58</sup> This comprehensive list of recommendations does not avoid the scrutiny of critics.

Paul 't Hart argues that when fully implemented, Janis' prescriptions "are certain to overload the capacity of the policymaking system...they demand the near impossible from group leaders. They are supposed to be powerful enough to control the flow of policy process internally and to have its results accepted externally, yet...they are urged to refrain from exhibiting any substantive or manipulative policy leadership during decision-making sessions with their advisers."<sup>59</sup> No matter how one views Janis' solutions, there is a definite focus on the group leadership woven throughout.

However, Janis recognizes the importance of the individual member's contribution to avoiding groupthink, as does Hart. Janis addresses the importance of individual critical thought when he recommends assigning the roles of critical evaluator and devil's advocate within the groups. He also recognizes the importance of allowing

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<sup>58</sup> Irving L. Janis, *Groupthink*, 262-272.

<sup>59</sup> Paul 't Hart, *Groupthink in Government*, xii.

individual members to express their dissent and espouse their opinions. This is one area where Hart provides an additional recommendation to protect and encourage dissenters within a group. He suggests protecting individuals by implementing whistleblower procedures. Hart explains that “where compliance is the problem, non-compliance may be the solution...Protecting whistleblowers may encourage potential dissenters in a policy group embarking on a disastrous course of action to escape the overt or implicit pressures for compliance in the group and its institutional environment.”<sup>60</sup> Although this solution may seem an extreme measure, it is intended to provide a dissenter the reassurance that if his objections are ignored and the group is engaged in questionable practices, then there is an alternative option to express dissent outside of the group.

Another area explored by both Janis and Hart regarding individual aspects involves identifying why individuals succumb to groupthink. The members’ requirement of belonging appears to be a major factor that may negatively affect a group’s decision-making process. This represents a feeling of social belonging where members place the value of belonging to the group as a priority over any decisions made by the group. “Personality research suggests that conformity tendencies may be strongest in persons who are most fearful of disapproval and rejection...Such people give priority to preserving friendly relationships, at the expense of achieving success in the group’s work tasks.”<sup>61</sup> In highly cohesive groups members feel a strong sense of belonging, solidarity, and loyalty to the group. Therefore, there is a low probability that individuals will dispute the group’s decision or offer dissent in the deliberation process. Janis’ central argument is that “the more amiability and esprit de corps among members of a policy-making in-

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<sup>60</sup> Paul 't Hart, *Groupthink in Government*, 291-292.

<sup>61</sup> Irving L. Janis, *Groupthink*, 242.

group, the greater is the danger that independent critical thinking will be replaced by groupthink, which is likely to result in irrational and dehumanizing actions directed against out-groups.”<sup>62</sup>

When a member offers contrary evidence or opinion, the group attempts to influence the dissenter to “tone down his dissident ideas.”<sup>63</sup> This continues as long as members still believe there is a chance to change the dissenter’s mind. If their attempts fail, they begin to exclude the dissenter in an attempt to “restore the unity of the group...The more cohesive the group and the more relevant the issue to the goals of the group, the greater is the inclination of the members to reject nonconformists.”<sup>64</sup> If one places significant value on membership of the group and desires inclusion, then the pressure applied by other members to conform results in “deindividuation”—the temporary absence of self-awareness where personal social control mechanisms based on guilt, fear or shame lose importance and group norms enable an individual to engage in behaviors normally not acceptable within regular social norms.<sup>65</sup> The combination of high-cohesiveness and deindividuation often results in a powerful tendency toward uniformity of thought and decisions. President Johnson’s removal of McNamara is an example of what could happen to nonconformists in a cohesive group.

A combination of the members’ need to belong and group pressure to conform that causes deindividuation results in a highly-cohesive group that unconsciously develops a mutual nonaggression pact. Janis explains the details of this pact.

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<sup>62</sup> Irving L. Janis, *Groupthink*, 13.

<sup>63</sup> Irving L. Janis, *Groupthink*, 5.

<sup>64</sup> Irving L. Janis, *Groupthink*, 5.

<sup>65</sup> Philip G. Zimbardo, “The Human Choice: Individuation, Reason and Order Versus Deindividuation, impulse and chaos,” in *Nebraska Symposium on Motivation*, ed. William J. Arnold and David. Levine (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1969), 251; Ralph H. Turner and Lewis M. Killian, *Collective Behavior*, 3rd ed. (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall College Div, 1987), 25.

Each individual in the group feels himself to be under an injunction to avoid making penetrating criticisms that might bring on a clash with fellow members and destroy the unity of the group. Adhering to this norm promotes a sense of collective strength and also eliminates the threat of damage to each member's self-esteem from hearing his or her own judgments on vital issues criticized by respected associates...When the mutual nonaggression pact and other related norms for preserving the unity of the group are internalized, each member avoids interfering with an emerging consensus by assuring himself that the opposing arguments he had in mind must be erroneous or that his misgivings are too unimportant to be worth mentioning.<sup>66</sup>

From this excerpt one can identify personal traits that are conducive to facilitating groupthink. These include a need to fit in socially, a lack of self-esteem, and a lack of self-confidence. One factor contributing to these traits, especially lack of self-confidence, may be the member's lack of familiarity with the topic under discussion. The inability to effectively communicate or express opinions, either due to fear of speaking or inability to convincingly convey his views, may be another contributing factor. These individual traits can be present in any group setting, whether it is a team of all Caucasian males, all Hispanic females, or a group that is well-represented with demographic diversity.

To argue that racial, ethnic, and gender diversity cannot help avoid groupthink is just as erroneous as Gen Breedlove's assertion that a group of white males automatically causes groupthink. That is not the contention of this paper. One does not have to be a sociology expert to understand that when groups lack demographic diversity they may not have the ability to fully consider the views and opinions of an unrepresented group of society. For instance, when convening over an issue dealing with the Middle East, it is unreasonable to think that a group of Caucasian and African-American men and women can fully understand the intricacies of the Middle Eastern culture. In addition, it

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<sup>66</sup> Irving L. Janis, *Groupthink*, 258.

is equally short-sighted if one does not acknowledge that the possibility of groupthink does exist if a team consists of only Caucasian males. Janis explains, "Groups of individuals showing a preponderance of certain personality and social attributes (social class, ethnic origin, occupational training, etc.) may prove to be the ones that succumb most readily to groupthink."<sup>67</sup> However, a group's susceptibility to groupthink is much more complex than demographic diversity.

The information presented suggests that group leadership is the single most important factor in avoiding groupthink. The comparison between the Bay of Pigs and Cuban Missile Crisis deliberations demonstrates this conclusion. Basically the same team of Caucasian and well-educated males met to deal with both situations. The determining factor appears to be the manner in which the team conducted its meetings. During the Cuban Missile Crisis, President Kennedy made important procedural changes to the decision-making process that allowed the group to hear and fully consider opposing views and options. Janis suggests that because the circumstances of the deliberations changed and not the individuals, groupthink "is not simply a matter of a fixed attribute of a group, nor is it a question of the types of personalities that happen to be dominant within the group."<sup>68</sup> While there is tremendous merit in Janis' conclusion, it downplays the role of President Kennedy appointing Robert Kennedy and Theodore Sorensen as "intellectual watchdogs."<sup>69</sup>

Usually the leader of a group has the ability to choose team members and assign roles. Even if the leader cannot hand-pick the members, they can attempt to identify those who have critical thinking abilities. If given the opportunity, these are the individuals who can play an important role in avoiding groupthink, regardless of the team's

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<sup>67</sup> Irving L. Janis, *Groupthink*, 242.

<sup>68</sup> Irving L. Janis, *Groupthink*, 158.

<sup>69</sup> Irving L. Janis, *Groupthink*, 141.

demographic make-up. Robert Kennedy and Theodore Sorensen, who were not members of the Bay of Pigs team, essentially played the role of devil's advocate during the Cuban Missile Crisis. Unlike the domesticated dissenters in President Johnson's Vietnam escalation, these two men effectively executed their role and eliminated premature consensus in the group. They were well-educated and confident in their abilities to challenge the group. Thus it is logical to conclude that President Kennedy's appointment of two new critical thinking members of the group to play devil's advocate provided an important impact on the group's success in avoiding groupthink. It is also reasonable to infer that regardless of a group's demographic make-up, groupthink is avoidable through good leadership and processes. Individuals, however, also play an important role. Having a good mix of individuals on a team can help avoid groupthink, but the most influential type of diversity is cognitive diversity—an individual's ability to think critically.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter set out to discuss the role diversity plays in preventing groupthink. The impetus centered on Gen Breedlove's comments and his challenge to the airmen attending the Tuskegee Airmen Incorporated National Conference. His comments and challenge implied that demographic diversity was the answer to solving groupthink. This implication generated four questions to answer along the expedition to ultimately discover ways in which diversity can help avoid or minimize groupthink: (1) What is the US Air Force doing to increase diversity among its officer ranks? (2) What is the focus of the Air Force's diversity initiative? (3) Is this initiative working? (4) Is racial and gender diversity the answer to solving the groupthink dilemma to which Gen Breedlove refers?

First, what is the US Air Force doing to increase diversity among its officer ranks? The US Air Force took many steps aimed at increasing



diversity among both its enlisted and officer corps. It began taking the most recent steps to increase diversity even before the issue gained renewed interest with the US Congress's creation of the MLDC and the release of EO 13583 in 2011. In 2010, AF/A1DV released the *United States Air Force Diversity Strategic Roadmap: A Journey to Excellence*. This document provided a broad definition of diversity to include the demographic, organizational/structural, global, cognitive, and behavioral diversity subcategories. Then in 2013, AF/A1DV released the updated *United States Air Force Diversity Strategic Roadmap*. Both the 2010 and 2013 versions address the roles and responsibilities of USAF personnel and the Air Force's priorities concerning increasing diversity in the USAF. However, the 2013 version updated and more thoroughly covers the priorities to coincide with other government diversity objectives, which include EO 13583, National Military Strategy, DoD Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan, 2012-2107, AFD 36-70, and AFI 36-7001. The five priorities are: (1) institutionalizing diversity to achieve mission success; (2) attracting high-quality, talented and diverse military and civilian Air Force employees; (3) recruiting these potential employees; (4) developing a high-quality, talented, and diverse total force of active duty, Guard, Reserve and civilian personnel; and (5) retaining the total force.<sup>70</sup> The Air Force also commissioned the RAND Corporation to conduct a study aimed at improving diversity among its officer corps. Finally, the SecAF identified current and future D&I initiatives. These include "D&I Requirements for Development Team (DT) Boards...[a] Promotion Board Memorandum of Instruction...[a] Career Intermission Program...[identifying] Enlisted Airmen for Officer Training School...[a] Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) Rated Height Screening Initiative...Use of Panels in Civilian Hiring...[increasing the] Female Officer Applicant Pool...[extending the] Post-Pregnancy Deployment

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<sup>70</sup> AF/A1DV, *United States Air Force Diversity Strategic Roadmap*, 12 March 2013, 9-16.

Deferment...[and] Career Path Too (CPT) Transformation.”<sup>71</sup> The US Air Force’s steps to increase diversity among its force provides important insight into answer the next question.

Second, what is the focus of the Air Force’s diversity initiative? While the *Air Force Strategic Roadmap* broadens the definition of diversity, the majority of the US Air Force’s focus is on demographic diversity. The US Air Force commissioned the RAND study to specifically address the underlying causes for low representation of minorities and women among the officer ranks. In addition, four of the nine D&I initiatives identified by the SecAF directly target females. Of the remaining five, although not specifically mentioned, it is not unreasonable to conclude these primarily target racial, ethnic and gender diversity. Finally, Gen Breedlove’s comments directly targeted demographic diversity and he is not alone among US Air Force leadership.

Recently, a US Air Force Major Command (MAJCOM) Commander spoke to SAASS Class XXIV. When specifically asked about what steps his MAJCOM was taking to implement increase diversity, the two of the three initiatives he mentioned dealt with increasing opportunities for racial, ethnic, and gender diversity. The third dealt with having a wide range of experience with different aircraft on his staff. In a follow-up question, the author queried the general by asking why his initiatives primarily focused on demographic diversity when the US Air Force defines diversity in much broader terms that include organizational/structural, cognitive, behavioral, and global diversity subcategories. The general very honestly answered that demographic diversity is easier to measure and facilitates performance evaluations of his command.<sup>72</sup> The commanders response provides a better

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<sup>71</sup> SecAF, to Airmen of the United States Air Force, email.

<sup>72</sup> The MAJCOM commander’s identity is protected under Air University’s non-attribution policy because he made his comments while addressing SAASS class XXIV



understanding as to why his, and the US Air Force's, initiatives primarily focus on demographic diversity.

Third, is the Air Force's diversity initiative working? In short, it is too early to tell. The RAND report, which evaluated the US Air Force accession, retention, and promotion of African-Americans, Hispanics and women, provides mixed results. It found that although total representation among these demographics increased over the last 20 years, their representation decreases as rank increases. On the positive side, the US Air Force is doing well at attracting and recruiting racial and ethnic minorities. Considering the percentage of racial and ethnic minorities eligible for commission, the study concludes the "Air Force is matching the levels of racial and ethnic diversity expected" at the junior officer level.<sup>73</sup> The US Air Force is underperforming in attracting and recruiting females, however. There is a higher percentage of women than men eligible for a commission. In 2011, males represented 82 percent of newly commissioned officers as opposed to 18 percent of women.<sup>74</sup> The report cites the accession of young officers as the primary cause for the reduction of racial and ethnic minorities among senior officers. There is very little difference between the retention rates of this demographic and white officers. Since the US Air Force is doing as well as can be expected in attracting and recruiting this demographic, either it must relax the commissioning requirements or take measures to increase retention rates. In regards to women, there is definitely an issue with both attracting, recruiting, and retention. In most cases, the percentage of women represented in the higher ranks is less than the percentage in the corresponding year group. The study hypothesizes family concerns may be a factor in retaining women.<sup>75</sup> This most likely explains why the four

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during an official speaking engagement. During this engagement the general was very open and honest when he fielded many questions from the class concerning diversity.

<sup>73</sup> Nelson Lim et al., *Improving Demographic Diversity*, xii.

<sup>74</sup> Nelson Lim et al., *Improving Demographic Diversity*, 13-14.

<sup>75</sup> Nelson Lim et al., *Improving Demographic Diversity*, xv, 25.

of the nine D&I initiatives directly address attracting, recruiting, and retaining women. It is not hard to see the US Air Force is implementing measures to increase and maintain diversity among its members. The measures in place before the RAND study achieved mixed results and it is too early to evaluate the SecAF's D&I initiatives. Even if successful, it will take decades before the USAF will experience the fruits of its labor

Finally, is racial, ethnic, and gender diversity the answer to solving the groupthink dilemma to which Gen Breedlove refers? As stated earlier, it would be foolish to argue that demographic diversity cannot help reduce groupthink. Janis recognizes that teams consisting of the same demographic background have the potential to fall victim to groupthink. However, it is not a foregone conclusion as Gen Breedlove implies. In addition, this is not the most important type of diversity in avoiding groupthink. When the author questioned the earlier referenced MAJCOM commander, he asked if demographic or cognitive diversity was most important when developing strategy. The MAJCOM commander responded unequivocally that cognitive diversity was the most important. Nonetheless, he did acknowledge that demographic diversity allows for the consideration of the views of otherwise unrepresented racial, ethnic, and gender groups. Although demographic diversity may reduce the chances of groupthink, the experts spend very little effort addressing this area. Therefore, the research suggests that it is neither the best overall solution, nor is it the most effective type of diversity, to counter groupthink.

Both Janis and Hart recognize leadership is the most influential factor in avoiding the pitfalls of group-think. Group leaders must be familiar with and take measures to minimize groupthink and its effects on decision-making. Many of the preventative measures involve establishing administrative and organizational policies and procedures by which the groups operate. These include: (1) leadership remaining impartial from the outset of deliberations; (2) convening several

independent groups to work the same issue when possible; (3) when examining the feasibility and effectiveness of proposed courses of action, dividing the group into subgroups and later reconvening into the larger group to discuss differences; (4) having group members discuss the groups deliberations with colleagues outside the group; (5) inviting outside experts to occasionally attend group proceedings; (6) before making a final recommendation, opening the floor for one last round of re-attacks; and (7) implementing whistleblower procedures to protect and encourage dissenters within the group.<sup>76</sup> Janis and Hart also recognize the importance of individual contributions to preventing groupthink.

Cognitive diversity, in the form of critical thinking, is regularly referenced as an important individual trait within groups. In the two recommendations in which individuals specifically counter groupthink, assigning every member as a critical evaluator or making at least one member play devil's advocate, critical thinking is the most important trait identified. Additionally, the members fulfilling these roles must be able to resist pressures to acquiesce to group norms and assumed unanimity as well as communicate their opposition in a well-educated and organized fashion.

In conclusion, there is no question that the US Air Force's commitment to diversity within its force is both a noble and necessary endeavor. Increasing all forms of diversity, as defined in the *United States Air Force Diversity Strategic Roadmap*, will result in many positive contributions to the US Air Force's mission and the nation's defense. In addition, there is no doubt that demographic diversity may help counter groupthink through the expressed views of different races, ethnicities, and genders. Even if demographic diversity was the answer, and the US Air Force's D&I initiatives are successful, it will take decades for the field

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<sup>76</sup> Irving L. Janis, *Groupthink*, 262-272; Paul 't Hart, *Groupthink in Government*, 291-292.

grade and flag officer corps to be representative of the American public's demographic diversity. Consequently, when developing strategy it may be difficult to put together a demographically diverse team of officers. Fortunately, the research indicates that demographic diversity is not as important as cognitive diversity in avoiding groupthink. Therefore, no matter what the demographic make-up of a group, leaders must aspire to have cognitive diversity on their strategy teams. The next two chapters take a look at two Caucasian male USAF officers well known for their critical thinking capability and successful dissent against the corporate air force norms of the time.



## Chapter 3

### Lieutenant General Elwood Richard “Pete” Quesada

*I don't think it did me any harm. On the other hand I think it did me a hell of a lot of good and for what it's worth I hope you'll listen. I think a military officer, regardless of what service he's in, is improved if he handles unusual assignments. It makes him broader...I think you become more rounded...I think it helped me hopefully on how I thought.*

-- Lieutenant General Elwood Richard Quesada  
USAF Oral History

Lt Gen Elwood Richard “Pete” Quesada’s military career was exceptional compared to those of many of his peers. Many consider Lt Gen Quesada a very successful officer, not only because he acquired three stars before retiring, but because he effectively applied the lessons he had learned throughout his life and career to come up with innovative ideas and triumphantly tackle some of the toughest issues of his day. “In his twenty-six year career, [Lt Gen Quesada] dealt in one way or another with most of the major issues associated with the growth of American air power.”<sup>1</sup> His non-traditional upbringing in a single parent home, public-school and military education, experience serving as an executive officer and aide to senior officers and diplomats, and experience in WWII all played significant roles in shaping the way he approached these issues.

In a time where strategic bombing was king, Lt Gen Quesada was “the Air Force’s most outspoken supporter of tactical airpower.”<sup>2</sup> Sometimes his tenacity in tackling and addressing challenges did not always guarantee a warm reception from his superiors, peers, and subordinates. To him, getting the job done was the most important thing

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<sup>1</sup> John Schlight, “Elwood R. Quesada: Tac Air Comes of Age,” in *Makers of the U.S. Air Force*, ed. John L. Frisbee (Washington DC: Pergamon-Brassey, 1989), 178.

<sup>2</sup> Conrad C. Crane, *American Airpower Strategy in Korea, 1950-1953* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2000), 21.

and he had no difficulty stepping on others' toes in doing so. However, he "always relied on the logic of merit" to prevail. Therefore, Lt Gen Quesada used effective communication and diplomatic skill to convey the validity of his ideas and, in most cases, gain the support of many detractors. In a 1975 interview, Lt Gen Quesada said, "I think one of the real rewards of my military service, real reward to me was the objective attitude that prevailed, not only from my point of view, but by those that were surrounding me."<sup>3</sup> The ability to think critically and navigate the political landscape to communicate his ideas to those surrounding him were a result of Lt Gen Quesada's life and career experiences.

### **Early Life and Civilian Education**

Born in Washington D.C. on 13 April 1904. Gen Quesada was the youngest of four children born to Lope Lopez Quesada, a Spanish businessman, and the former Helen A. McNamara, an Irish-American woman from New York City.<sup>4</sup> Pete and his siblings were raised in a strict Catholic home in Washington D.C. where Lope worked for the Quesada family banking business overseeing the printing of Spanish currency at the Bureau of Engraving and Printing. Unfortunately, when Pete was 10 years old, his parents divorced due to a dispute over where the family should live. Lope, "being a Spaniard and his work being in Spain, by necessity, thought he had to live in Spain." Helen did not want to raise the kids in Spain "thinking it was a backward country."<sup>5</sup> As a result, the Quesada's ended up a broken family and the children lived with their mother.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Elwood Quesada, interview by Steve Long and Ralph Stevenson, 12 May 1975, transcript, K239.0512-838 (Maxwell AFB, AL: USAF Historical Research Center, 1988), 23, 25.

<sup>4</sup> Wolfgang Saxon, "Elwood R. Quesada, First F.A.A. Chief, Dies at 88," *The New York Times*, 10 February 1993, <http://www.nytimes.com/1993/02/10/us/elwood-r-quesada-first-faa-chief-dies-at-88.html> (accessed 23 March 2015).

<sup>5</sup> Elwood Quesada, interview by Steve Long and Ralph Stevenson, 1.

<sup>6</sup> Elwood Quesada, interview by Steve Long and Ralph Stevenson, 1-2, 7.

Although he was very fond of his father and occasionally visited him in Spain, Lope had only a minor influence on the man Gen Quesada became. Other than the short time he spent living in Washington D.C., Gen Quesada's father rarely came back to Washington after the divorce. He lived most of his life, and eventually died, in Spain. Gen Quesada said Lope "was a very decent God-fearing man with an abundance of Spanish pride, which was to a young boy attractive in those days. It isn't necessarily attractive today."<sup>7</sup> Dr. Thomas Hughes, the author of the only biography of Gen Quesada, revealed that over the course of many personal interviews with the general, he never had the impression Lope and Gen Quesada maintained a close relationship after the divorce. In fact, Hughes stated Gen Quesada could not remember the details of his father's death.<sup>8</sup> While his father only played a minor role in Gen Quesada's development, two educators provided a positive male influence.

Gen Quesada attended public schools in Washington D.C. Although a self-described average student, he excelled at athletics. Gen Quesada spent three years at McKinley Technical High School where he participated in baseball, basketball, tennis, track, and was captain and quarterback of the football team. His athletic talent blossomed into an opportunity to attend a small prep school in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania his senior year called Wyoming Seminary.<sup>9</sup> Gen Quesada explained, "It was and is a very, very fine Methodist school [that]...had quite a severe impact on me in later years." Specifically, the president of the school, Dr. Fleck, and his football coach, Professor Quay, persuaded Quesada

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<sup>7</sup> Elwood Quesada, interview by Steve Long and Ralph Stevenson, 2.

<sup>8</sup> Col Phillip S. Meilinger, *Airmen and Air Theory: A Review of the Sources* (Maxwell Air Force Base, AL: Air University Press, 2001), 49; Thomas A. Hughes (Professor of Airpower History, School of Advanced Air and Space Studies), interview by the author, 20 February 2015.

<sup>9</sup> Elwood Quesada, interview by Steve Long and Ralph Stevenson, 2-4; Thomas Alexander Hughes, *Over Lord: General Pete Quesada and the Triumph of Tactical Air Power in World War II* (New York: The Free Press, 1995), 22.



and his “big Pollock coal miner” teammates to take advantage of the educational opportunities offered them by their athletic talent. These two men “went out of their way to make them [Quesada and his teammates] realize that this was an opportunity to learn and be educated and get into college.”<sup>10</sup> The players all understood that they were brought to the school to play football, but if they did not take their studies seriously, then they would not be allowed to stay at Wyoming Seminary.

Dr. Fleck and Professor Quay did not exploit these young men, some of whom were in their early twenties, for their athletic ability. They truly took an interest in the young men’s lives and guided them along a positive path. Upon graduation from Wyoming Seminary, a large majority of Quesada’s teammates went on to college and made tremendous successes of themselves. Over fifty years later, Gen Quesada stated the two men and the school “had an everlasting affect [sic] on me, and I am making a rather generous remembrance [sic] in my will on their behalf...As a student, I was best at Wyoming.”<sup>11</sup> While Gen Quesada humbly downplayed his academic prowess, it is evident that Dr. Fleck and Professor Quay taught him the importance of taking advantage of, and learning the most from, the opportunities afforded him. This important lesson benefitted Gen Quesada throughout the rest of his life.

Following graduation from Wyoming Seminary in 1923, Gen Quesada enrolled at the University of Maryland where he also played quarterback on the football team. The summer following his freshman year was a life-changing event for the young Quesada. While working as a lifeguard at the Tidal Basin Bathing Beach where the Jefferson Memorial currently stands in Washington, Pete had an interesting

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<sup>10</sup> Elwood Quesada, interview by Steve Long and Ralph Stevenson, 4-6.

<sup>11</sup> Elwood Quesada, interview by Steve Long and Ralph Stevenson, 6, 12.



meeting with Millard “Tiny” Harmon. Tiny was a “moonlighting Air Service lieutenant who often refereed” college football games, including one Pete played in when Maryland beat the heavily favored Penn State.<sup>12</sup> While patrolling the basin in his row boat, Tiny grabbed a hold of the side of Pete’s boat and asked him what he was going to do next year. Perplexed, Pete told Tiny that he planned on playing football and pursuing his education at Maryland. Unsatisfied with Pete’s response, Tiny pitched the idea that Pete should attend the Army’s flying school at Brooks Field where he could also play on the football team. Tiny figured Pete was a good recruit because not only could he help the football team but he could most likely pass the flying curriculum. With this in mind, Tiny invited Pete to go flying with him at Bolling Field the next day. That first flight with Tiny Harmon started Gen Quesada’s love affair with flying. Immediately following the flight, “Quesada walked to the base hangar and signed enlistment papers. In another forty-eight hours he left for Texas.”<sup>13</sup> This began Gen Quesada’s very successful, albeit unusual, military career.

### **Interwar Military Career, Education, and Training**

Gen Quesada never possessed any aspirations to join the military as a young boy. He did not come from a military family and really had no military influences in his life up until he met Tiny. His father was a business man, his brother Erving was a lawyer, and his other brother Buddy an entrepreneur.<sup>14</sup> Nor did Gen Quesada attend a military academy like many of his peers. As a result, “Quesada entered the Air Service with few expectations and even fewer preconceptions. He held no preconceived notions for strategic airpower doctrine, nor was he concerned or likely even aware...of the Air Service’s ongoing struggle for

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<sup>12</sup> John Schlight, “Elwood R. Quesada: Tac Air Comes of Age,” 178.

<sup>13</sup> Thomas Alexander Hughes, *Over Lord*, 22.

<sup>14</sup> Elwood Quesada, interview by Steve Long and Ralph Stevenson, 7-9.

independence from the Army.”<sup>15</sup> Instead, Gen Quesada entered the Air Service with an open mind and allowed his career experience to shape his judgments. Gen Quesada’s initial career in the Air Service, however, turned out to be brief.

When he arrived at Brooks Field for flight school in 1924, he immediately hit the ground running with 150 other students. He flew in the WWI-vintage Jennies and played on the football team. Although he showed promise in the aircraft, his short experience as a military aviator almost came to an abrupt end when he broke his leg playing football. This unfortunate event caused Pete to miss six weeks of flight training. For most, this would be a devastating blow the likes of which could end in failure; not so for Pete. His experience as an athlete spawned a competitive fire that drove Pete to stay in Texas over the Christmas break and make up his training. Lieutenant Nathan Twining, an instructor at the school and future Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, recognized Pete’s flying skill and determination. As a result, he provided Pete with intensive flight instruction during the Christmas period. With this personal instruction, Gen Quesada managed to be one of only 15 graduates out of 150 students who started.<sup>16</sup> General Quesada admitted that while the others in his class had around 100 flying hours upon graduation, he completed the training with only 80. He credited Twining for making this possible. Quesada remarked, “I am very grateful and always grateful to Nate for keeping me in.”<sup>17</sup>

Following flight training at Brooks, Pete continued on to advanced flying training at Kelly Field where he was in the company of many future influential personalities and Air Force leaders like Charles Lindbergh and

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<sup>15</sup> Gregory Kreuder, “Lieutenant General “Pete” Quesada and Generalfeldmarschall Wolfram Von Richthofen: What Made Them Great?” (master’s thesis, School of Advanced Air and Space Studies, June 2009), 6.

<sup>16</sup> John Schlight, “Elwood R. Quesada: Tac Air Comes of Age,” 178; Thomas Alexander Hughes, *Over Lord*, 27-28.

<sup>17</sup> Elwood Quesada, interview by Steve Long and Ralph Stevenson, 13.

Thomas White, a future Chief of Staff of the Air Force. In fact, of the men that graduated from advanced training that year, eight held positions of high authority during WWII.<sup>18</sup> Nonetheless, they were all fledgling students competing with each other for placement in the most desirable aircraft. “Some would want the bomber, few would want the observer, some would want the attack, and most would want the pursuit” aircraft.<sup>19</sup> Young Pete was no exception. He desired to fly pursuit aircraft. Gen Quesada’s hard work and determination paid off when the instructors assigned him to pursuit aircraft, in which he spent the rest of his advanced flight training and “developed a reputation as a marvelous pilot.”<sup>20</sup>

In spite of his success in advanced flying training, Gen Quesada did not receive a regular commission following graduation in 1925. Officer slots were extremely limited due to budget and manpower constraints during the interwar period. Quesada was only slightly disappointed as he left Kelly Field because he only went to flight school “on a whim anyway.”<sup>21</sup> Thus a short career in the military came to a temporary halt.

Following graduation Pete spent a few years exploring different interests and careers. He went directly from Kelly to try out for the St. Louis Cardinals professional baseball team. He eventually made the team and was offered a larger contract than his teammate and future baseball great Dizzy Dean. Due to his childhood upbringing in a strict Catholic home, however, he found the language and recreational habits of a professional baseball team a little too much for him. In addition, Pete realized he did not possess the requisite skills to be successful in the big leagues. Therefore, he returned the \$1000 he received from the

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<sup>18</sup> Thomas Alexander Hughes, *Over Lord*, 29.

<sup>19</sup> Elwood Quesada, interview by Steve Long and Ralph Stevenson, 17.

<sup>20</sup> Thomas Alexander Hughes, *Over Lord*, 30.

<sup>21</sup> Thomas Alexander Hughes, *Over Lord*, 30.

Cardinals and moved to Florida to work for his brother's fishing charter business.<sup>22</sup> Pete only spent about a year working with his brother before accepting a position with the Treasury Department in 1926 working for the Division of Criminal Investigation in Detroit, Michigan. He enjoyed his job with the organization that later formed into the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Quesada commented it was "kind of spooky" and he sometimes "got to carry a tommy gun."<sup>23</sup> He even participated in one sting operation involving local bootleggers with connections to Al Capone's Chicago syndicate."<sup>24</sup> No matter how much Pete enjoyed his new job, it did not compare to the excitement he experienced flying airplanes.

While in Detroit, Gen Quesada ran into his old buddies Tommy White and Nathan Twining during a visit to Selfridge Field. The two were stationed at Selfridge flying the Air Service's newest pursuit plane, the Curtiss PW-8. Pete and many others considered the airplane "hot stuff."<sup>25</sup> After an evening of catching up on lost time, White and Twining offered to give Pete a ride in the PW-8 the following weekend. That ride and subsequent visits with his friends at Selfridge gave Gen Quesada "a greater and greater longing to get back into an airplane" and return to the Air Service.<sup>26</sup> This desire soon became a reality.

In 1926, Congress passed the Air Corps Act. Not only did the legislation change the name of the Air Service to the US Army Air Corps, but it also authorized an increase of nearly 2000 airplanes and the accompanying manpower required to maintain and fly them. This resulted in a 100% increase in manpower by 1932. Gen Quesada applied to take the "Army Air Corps Competitive Examination." He then quit his job, moved back to his mother's house in Washington, and

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<sup>22</sup> John Schlight, "Elwood R. Quesada: Tac Air Comes of Age," 178.

<sup>23</sup> Elwood Quesada, interview by Steve Long and Ralph Stevenson, 25.

<sup>24</sup> Thomas Alexander Hughes, *Over Lord*, 30.

<sup>25</sup> Elwood Quesada, interview by Steve Long and Ralph Stevenson, 26.

<sup>26</sup> Elwood Quesada, interview by Steve Long and Ralph Stevenson, 26.

enrolled in a preparatory class.<sup>27</sup> After taking the examination, Quesada thought he made a perfect score. He recalls thinking “My God, these fellows are going to think I cheated.”<sup>28</sup> Obviously he did well because of the 100 applicants, he was awarded one of the 18 Air Corps commissions that were available.<sup>29</sup>

In April 1927, Pete was back in the military as an Army Air Corps pilot. He spent his first assignment at Bolling Field as an engineering officer in charge of what today would be the maintenance shop. Bolling offered a variety of aircraft for Pete to fly and he took every opportunity to do so. He spent many afternoons and weekends flying above the skies of Washington. Quesada mastered one aircraft in particular, the Loening Amphibian, which many pilots found hard to fly.<sup>30</sup> His skill flying this and the other aircraft caught the attention of Captain Ira Eaker, who in an interview said Quesada showed “signs of being a very good pilot.”<sup>31</sup> This reputation and his experience in the Loening Amphibian, as well as multiple other aircraft, led to future opportunities for Quesada to fly with, impress, and learn from some of the Air Corps’ current and future leaders.<sup>32</sup>

While at Bolling, Captain Eaker recommended that the chief of the Air Corps, Major General James Fechet, take Pete with them on an expedition.<sup>33</sup> They flew two of Bolling’s Loenings up to Greeley Island to rescue a stranded German aircraft attempting to cross the Atlantic Ocean from the East. The expedition provided Gen Fechet the

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<sup>27</sup> John Shiner, *Foulois and the U.S. Army Air Corps* (Washington DC: Office of Air Force History, 1983), 31-33; Thomas Alexander Hughes, *Over Lord*, 31.

<sup>28</sup> Elwood Quesada, interview by Steve Long and Ralph Stevenson, 28.

<sup>29</sup> Thomas Alexander Hughes, *Over Lord*, 31.

<sup>30</sup> Elwood Quesada, interview by Steve Long and Ralph Stevenson, 30-32; Thomas Alexander Hughes, *Over Lord*, 31-32.

<sup>31</sup> Ira Eaker, interview by Hugh Ahmann, 10 February 1975, transcript, K239.0512-829 (Maxwell AFB, AL: USAF Historical Research Center, 1982).

<sup>32</sup> John Schlight, “Elwood R. Quesada: Tac Air Comes of Age,” 179.

<sup>33</sup> James Parton, *Air Force Spoken Here: General Ira Eaker and the Command of the Air* (Bethesda, MD: Adler Publishing, 1986), 69.

opportunity to fulfill his adventurous spirit and garner some positive press coverage for the Air Corp. Although the rescue experienced a few complications, it was completed successfully. Pete's poise and flying skill made quite an impression on the chief who "developed a marked preference for the young Quesada after the flight."<sup>34</sup> A couple of months later, Pete found himself working as Gen Fechet's Assistant Executive Officer.

As the assistant executive officer, Quesada functioned primarily as Gen Fechet's flying aide. He spent many hours in the cockpit flying Gen Fechet around the country in state-of-the-art two-seat pursuit aircraft inspecting various Air Corps bases. This experience offered the young lieutenant an opportunity to develop a close friendship and receive mentoring from the chief of the Air Corps. It also gave Quesada an opportunity to witness the inner-workings of the Air Corps and its highest ranking leaders. Pete observed and learned what was important to the Air Corps leaders and how they went about accomplishing their objectives. His position as the general's aide offered him one other exciting experience—to be a part of the historic *Question Mark* crew.

There exists some debate concerning the origins of the idea to test the feasibility of in-flight refueling and the mechanical endurance of aircraft. Author Bill Gilbert explains that the *Question Mark* mission "was the brainchild" of Ira Eaker.<sup>35</sup> However, Gen Quesada contends the idea first originated as a private endeavor between himself and a Marine Corps pilot named Ed Pue. He said, "Eaker, who was a person quick to grasp any opportunity that he thought would help the Air Force, turned it into a military endeavor. And he became the ramrod behind getting it organized."<sup>36</sup> Regardless of where the idea originated, General Fechet

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<sup>34</sup> Thomas Alexander Hughes, *Over Lord*, 35.

<sup>35</sup> Bill Gilbert, *Air Power: Heroes and Heroism in American Flight Missions, 1916 to Today* (New York: Citadel Press, 2003), 33.

<sup>36</sup> Elwood Quesada, interview by Steve Long and Ralph Stevenson, 63.



approved the concept and Pete found himself on a flight crew with Lieutenant Harry Halverson, Major Ira Eaker, and Captain Carl “Tooey” Spaatz, who nearly twenty years later became the first Chief of Staff of the Air Force.<sup>37</sup> Again, Quesada impressed those around him.

During their trip to the west coast, where the *Question Mark* mission was planned, the men with Pete marveled at how he did not allow their presence to prevent him from displaying his religious convictions. Every night before bed, he got on his knees to pray. Eaker commented on how Quesada’s courage impressed them all. Displaying the courage of his religious and other convictions was a normal occurrence throughout Gen Quesada’s career.<sup>38</sup> Shortly following the crews arrival in California, the *Question Mark* mission began. At 0726 hours on New Year’s Day 1929, the *Question Mark* took off from Metropolitan Airport in Van Nuys, California. The crew burned holes in the California sky for 150 hours, 40 minutes, and 14 seconds. The mission ended at 1407 hours on January 7, 1929. When all was said and done, the crew set a new record for endurance and distance. They flew 7,360 miles, refueled in mid-air with a fire hose 43 times taking on 5,660 gallons of gas and 245 gallons of oil. The crew gained world-wide notoriety and President Coolidge awarded them the Distinguished Flying Cross. Thirty-five years later, the Chief of Staff of the Air Force, Gen Curtis LeMay, recognized the *Question Mark* mission as an influential factor in the development of the KC-135 tanker aircraft and today’s sophisticated refueling techniques.<sup>39</sup> Gen Quesada fame and flying reputation followed him throughout his career and probably influenced his assignments leading up to WWII.

Following the *Question Mark* flight, Quesada continued to work in executive officer and aide positions. Following Gen Fechet’s retirement,

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<sup>37</sup> Bill Gilbert, *Air Power: Heroes and Heroism in American Flight Missions*, 33.

<sup>38</sup> Thomas Alexander Hughes, *Over Lord*, 35.

<sup>39</sup> Bill Gilbert, *Air Power: Heroes and Heroism in American Flight Missions*, 33-39.

Second Lieutenant Quesada was assigned as the Assistant Military Attaché and pilot for the US Ambassador in Cuba, Harry Guggenheim. This assignment levied a great deal of responsibility on a lieutenant. When Quesada reported in on the first day, his boss Major Red O'Hare said, "Okay Pete, you know you don't have to be formal here, there are only two of us and a certain amount of work to be done and we will share and share alike...We start on a 50-50 basis right now. I have been OD [Officer of the Day] for two years, now you be OD for two years."<sup>40</sup> Quesada tells a story about how he was placed in charge during a Cuban revolution while O'Hare took leave to Paris. He said he had the opportunity to personally brief and keep the ambassador up to date with "pretty accurate information on how the revolution was going."<sup>41</sup> Again, Pete's performance impressed his bosses. Not only did he get to work closely with Ambassador Guggenheim, an early airpower enthusiast, his relationship with Major O'Hare later "paid dividends when O'Hare became Omar Bradley's chief administrative officer in World War II. During the battle of France in 1944, this association contributed to a close air-ground organization."<sup>42</sup>

The rescue of the German plane, the *Question Mark* flight, the assignment working directly for the chief of the Air Corps, followed by his exceptional service in Cuba "established Quesada as an outstanding junior officer, pilot, and aide."<sup>43</sup> It also provided a young officer with a broad perspective of how senior officers and diplomats think and act; an opportunity uncommon for such a junior officer. This experience continued in 1933 when Gen Foulois assigned Quesada as executive officer, flying aide, and personal pilot for the first Assistant Secretary of War for Air, Trubee Davison, following his Cuba tour of duty.<sup>44</sup> Davison

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<sup>40</sup> Elwood Quesada, interview by Steve Long and Ralph Stevenson, 62.

<sup>41</sup> Elwood Quesada, interview by Steve Long and Ralph Stevenson, 62.

<sup>42</sup> Thomas Alexander Hughes, *Over Lord*, 37.

<sup>43</sup> Thomas Alexander Hughes, *Over Lord*, 38.

<sup>44</sup> John Schlight, "Elwood R. Quesada: Tac Air Comes of Age," 181.



spent the previous five years supervising the air arm's expansion and worked tirelessly to bring airmen and the Army closer together following Billy Mitchell's court-martial. The assignment under Davison kept Gen Quesada associated with the Air Corps' top brass and civilian political leadership. Gen Quesada reminisced, "This was a very good experience for me. And as such, every place he [Davison] went I went also."<sup>45</sup> In fact, Pete spent the last two months of his duty with Davison flying him around the country visiting every major airbase in the lower forty-eight United States. Once again, Gen Quesada had the opportunity to see how the Air Corps continued to grow since the Air Corps Act of 1926. He also observed how the growth was occurring at the expense of the other Army branches.

As the Great Depression began to take its toll on the War Department, hard budgetary decisions resulted in a deficiency of 389 aircraft of the 1,800 serviceable planes authorized by the 1926 act. This small shortage was nothing compared to what Quesada witnessed from the other branches. The budget spent on the Air Corps from 1926 through 1931 vastly outpaced the other branches. This did not go unnoticed by the artillery, infantry, and cavalry officers. While the Air Corps was getting the latest aircraft technology had to offer, the rest of the army worked out of dilapidated facilities and continued to train and work with WWI-era equipment. The Air Corps complaining about being short a few hundred aircraft did not garner any sympathy within the rest of the Army. This observation stuck with Quesada and gave him a better appreciation for the other branches' position. President-elect Roosevelt's Depression-era austerity program also eliminated all assistant secretary positions, including Davison's.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Elwood Quesada, interview by Steve Long and Ralph Stevenson, 73.

<sup>46</sup> John Shiner, *Foulois and the U.S. Army Air Corps* (Washington DC: Office of Air Force History, 1983), 81-82, 114; Thomas Alexander Hughes, *Over Lord*, 39.

Following the assignment with Davison, Pete attended advanced navigation school and then participated in the Army's failed attempt at delivering airmail across the country.<sup>47</sup> Unfortunately for Quesada, Gen Douglas MacArthur made Pete's next assignment the aide to the Secretary of War, George Dern. At this point in his career, Quesada did not see the value of all these aide and executive officer positions. He said, these assignments "got to become... 'a pain in the ass' and could turn into a liability. I didn't want to become a professional aide having in mind the effect it might have on my service, for lack of a better word, my career."<sup>48</sup>

After a short experience with Dern, Gen Quesada became flying aide and executive officer to the administrator of President Roosevelt's New Deal National Recovery Administration (NRA), Hugh Johnson. A well regarded industrialist, Roosevelt made Johnson responsible for revitalizing US industry. According to Quesada, Johnson was "the second most powerful man in the country" at the time. "Going around with him was a good education for me definitely in more ways than one." Johnson a "very, very powerful writer" also used Pete as a research assistant helping him to prepare congressional testimony, public speeches and formal written communications. As a result, Pete learned how to quickly delve into complex topics and become an effective communicator through both oral and written word. Pete also learned how irresponsible alcohol consumption can ruin an otherwise good man.<sup>49</sup>

Hugh Johnson regularly disappeared on multi-day drinking binges, negatively affecting his performance. Pete remarked, "He [Johnson] used to get so goddamn drunk it would last three or four,

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<sup>47</sup> John Schlight, "Elwood R. Quesada: Tac Air Comes of Age," 181-182; Thomas Alexander Hughes, *Over Lord*, 40-47.

<sup>48</sup> Elwood Quesada, interview by Steve Long and Ralph Stevenson, 78.

<sup>49</sup> Elwood Quesada, interview by Steve Long and Ralph Stevenson, 82-83.

occasionally five days. He would just disappear.” On one occasion in Cleveland, Ohio Johnson failed to meet Quesada at the airport a couple of days in a row. This was the final straw for Pete. In an interview, Quesada described the incident.

He started on a binge. And it was just...I hate to see a man of that type destroy himself by that contact. On this occasion I used to go out to the airport, and he was supposed to be out at 10 o'clock and he wouldn't show. This kept up for a couple days, and so, I got damn fed up and I went back and told him, 'Now look here, Mr. Johnson, I've had enough of this! Here you are, the head of the NRA; I'm your executive officer; I'm waiting out at the airport for you and you're in this hotel drunk.' I said, 'If you're not out there this afternoon at 4 o'clock, I'm going home without you.' And he came out at 4 o'clock. About three days later, he called me in and dressed me down for talking to him that way. He reminded me, which was certainly true, that he had treated me like my father, and he was pained to think that I would turn on him this way. He was very fond of me, and so I had a hell of a time getting out of this. So I realized the only way I could do it was, 'Mr. Johnson, it is because you treated me as my father, and it is because you have been fond of me I said what I said. I would say the same to my father.' He put his arms around me and it was all over. (laughing).<sup>50</sup>

This interaction with the second most powerful man in the United States is an enlightening insight into Gen Quesada's moral character and bold personality.

Many men in Pete's position, instead of causing waves, might have accepted Johnson's behavior and let a man of his stature continue to act in this destructive manner. However, Gen Quesada's moral convictions and unwillingness to enable such behavior would not allow him to remain silent. He took the brave action of confronting his boss even though it could have been detrimental to his career. This was par for General Quesada's career. He was not one to shy away from calling it

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<sup>50</sup> Elwood Quesada, interview by Steve Long and Ralph Stevenson, 84-85.

like he saw it and making sure people knew where he stood on an issue. He was politically correct when required but also had no issues being brash when the situation warranted. Perhaps this is why Gen Quesada became a highly sought after executive officer and aide.

Although all of his aide and executive experience shaped the way Quesada thought and acted throughout his career, his next assignment as personal pilot and flying aide to the commandant of the Infantry School in Fort Benning Georgia, then Col George C. Marshall, is probably the most influential.<sup>51</sup> Fort Benning represented the most prominent infantry culture in the Army. As such, Quesada thought it was not going to be the best assignment for a pilot, especially considering the current rift between the air branch and the rest of the Army. Much to his surprise, Pete realized that Marshall was a fair and open-minded leader who did not exhibit the “knee-jerk service parochialism so common to the period.”<sup>52</sup> Unable to adequately express his admiration for Marshall in words, Quesada said, “I think that Marshall was the aristocrat of our time. Marshall was the most selfless man that has reached public office in the last [twentieth] century in this country. He was selfless, always, at all times and under all conditions. He just had a certain something that was, he had it to an excess that almost set him aside from others in this area.”<sup>53</sup> Gen Marshall did not seem to hold the Air Corps’ growing budgetary success against them. Instead, he assumed an objective opinion similar to that held by Gen MacArthur who wrote that an Army too strong in the air is no different than one that overemphasizes cavalry. It is able to strike quickly and with great success, but unsuccessful in holding the gained objectives. Gen Marshall, like Gen MacArthur realized the important balance required between all the Army branches.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> John Schlight, “Elwood R. Quesada: Tac Air Comes of Age,” 182.

<sup>52</sup> Thomas Alexander Hughes, *Over Lord*, 47.

<sup>53</sup> Elwood Quesada, interview by Steve Long and Ralph Stevenson, 253-254.

<sup>54</sup> D. Clayton James, *The Years of MacArthur, Volume 1: 1880-1941* (Bethesda, MD: Houghton Mifflin, 1970), 162-166.

As a result of his service with Gen Marshall, Quesada also became “one of the few junior officers on the ground or in the air who understood this complex and nuanced relationship between the Army and its branches.”<sup>55</sup>

Since his new boss liked to fly, and often found excuses to do so, Quesada averaged more hours per day in the cockpit than any other time in his career. Flying around the country with Marshall, Pete learned quite a bit about the ground forces from the man who would become what many consider the finest American soldier of his time. Quesada also gained a greater appreciation for the sad state of affairs that existed in the Army, outside of the Air Corps. Even though he had the opportunity to see the disparity between the air and ground branches when he worked for Trubee Davison, the perspective Quesada gained from visiting various ground bases further cemented his opinion that the other branches were suffering at the expense of the Air Corps’ rapid growth. In 1926, the Air Corps received around 13 percent of the \$267 million War Department budget. By 1939, the Air Corps portion of the budget grew to 28 percent of the War Department’s \$480 million budget and a large portion of the Army’s total budget. In a time when the Air Corps took nearly 6,000 officer and enlisted positions from the other branches and the number of aircraft nearly doubled, the cavalry only received 47 tanks and the infantry did not purchase a single rifle.<sup>56</sup>

Pete spent a relatively short time at Fort Benning. The experience, however, made an impact that would follow Gen Quesada the rest of his career. Pete grew an appreciation for the ground forces mission and their perspective on the inter-service hostility. His performance and understanding of early joint-mindedness gained the respect of both

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<sup>55</sup> Thomas Alexander Hughes, *Over Lord*, 48-49.

<sup>56</sup> Thomas Alexander Hughes, *Over Lord*, 47-49; US War Department, “Relation of Air Corps Expenditures to Total War Department (Military) Expenditures, 1925-1938” (Maxwell AFB, AL: USAF Historical Research Center, 1939), Graph 167.6-5.

Marshall and Omar Bradley, an Infantry School instructor who Quesada would later “forge an American tactical-air doctrine in France and Germany”<sup>57</sup> during WWII.

Following the great experience at Fort Benning, Gen Quesada filled a staff officer position under Major General Frank Andrews at the General Headquarters Air Force (GHQ). Congress recommended, and Army leadership saw merit in, the formation of the GHQ as a semiautonomous branch of bomber, pursuit, attack, and observation aircraft responsible for America’s first line of defense in the homeland. Additionally, Army leaders thought formation of the GHQ would appease the airmen and stop their campaign to create an independent air force. Quesada joined Andrews on 1 January 1935 as only the second officer assigned to the GHQ. Working right at his side, Gen Andrews made Pete responsible for dealing with the red tape and paperwork required to assemble a new staff. The two men had the entire staff assembled by February. A few months later the GHQ moved to Langley and then Pete started pressing Gen Andrews for his next assignment at ACTS.<sup>58</sup> Quesada explained that he had concern over all the aide assignments the Army put him in and that any more of these types of assignments could ruin his career. Gen Andrew assured Pete not to worry. He said, “you’re getting great experience right here. It will someday make you a better officer. I need you right now, but maybe after all the initial work is complete I’ll think about it.”<sup>59</sup>

Although Pete did not see the benefit at the time, he later reminisced on how his executive officer and aide duties benefitted him by making him an uncommonly broad officer who thought differently. The

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<sup>57</sup> Thomas Alexander Hughes, *Over Lord*, 49.

<sup>58</sup> John Schlight, “Elwood R. Quesada: Tac Air Comes of Age,” 182-183; Thomas Alexander Hughes, *Over Lord*, 49-50.

<sup>59</sup> Thomas Alexander Hughes, *Over Lord*, 50.



following excerpt from a 1975 interview, although lengthy, provides fascinating retrospect from Gen Quesada.

I don't think it did me any harm. On the other hand I think it did me a hell of a lot of good...

I think a military officer, regardless of what service he's in, is improved if he handles unusual assignments. It makes him broader...I do think military assignments that are of the unusual type equip you better. I think you become more rounded...MacArthur, he was always doing the unusual. I'm not trying to class myself with him...I think that you could make a history of whereby unusual off-beat assignments contributed to a successful career...So I think it helped me rather than hurt me in the final analysis, and I don't think it helped me because who I knew.

I think it helped me hopefully on how I thought. You are coping with different types of problems. You're coping with Congress on one hand. You're coping with economic problems. You're coping with trying to persuade. You're coping with trying to influence and I think it is an asset rather than a liability to do the unusual...It makes you better, makes you more rounded...I'm convinced they helped me.<sup>60</sup>

The performance of these jobs reveal several traits of the young officer. First, Gen Quesada was a hardworking man dedicated to doing the best job possible. He understood that in order to succeed he had to make personal sacrifices. Second, Quesada was not socially inclined. He was not attracted to social scenes and paid very little attention to fitting in. Third, he was not completely selfless. As mentioned earlier, he did whatever he was assigned to the best of his ability. However, he was also concerned about his career. He wanted to have a successful career and move up the ranks. Therefore, he tried to learn everything he could from each assignment. Finally, there is no doubt that the experiences gave Pete a very broad perspective and made him an effective communicator. He commented on how the experiences made him a more rounded officer,

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<sup>60</sup> Elwood Quesada, interview by Steve Long and Ralph Stevenson, 87-88.



made him think differently, and prepared him with the gift of persuasion. These are not only valuable traits of great leaders, they are traits of independent thinkers and good strategists. General Quesada's next two assignments enhanced his breadth of knowledge through Profession Military Education (PME).

Gen Andrews kept his word and sent First Lieutenant Quesada to ACTS. Pete reported to Maxwell Field in August 1935 with some familiar friends and other classmates who would later make significant contributions to airpower in WWII and throughout Air Force history. These included John Cannon, Benjamin Chidlaw, Ira Eaker, Harold McClelland, Edgar Sorensen, Nathan Twining, and instructor Claire Chennault.<sup>61</sup> By the time these men were at ACTS, high-altitude-daylight-precision-bombing theory dominated the curriculum.

By 1926, US air theorists at ACTS questioned the Clausewitzian concept that war is decided between fielded forces on the battlefield. They argued that with air power it is possible to defeat an enemy by striking "vital points of a nation's structure rather than conducting exhaustive wars of attrition" between ground forces.<sup>62</sup> This line of thinking eventually marginalized the various roles of tactical air as ancillary, and very minor, in the air force's overall mission during war. "By 1935, the full-blown theory of high-level, daylight precision bombardment of pinpoint targets was being taught" at ACTS.<sup>63</sup>

At the time, this theory was unproven and technically impossible. Nonetheless, Lt Col Harold George, a Billy Mitchell disciple who was one of the few to risk testifying on Mitchell's behalf and the director of ACTS Department of Air Tactics and Strategy, attempted to step up the

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<sup>61</sup> Robert T. Finney, *History of the Air Corps Tactical School, 1920-1940* (Maxwell AFB, AL: USAF Historical Division, Air University, 1955), 58-59, 73-75.

<sup>62</sup> Robert T. Finney, *History of the Air Corps Tactical School*, 30.

<sup>63</sup> Robert T. Finney, *History of the Air Corps Tactical School*, 33.

strategic bombing indoctrination during Quesada's year at Maxwell.<sup>64</sup> George impressed upon the students that, "We shall attempt to develop logically the role of air power in future war...we are not concerned with fighting the past war, that was done 18 years ago. We are concerned however, in determining how air power shall be employed in the next war and constitutes the principles governing its employment." George continued to argue that "air power brought into existence a method for the prosecution of war which has revolutionized that art and given to air forces a strategic objective of their own independent of either land or naval forces, the attainment of which might, in itself, accomplish the purpose of war."<sup>65</sup>

Despite the indoctrination push, some students and instructors, like Chennault and Quesada, were not completely sold. In fact, Chennault, an instructor in the Pursuit Section, was vocal with his criticism. He bitterly blasted strategic bombing and accused Hap Arnold of distorting results of an exercise by pitting modern bomber aircraft against outdated fighter aircraft. His non-conformist approach resulted in Chennault becoming an outcast with his colleagues at the school. From Pete's perspective, "Chennault's quarrels with other faculty members highlighted just how contentious flyers could be, not only with the General Staff, but also among their own who did not share an enthusiasm for bombardment theory."<sup>66</sup> Thus, Pete took a different approach.

Probably due to his previous aide and executive officer experience, especially the assignment with Gen Marshall, Gen Quesada was more politically sensitive than Chennault and kept an open mind. He did not become an advocate on either side of the issue while at ACTS. Pete

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<sup>64</sup> Robert T. Finney, *History of the Air Corps Tactical School*, 58; Thomas Alexander Hughes, *Over Lord*, 53-54.

<sup>65</sup> Lt Col Harold L. George, "An Inquiry into the Subject of War," 248.11-19.

<sup>66</sup> Thomas Alexander Hughes, *Over Lord*, 55-57.

understood the revolutionary character of air power and the possibilities of strategic bombing theory. As a result of Chennault's teaching on pursuit tactics, Major Herbert Dargue's course on naval aviation tactics, and what little additional instruction he received on the subject at ACTS, however, Pete understood the benefits of tactical air as well. Therefore, he remained independent minded and did not rock the boat at ACTS. While many of his peers wrote their thesis papers on some aspect of strategic bombing theory, Pete chose a broad-minded approach to addressing the growing military turmoil in Europe; a topic that did not impress the partisan ACTS faculty. Nonetheless, Gen Quesada finished in the top third of his class and moved on to the Command and General Staff School (CGSS) in Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.<sup>67</sup>

Similar to ACTS, when Quesada reported to CGSS in 1936, he was one of the most junior officers in the class. His selection for the school demonstrated the confidence Gen Andrews had in Pete because successful completion of the curriculum was a stepping-stone to command. The school consisted of students from all branches and services as well as the international community. Of the 237 students in the class, only 35 were from the Air Corps. Even though the school was broader in its approach, the curriculum had a heavy emphasis on ground forces at the tactical and operational level with little focus on national strategy and mobilization studies. This drew criticism from many airmen because there was no time spent studying strategic air forces. In fact, CGSS only spent two days on airpower curriculum and both covered tactical air support to ground forces. Pete found the curriculum unchallenging, but he learned from the experience and the contacts he made at the school.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Thomas Alexander Hughes, *Over Lord*, 57-59.

<sup>68</sup> Thomas Alexander Hughes, *Over Lord*, 59-63.

General Quesada came to the same conclusion as Gen Marshall regarding CGSS—other than learning how to learn, he learned almost nothing of value from the official curriculum. Nonetheless, his time there was well spent because it allowed him to broaden his mind through interaction with a diverse group of peers. One such association involved a cavalry captain named Maurice Rose, who was later recognized as “a top armored commander” before being killed following his surrender to German forces in 1945.<sup>69</sup> Prior to CGSS, Rose had just graduated from armor school and, like Quesada, had extensive experience as an aide and executive officer. The two hit it off and regularly bounced ideas off of one another throughout the year. Through this interaction, the men developed ideas on close air support that they would both later employ during WWII. Quesada and Rose were independent minded and free from their respective organization’s corporate positions. They saw merit in airpower’s role in mechanized combat. As evidenced in a notebook provided by his wife Kate, Quesada understood that although his fellow airmen may not agree with him, “future war will require all sorts of arrangements between the air and the ground, and the two will have to work closer than a lot of people think and want.”<sup>70</sup> His relationship with Rose cemented this realization for Pete.

Following graduation, Gen Quesada spent a year as a flight commander in the First Bombardment Squadron at Mitchell Field in New York. Then, “all of a sudden out of the blue” he received orders to report to Argentina as a military technical advisor.<sup>71</sup> Pete was sent there as part of a small group, led by now Lt Col John Cannon, to help Argentina develop a modern air force with US bomber and fighter aircraft. Quesada had the task of helping the Argentines develop maintenance and supply

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<sup>69</sup> Edward M. Coffman, *The Regulars: The American Army, 1898-1941* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2007), 238.

<sup>70</sup> Thomas Alexander Hughes, *Over Lord*, 63.

<sup>71</sup> Elwood Quesada, interview by Steve Long and Ralph Stevenson, 89.

systems and also taught instrument flying. This assignment put Gen Quesada's powers of persuasion and diplomatic savvy to the test. He explained, "This was not an easy job, because the Argentines are quite proud people and at most time very sensitive. So it was very difficult to tell them to do anything. You had to be very round-about in your method of approach. So this got to be a job of persuasion."<sup>72</sup> It seems Quesada did a bang-up job. Cannon reported that Pete displayed the traits of a self-confident officer with an engaging personality during his duty in Argentina.<sup>73</sup> Once again a "victim" of his own success in an attaché-like position, following his three years in Argentina, Gen Hap Arnold summoned Pete to work on his staff at the War Department.

Quesada reported for duty in October 1940. Gen Arnold was extremely busy dealing with the massive Air Corps expansion and preparing for a looming war in Europe. After five days of waiting in the chief of the Air Corps office, Gen Arnold finally took five minutes to meet Pete and supply him with his duty responsibilities. Gen Arnold quickly informed Quesada he was the new foreign liaison chief responsible for dealing with all the embassies in Washington DC. He also told Pete his current rank would not be sufficient for the new responsibility and promoted him to major. With little time for further discussion, he dismissed Quesada from his office.<sup>74</sup>

While happy with his new promotion, Pete was not too excited about his new job. He recalled, "I was made head of the Foreign Liaison. I had to handle all the Embassies, having worked in Cuba, and now I'm tarred with this brush."<sup>75</sup> However, without realizing it at the time, this assignment once again paid off. He was back among the Army's most powerful leaders and near the center of all the activity in preparation for

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<sup>72</sup> Elwood Quesada, interview by Steve Long and Ralph Stevenson, 90.

<sup>73</sup> Thomas Alexander Hughes, *Over Lord*, 66.

<sup>74</sup> Thomas Alexander Hughes, *Over Lord*, 69-70.

<sup>75</sup> Elwood Quesada, interview by Steve Long and Ralph Stevenson, 91.

war. This gave Pete a bird's-eye view of the inner workings of the Army and its Air Corps. Quesada and his four assistants regularly worked fifteen-hour days dealing with the British, Chinese, Russian, and other embassies involved with the current war in Europe. The five men spent most of their time dealing with war-material requests. When they received requests, Quesada took them directly to Hap Arnold or George Marshall for signature. If either general disapproved a request, Pete had the unenviable task of informing the appropriate attachés. This became a daunting task, especially after France fell to the Germans.<sup>76</sup>

Great Britain requested 14,000 various types of US planes after France fell. President Roosevelt instructed manufacturers to give priority to British orders. This upset Gen Arnold because it delayed production of Air Corps orders, which he knew would be badly needed when the United States entered the war. As a result of the disagreement, Pete had to walk a fine line between the president's policy and Arnold's desires. He would often slow roll the process by delaying requisition forms or adding extra layers to the process in order to impede the British requests. In the end, however, Britain received the majority of the US produced planes until the United States entered the war.<sup>77</sup>

In March 1941, the US Congress signed the Lend-Lease Act agreeing to lend war material to Great Britain in exchange for access to British military bases. As a result, Secretary of War Henry Stimson ordered the Air Corps to increase its efforts in supplying the British through an air transportation system that could quickly fly war material to the allies. Unhappy with the directive, Hap Arnold decided to fly over to Great Britain to assess the feasibility of the directive. Since Quesada spent the last year working with the British, Arnold put him in charge of planning the trip. The two men flew over to Great Britain in early April

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<sup>76</sup> Thomas Alexander Hughes, *Over Lord*, 71-72.

<sup>77</sup> Thomas Alexander Hughes, *Over Lord*, 72-73.



and were there during some of the heaviest bombing of London. The trip offered Arnold and Quesada their first experience of seeing a nation at war. When they were not attending meetings with Winston Churchill, King George VI, and other British politicians and military leaders, they took every opportunity to tour the countryside and witness the activities of war. The trip had a significant impact on both men.<sup>78</sup> In reference to what they witnessed of the war effort Quesada remarked, "It established in my mind...that the British are very, very, courageous people and very fine people. I liked them before that and liked them more afterward." In the end, the trip resulted in the creation of the Ferrying Command, in which Arnold assigned Pete in charge of implementing the promises he made to the British. Again, Pete did not disappoint. As part of fulfilling many of Arnold's promises to the British, Quesada "extracted a promise from Arnold that I [Quesada] could have a tactical unit."<sup>79</sup> Gen Arnold kept his word.

### **Military Career in WWII**

In July 1941, Quesada found himself the commander of the 33rd Fighter Group at Mitchel Field, which he "was very, very, happy to get."<sup>80</sup> After the German declaration of war against the United States following the attack on Pearl Harbor, Arnold ordered the 33rd to Philadelphia to provide air defense of the city and the coast. As the commander, Quesada quickly found himself in a "hell of a jam."<sup>81</sup> When they entered the war, Quesada thought the United States "got all excited and made damn fools of ourselves, thinking how strenuously we had to defend" the coastline of mainland United States.<sup>82</sup> This caused Brigadier General

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<sup>78</sup> Elwood Quesada, interview by Steve Long and Ralph Stevenson, 92-93; Thomas Alexander Hughes, *Over Lord*, 73-74.

<sup>79</sup> Elwood Quesada, interview by Steve Long and Ralph Stevenson, 93.

<sup>80</sup> Elwood Quesada, interview by Steve Long and Ralph Stevenson, 93.

<sup>81</sup> Elwood Quesada, interview by Steve Long and Ralph Stevenson, 93.

<sup>82</sup> Elwood Quesada, interview by Steve Long and Ralph Stevenson, 93.



Sanderford Jarman's coastal artillery units to shine searchlights on every plane in the air. Quesada feared the lights could cause issues with his inexperienced pilots in the new P-40s. When Pete voiced his concern to Gen Jarman and asked him to change the searchlight protocol, the general refused and told Quesada he needed to better train his pilots. Quesada took his concern to the air staff for assistance. Before they had the opportunity to intervene, two of Quesada's young pilots died when they became blinded by the searchlights and collided three miles from their landing field. This infuriated Quesada and he usurped Gen Jarman's authority by issuing an order forbidding searchlights to be turned on any approaching aircraft. This infuriated Gen Jarman. Quesada's order directly challenged his authority and the general wanted him court-martialed. Consequently, Gen Jarman filed a complaint with the War Department and General Marshall's inspector-general, along with Gen Hap Arnold himself, were sent to investigate the incident.<sup>83</sup>

The investigation found both Jarman's and Quesada's actions inappropriate. Investigators reported that while Quesada acted brashly and did not have the authority to publish such an order, Jarman was not justified in using the searchlights in such a manner. Ultimately, neither man was severely punished over the incident.<sup>84</sup> Quesada reasoned, "This whole thing was ridiculous...the merits of the case had proven to be right. There was no justification whatsoever in these searchlights being turned on aircraft for that purpose. So I was sort of exonerated, but slapped just the same." It is hard to find how exactly Quesada was punished. Shortly following the incident Arnold promoted Quesada from a major to brigadier general in less than three months. Pete believes his quick promotion was "Arnold's way of slapping the ground forces on the

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<sup>83</sup> Elwood Quesada, interview by Steve Long and Ralph Stevenson, 93-94; Thomas Alexander Hughes, *Over Lord*, 80.

<sup>84</sup> John Schlight, "Elwood R. Quesada: Tac Air Comes of Age," 184-185; Thomas Alexander Hughes, *Over Lord*, 80-81.

wrist, and he made me a brigadier general (laughing). I will always think that that had something to do with it. Because I was very junior. I'll always think that Arnold was—it was a little bit parochial—that caused him to make me a brigadier general (laughter).”<sup>85</sup>

Gen Quesada may be partially correct concerning his rapid rise to brigadier general. However that was not the only reason. Another cause was the Army's incredible rate of expansion before and during the beginning of the United States involvement in WWII. Between 1939 and 1942, the air-arm expansion plan grew from a 45-group to a 274-group program.<sup>86</sup> Downplaying his speedy promotions, General Quesada explained this growth required competent junior officers to fill positions that were normally filled by officers of much higher rank. He said, “The main reason that these promotions took place in such rapid sequence was the rapidity of expansion...It wasn't because [he] was a great guy. It was...because [he] was a person who was fairly well qualified to do the job, and since he had the job they gave him the rank.”<sup>87</sup> This may have been the case for Gen Quesada, but most junior officers were not usually promoted in such a rapid manner. Gen Arnold must have seen something special in Pete.<sup>88</sup>

Freshly promoted, Brig Gen Quesada stood up the newly formed First Air Defense Wing as the commander. In January 1943, he took his wing to combat in Africa under the XII Fighter Command to protect Allied forces from air and submarine attacks as well as protecting friendly shipping and attacking enemy convoys in the Mediterranean. Shortly after his arrival, the Casablanca Conference convened and the participants decided to unite British and American forces into functional,

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<sup>85</sup> Elwood Quesada, interview by Steve Long and Ralph Stevenson, 94-95.

<sup>86</sup> Wesley Frank Craven and James Lea Cate, eds., *The Army Air Forces in World War II*, vol. 1, *Plans and Early Operations, January 1939 to August 1942* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948), 113-130.

<sup>87</sup> Elwood Quesada, interview by Steve Long and Ralph Stevenson, 99.

<sup>88</sup> Thomas Alexander Hughes, *Over Lord*, 81-82.

combined commands. In essence, all the bombers, fighters, and air defense planes and equipment were placed in their own separate commands under the Northwest African Air Forces (NAAF) commanded by Gen Carl “Tooey” Spaatz. The move aimed to cease the bickering among the Allies and more efficiently utilize scarce air resources.<sup>89</sup>

Following the Casablanca Conference all the senior British and American air leaders under Spaatz met in Tripoli to decide who would command each of the five combined air forces—Northwest African Strategic Air Forces (NASAF), Northwest African Tactical Air Forces (NATAF), Northwest African Coastal Air Force (NACAF), a training command, and a reconnaissance command.<sup>90</sup> While Quesada attended the meeting, he was just tagging along and not expected to participate in the proceedings. The meeting became contentious between the Americans, who lobbied for the best commands based upon their numerical superiority, and the British, who argued for the commands based upon their considerable experience commanding during war. Quesada could not remain silent. He offered an alternative solution arguing that whoever had the preponderance-of-forces in a particular unit should assign the commander for that unit. He reasoned this criteria was easily measurable whereas command experience was not. His explanation may have went too far. He said, “Let’s try to put some measure on experience...Let’s examine the experiences that the British say they have. The only precise way that I know [of] measuring is referring back to Dunkirk, Singapore, Crete, Greece, and other debacles.”<sup>91</sup> Immediately following his comments, Tooey Spaatz tapped

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<sup>89</sup> Col Phillip S. Meilinger, *Airmen and Air Theory: A Review of the Sources*, 49; Elwood Quesada, interview by Steve Long and Ralph Stevenson, 98; John Schlight, “Elwood R. Quesada: Tac Air Comes of Age,” 185-186.

<sup>90</sup> Wesley Frank Craven and James Lea Cate, eds., *The Army Air Forces in World War II*, vol. 2, *Europe: Torch to Pointblank, August 1942 to December 1943* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949), 162-166.

<sup>91</sup> Elwood Quesada, interview by Steve Long and Ralph Stevenson, 108-109.

Quesada on the knee and said, "Take it easy, Pete, that's all right."<sup>92</sup> Gen Spaatz knew Quesada had a good point concerning the criteria for command, but he also understood the younger Americans needed more war experience under their belts. Additionally, he realized Pete needed a good mentor to work under in Africa.

Most of the British leaders in the meeting took exception to Pete's criticism of their leadership. However, Air Vice Marshal Arthur "Maori" Coningham, who Spaatz later named the NATAF commander, grew a respect for Quesada that developed into a life-long friendship. Before the meeting, Coningham believed Pete was a "double-barrel jerk." Consequently, Pete's comments made Maori realize that Quesada was a straight shooter and intelligent. The two had quite a bit in common. Quesada explained that following his outburst, "From that day on I was a great pal of Maori Coningham, because Maori Coningham had tremendous dislike, that he would express quite vocally at times, for the leadership that the British Army had displayed...He would come right out and say it in an Army environment or wherever he happened to be. So this was sort of an echo of what he was trying to establish so that made us everlasting friends."<sup>93</sup>

Their friendship really blossomed in Africa where both shared the same beliefs concerning tactical air power employment. Maori was a proven commander who led British tactical air the winter prior during Gen Montgomery's success at El Alamein.<sup>94</sup> He convinced Montgomery that the best way to use tactical air was through interdiction of Luftwaffe airfields and lines of communication rather than using them as artillery. This use of tactical air greatly contributed to Montgomery's success.

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<sup>92</sup> Elwood Quesada, interview by Steve Long and Ralph Stevenson, 109.

<sup>93</sup> Elwood Quesada, interview by Steve Long and Ralph Stevenson, 108-109.

<sup>94</sup> Vincent Orange, *Coningham: A Biography of Air Marshal Sir Arthur Coningham* (London: Methuen Publishing, 1990), 111-126. Chapter nine provides further details of Air Marshal Coningham's role in the Battle El Alamein. The rest of the book provides a good accounting of Air Marshal Coningham's life and military career, to include his relationship with General Quesada during WWII.

This attracted Pete to Maori because up to this point he had been an unsuccessful advocate for this type of independent use of tactical air power with US Army leadership.<sup>95</sup> In his next assignment in Africa, Pete and his forces employed the same interdiction concepts over the Atlantic Ocean, Mediterranean Sea, and behind the enemies fighting front.

Following the meeting with his generals, Spaatz ultimately appointed his commanders by following Quesada's preponderance-of-forces criteria. He divvied the commands between the Americans and the British. Spaatz then ordered each command to name a deputy commander from the opposite nation. He made Air Vice Marshal Hugh Lloyd the commander of NACAF and convinced Lloyd to make Quesada his deputy over a more seasoned American general.<sup>96</sup>

Excited to be part of the shooting war, Quesada reported to Lloyd in late April 1943. Their relationship started off rocky. The NACAF's mission involved air defense behind the active front, operation of the theater's air communication systems, and defending Allied logistics lines of communications as well as interdicting the enemies. Quesada spent the first few weeks inspecting NACAF's American units. Reports got back to Lloyd that Quesada acted overly bossy and conceited during the visit. This confirmed to Lloyd why Spaatz wanted the young general under the seasoned air marshal. In addition to his abrasive relationship with NACAF's units, Quesada also had a personal run in with Lloyd.

Pete disagreed with Air Marshal Lloyd's plan to put British commanders, with American deputies, in charge of all NACAF's subordinate combined units. Quesada argued this plan limited command opportunities for Americans. When Lloyd refused to modify the plan, Pete took his complaint directly to Gen Spaatz. After unsuccessfully encouraging the men to solve the issue among themselves, Spaatz

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<sup>95</sup> John Schlight, "Elwood R. Quesada: Tac Air Comes of Age," 186.

<sup>96</sup> Thomas Alexander Hughes, *Over Lord*, 89-90.

ordered them to his headquarters and expressed his disappointment. Ultimately he determined Lloyd's reasoning as parochial and Pete's argument prevailed. NACAF's command assignments were given to both American and British countrymen. Quesada's victory had a major consequence. The confrontation chilled his relationship with Lloyd for some time. However, they eventually solved the personal issues and grew a mutual respect for one another.<sup>97</sup>

Under Air Marshal Lloyd's tutelage, Pete became a more effective leader and well-respected by his bosses and subordinates. Pete said, working as Lloyd's deputy was a "very fine assignment for me because I learned much from it."<sup>98</sup> This was evident by Lloyd's sentiment when Pete departed Africa. Despite their initial disagreements, Lloyd believed his previous concerns about Pete had no merit and that "he is in fact a splendid leader." Tooe Spaatz agreed stating that Quesada "handled a difficult assignment with firmness and tact." Pete also won the respect of those he led. Pete became the airmen's airman. While in Africa, he flew side-by-side with his men on twenty-one operational missions; a significant amount for a general officer. This earned him the reputation of a flying general. These mission allowed Pete develop a more balanced style of command while developing bonds with his pilots and ground personnel. Thus, when Pete left Africa he was both a better equipped leader and gained a significant amount of operational experience in war, which he credits to Lloyd's patient mentoring and leadership.<sup>99</sup>

Gen Quesada headed to Great Britain following his experience in Africa. By May 1943, the Allies cleared the Germans from the African continent and transferred many of the generals from Africa to Great

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<sup>97</sup> David Ian Hall, *Strategy for Victory: the Development of British Tactical Air Power, 1919-1943* (Westport, CT: Praeger Security International, 2008), 140-145; Thomas Alexander Hughes, *Over Lord*, 90-92.

<sup>98</sup> Elwood Quesada, interview by Steve Long and Ralph Stevenson, 107.

<sup>99</sup> Thomas Alexander Hughes, *Over Lord*, 108. For a more detailed account of Gen Quesada's experience as the NACAF deputy see chapter three of Thomas Alexander Hughes' book *Overlord*.



Britain to prepare for the invasion of Europe. This move allow the generals the opportunity to personally build up their commands for the invasion. Gen Dwight Eisenhower became the Supreme Commander with Air Chief Marshal Arthur Tedder as his deputy. Gen Spaatz became the commander of US air forces in Europe. Gen Quesada took command of the IX Fighter Command, which included the IX and XIX Tactical air commands. Pete reported to the Ninth Air Force Commander, Gen Lewis Brereton.<sup>100</sup>

Gen Quesada's responsibility included commanding the American tactical air forces allotted for the Normandy invasion. As such he immediately hit the ground running in preparation for the large task that loomed ahead. Interestingly, Air Marshal Maori Coningham took command of the British Tactical Air Forces in the European theater. This allowed the two men to work closely during multiple tactical air campaigns. In fact, the Americans did not have very much doctrine in regards to employment of tactical air. Therefore, planners fell back on what they learned from British and German air operations thus far in the war. Planners primarily used Field Manual 100-20, which was written and approved during the North African campaign. Quesada insisted, like Coningham during El Alamein, that tactical air forces should cooperate with ground forces as independent coequals. Therefore, the IX Fighter Command became the coequal of the numbered American army and worked closely with it.<sup>101</sup>

With the immense task that lay ahead, Pete showed little tolerance for incompetence or parochialism. He had less than a year to organize and train a force that grew from less than a dozen men in October 1943 to over 35,000 airmen and 1,600 airplanes by June 1944. He was not

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<sup>100</sup> Elwood Quesada, interview by Steve Long and Ralph Stevenson, 114-115; Thomas Alexander Hughes, *Over Lord*, 111-114.

<sup>101</sup> Elwood Quesada, interview by Steve Long and Ralph Stevenson, 115; John Schlight, "Elwood R. Quesada: Tac Air Comes of Age," 186-187.



concerned with being part of the social in-group or making friends. It was because of the seriousness of the situation and the care for those under his command that he demanded high standards. Pete informed biographer Thomas Hughes that he told his subordinate commanders that their men should “be perfect at all times. You must be prepared to weed out the incapable and inefficient...and you must do so with courage and conviction, setting aside personal feelings, sympathy, and friendship.”<sup>102</sup> Quesada treated his commanders no differently. He further explained, “I had little patience for those who turned out quite parochial regarding air-ground matters. I tried at first to move them around a bit, but eventually I sent the bad ones home. It usually meant the end of their careers.”<sup>103</sup> To Quesada, the mission was more important than anything else because failure resulted in death. Col Blair Garland, Pete’s chief signal officer, recalled, “At staff meetings he was forceful and sometimes impatient, though if you were forthright and honest and competent...if you were those things, you always got along fine.”<sup>104</sup>

Pete set a hectic pace in integrating and training his units. What normal required months of training, his men accomplished in weeks. Gen Quesada regularly brought in pilots he had flown with in Africa to teach the CAS and AI techniques they employed in that theater. He also sent his pilots to Italy to view Twelfth Air Force’s methods of cooperating with ground forces. Then, they would return to assist with training the rest of the pilots in combat drills.<sup>105</sup> As a result Quesada’s men became well trained in tactical air interdiction missions.

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<sup>102</sup> Elwood Quesada, interview by Steve Long and Ralph Stevenson, 114-116.

<sup>103</sup> Elwood Quesada, interview by Steve Long and Ralph Stevenson, 116.

<sup>104</sup> Blair Garland, interview by Hugh Ahmann, 7 June 1982, transcript, K239.0512-1332 (Maxwell AFB, AL: USAF Historical Research Center, 1984).

<sup>105</sup> John Ramsay, *Ninth Air Force in the ETO, 16 October 1943 to 16 April 1944*, Army Air Forces Historical Study 32 (Maxwell AFB, AL: USAF Historical Division, Air University, 1945), 104-104, 150-154; John Schlight, “Elwood R. Quesada: Tac Air Comes of Age,” 189.

Unfortunately, Gen Quesada did not realize they were going to need such close coordination with ground forces until after the invasion. Therefore, the men spent the last couple of months before Normandy training for air interdiction missions designed to isolate the battlefield. Quesada's planes also flew many combat mission help gain control of French airspace by attacking the Luftwaffe and escorting Allied bombers up through April 1944. Nonetheless, Pete explains during Normandy the Army had an extremely difficult task in close combat that the Air Corps did not anticipate.<sup>106</sup> Contact with the Germans was "severe; the casualties were high. It was conducted under the most harsh circumstances...the Air Force was unaware of how much they could do in the area [CAS]. The Air Force generally thought that they were ineffective in that area, that their arm was not the best arm to use when the ground forces were in close and bitter contact with the enemy."<sup>107</sup> Pete admits he suffered from the same short-sightedness by stating, "There was an attitude that went all through the Air Force, that I adopted, my juniors adopted and my senior adopted, that this [CAS] was not our mission. It was not our mission to participate that close to battle. However, after just a matter of just days [following D-Day] it was just obvious that there was a lot that we could do." The Allies placed men with VHF radios with every regiment.<sup>108</sup> These men were modestly trained to pass airstrike coordinates to the pilots above. Pete claims these men "contributed mightily" to the success at Normandy.<sup>109</sup> Pete and his men learned from this experience and made adjustments to better accomplish the CAS mission.

The allies had now broken through the beachhead and established positions in France. Although the Air Corps routinely placed liaison

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<sup>106</sup> Elwood Quesada, interview by Steve Long and Ralph Stevenson, 128; John Schlight, "Elwood R. Quesada: Tac Air Comes of Age," 190-191.

<sup>107</sup> Elwood Quesada, interview by Steve Long and Ralph Stevenson, 119.

<sup>108</sup> Elwood Quesada, interview by Steve Long and Ralph Stevenson, 138.

<sup>109</sup> Elwood Quesada, interview by Steve Long and Ralph Stevenson, 146.

officers with the Army at the corps level, they were strictly used as liaisons performing staff coordination functions. Quesada claimed his idea of placing airmen with ground units to better provide CAS did not occur until shortly before the breakout at St. Lo. The idea was to put well-trained airmen on the ground who speak to airborne pilots in airmen's terms when directing CAS. This represents the birth of the modern-day concept of the Air Liaison Officer (ALO) and Forward Air Controller (FAC). Quesada contends the combined use of aircraft as an extension of artillery and in CAS was crucial in the operation at St. Lo. He said, "I always say...that a contributing factor, and I mean a very significant contributing factor, to the breakout was the concentration of armor in a small narrow area that was escorted from dawn to dusk. Every column was escorted by fighters who were armed. And that was a great contributing factor to the complete success of the breakout of St. Lo and the rushing movement to Avranches."<sup>110</sup>

The example of St. Lo demonstrates Gen Quesada's willingness to keep an open mind and do what is best for the mission, despite the strategic bombardment company line. Author John Schlight regards the break through at St. Lo as a turning point for both tactical air doctrine and Gen Quesada. He wrote, "Having shared until then the flyer's almost universal aversion to working too closely with ground troops, [Quesada] underwent what was almost a battlefield conversion in coming to appreciate at close range the necessity of cooperation."<sup>111</sup> Gen Quesada demonstrated his propensity for independent thinking. This is just one more example of his distaste for, and refusal to participate in, any kind of service parochialism. As a result, his forces were instrumental in the breakout of St. Lo.

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<sup>110</sup> Elwood Quesada, interview by Steve Long and Ralph Stevenson, 139-141, 164.

<sup>111</sup> John Schlight, "Elwood R. Quesada: Tac Air Comes of Age," 195-196.

Before and after Normandy, Gen Quesada played a significant role in some important innovations in airpower. One such development involved an FM-radio-telephone network used for long distance real-time communication between vastly geographically separated headquarters. He and his men also modified equipment and developed techniques to use Microwave Early Warning Radar Sets (MEWS) to control aircraft. Designers developed the MEWS as an air defense radar for identifying incoming enemy aircraft. Pete and his men found that by attaching a Norden bombsight upside down and backward to the radar, however, they could make a device to track and control friendly aircraft. This innovation represented the first use of radar as an offensive instead of a defensive weapon; a concept still used today. Quesada's willingness to keep an open mind and encourage creative, energetic, and decisive officers like himself became the driving force behind these and many other innovations during the war for which he receives relatively little credit.<sup>112</sup> However, Pete's involvement during one of the most notorious battles on the continent in WWII is legendary.

The Battle of the Bulge illustrates another example of Gen Quesada's effective use of tactical airpower. It also represented the first and only time "American air power was used in an unplanned and large-scale defensive operation" during the war.<sup>113</sup> The battle occurred due to Hitler's last-ditch effort to drive through Belgium and separate American and British forces on the continent. Since the Luftwaffe was essentially defeated, the Germans attempted to take advantage of overcast skies and total ground fog to neutralize Allied air power and mount a ground offensive aimed at attacking Allied garrisons. Unfortunately, they did not

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<sup>112</sup> Elwood Quesada, interview by Steve Long and Ralph Stevenson, 133-137; John Schlight, "Elwood R. Quesada: Tac Air Comes of Age," 189-190; Thomas Alexander Hughes, *Over Lord*, 126.

<sup>113</sup> Thomas Alexander Hughes, *Over Lord*, 274.

count of Gen Quesada's gamble to fly American CAS and AI sorties in the unfavorable weather.<sup>114</sup>

The converted MEWS radar was instrumental in the battle. Due to the weather, pilots were unable to visually distinguish between enemy tanks and vehicles from friendly forces. Therefore, Quesada moved two radars closer to the ground action and used radar operators, who knew the front line location, to advise pilots when to strike and when to hold their fire. Thus Gen Quesada's and Air Marshal Coningham's airplanes, which Maori turned over to Pete's command for the battle, were decisive in halting the advancing German ground forces. They combined with allied ground forces to execute a truly combined and joint attack that used fighter-bombers to fly armed-reconnaissance missions and CAS. At the same time, medium and heavy bombers provided AI by attacking German choke points. The combination of allied artillery, tanks, and infantry teams with constant US tactical air strikes crushed the Germans' will to fight and ultimately won the battle. Gen Omar Bradley credited the tactical air missions with strangling Hitler's supply routes and significantly helping the First and Third Armies counter-attack that resulted in the German retreat. Dwight Eisenhower told Winston Churchill that the Battle of the Bulge was the greatest Allied victory of the war.<sup>115</sup>

Gen Quesada made a tremendous impact during the war. Many ground commanders praised Quesada's use of tactical airpower. General Ridgway, Commander of the XVIII Airborne Corps, noted that Quesada's airplanes did all they could for the XVIII Airborne Corps on every occasion. Additionally, General J. Lawton Collins stated that without the tactical air support the VII Corps could not have made the progress they

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<sup>114</sup> John Schlight, "Elwood R. Quesada: Tac Air Comes of Age," 197; Thomas Alexander Hughes, *Over Lord*, 272, 277, 280.

<sup>115</sup> John Schlight, "Elwood R. Quesada: Tac Air Comes of Age," 197-198; Thomas Alexander Hughes, *Over Lord*, 290-292.

did as fast as they did with as few casualties. “When Eisenhower asked Bradley to rank the thirty most important American generals of the campaign, he placed Quesada fourth, behind only Eisenhower’s chief of staff Walter Beddell Smith, Tooe Spaatz, and Courtney Hodges. Bradley believed Quesada had contributed more to the war effort than George Patton...[and] far above most other air force commanders.”<sup>116</sup> The American ground commanders’ recognition of Pete’s great work with tactical air would be instrumental in the years following the war.

### **Post-WWII Military Career**

Gen Quesada played an instrumental role in the USAF gaining its independence from the Army in 1947. Both Air Corps and Army leaders recognized Pete’s expertise in providing tactical air support to ground forces. This became important when an informal group that included Spaatz, Eaker, Fred Anderson, Lauris Norstad, Hoyt Vandenberg and Quesada set out to promote the idea of a separate air force. While negotiations with the Navy took place at the Secretary’s level, Quesada’s role included persuading Senators and the Army. He specifically targeted Senator Leverett Saltonstall, the Chairman of the Armed Services Committee, Gen Eisenhower, and Gen Bradley. Pete had to convince them that the Army did not need its own tactical air force because an independent air force could take care of that mission set.<sup>117</sup>

Gen Quesada was the obvious choice to make the argument on behalf of the Air Force for two primary reasons. He had the credibility and admiration of Army leadership for his tactical actions throughout WWII. He could also “argue with strong conviction that it would not be to the interest of the armed services to have the Army have its [own] tactical air forces.”<sup>118</sup> Gen Quesada’s relationships with Eisenhower and

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<sup>116</sup> Thomas Alexander Hughes, *Over Lord*, 302-303.

<sup>117</sup> John Schlight, “Elwood R. Quesada: Tac Air Comes of Age,” 198-199.

<sup>118</sup> Elwood Quesada, interview by Steve Long and Ralph Stevenson, 217-218.



Bradley before the war, and his proven performance during the war, enabled the Air Force's to become an independent service.

Additionally, during the Air Force's campaign, Spaatz promised Eisenhower that an independent air force would always meet its tactical air support commitments to the Army. Spaatz's commitment, along with Quesada's reputation, enabled Eisenhower to support a separate air force. Spaatz live up to his commitment and formed the tactical air forces under one command and named Gen Quesada the Commanding General, Tactical Air Command. Pete eventually convinced Spaatz to locate his command at Langley Field, Virginia in order to improve coordination with General Jacob Devers' and his ground forces at Fort Monroe.<sup>119</sup> In a speech presented at Langley Field in November 1946, General Quesada explained why he fought to be located in close proximity with the ground forces and his ideas on tactical air power.

I would like to discuss our concept of what tactical air power is and its usage. The very existence of the Tactical Air Command is dependent on the use of ground force troops. I have gone to great lengths to get General Devers' Headquarters moved to Fort Monroe, Virginia in order that closer cooperation and coordination of our common objectives could be achieved...the Tactical Air Command, Army group must function as an Air-Ground team...they both must participate in the assistance of one another to obtain the final results...To those people who advocate placing tactical air power directly under Army divisions, it is apparent that they have failed to realize that the air-ground team works multi-laterally. Obviously the role of ground forces supporting the air forces has never been imagined by them. It is conceivable and did happen during the past conflict, when major ground force units sought objectives specifically to support the Tactical Air Force operations...in Tactical Air Power...We pursue the view that by isolation and interdiction, the ground campaign then becomes a war of movement and not a war of fire power against defended objectives. Those who advocate tactical air power as a means of augmenting a division with additional fire power, fail to grasp the significance of isolating

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<sup>119</sup> Elwood Quesada, interview by Steve Long and Ralph Stevenson, 218-219.



an army before it is able to come in contact with opposing ground forces...

The objective of Tactical Air Power is not the destruction of an enemy's army...The objective of Tactical Air Power is the prevention of an enemy army to engage or continue to engage in conflict...The destruction of an enemy army may be incidental to the effort. Tactical Air Power prevents the enemy from engaging in the conflict on equal terms with us...To be sure, this method of [accepting] no traditional lines of battle place Tactical Air Power in the envious position of preventing a ground campaign before two ground armies are permitted to make contact. To this end, Tactical Air Power must recognize the intentions of the enemy ground force to a greater extent than ever conceived necessary by airmen.<sup>120</sup>

Gen Quesada's speech displayed an understanding and dedication to tactical air power that was rare in the rest of the Air Force. In fact, one could argue the main reason some leaders gave any credence to tactical air power was to help in the independent Air Force campaign.

In April 1948, not too long after Gen Quesada took command and the Air Force became a separate service, Gen Spaatz retired and Gen Hoyt Vandenberg became the next Air Force Chief of Staff. The United States found itself in the Cold War with the Soviet Union. As a result of this and a tightening budget, the Air Force significantly expanded Strategic Air Command (SAC) at the expense of Tactical Air Command (TAC). By December 1948, Vandenberg stripped TAC of many of its units and it became an operational and planning headquarters under Continental Air Command (CAC).<sup>121</sup> This move angered both Quesada and Spaatz because in their opinion it undercut the promises they made to Eisenhower and the rest of the Army to honor their commitment to provide adequate tactical-air-power support of ground forces. Quesada

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<sup>120</sup> Maj Gen Elwood R. Quesada, "Tactical Air Power," (lecture, Langley Field, VA, 5 November 1946).

<sup>121</sup> Col Phillip S. Meilinger, *Airmen and Air Theory*, 49. Conrad C. Crane, *American Airpower Strategy in Korea*, 21.

later commented, “The violation of that principle was a sad day for the Air Force.”<sup>122</sup>

Disenchanted with the deteriorating condition at TAC, Quesada refused the offer to command CAC and asked Gen Vandenberg to approve his retirement.<sup>123</sup> The chief disapproved Pete’s request partly because he feared “congressional and Army reaction if Quesada, the air arm’s most prominent advocate of close air support, prematurely left the service. The Air Force had won its independence from the Army in [1947] only after its leaders had promised to keep tactical aviation a high priority, and Quesada’s presence in uniform had been a visible symbol of that commitment.”<sup>124</sup> For the next two years Quesada was put in charge of the unwinnable task of drafting legislation to remove control of the Air National Guard from under state control by nationalizing the force followed by an assignment to oversee the nation’s first hydrogen bomb test in the Pacific.<sup>125</sup>

Finally, after Vandenberg continued to refuse his retirement request, Quesada pleaded his case to Secretary of the Air Force Thomas Finletter. In the spring of 1951, the Secretary approved his request and Pete retired amongst “a swirl of media reports that he was ‘resigning in protest’ over the treatment of tactical air power.”<sup>126</sup> Quesada’s retirement occurred as the United States was deeply involved in Korea, which at the time highlighted the Air Force’s lack of tactical aviation prowess. This caused the Chairman of the House Military Affairs Committee in the US Congress to question why the Air Force would allow the best qualified tactical aviation general in the Air Force to retire in the middle of a new war in Korea. The chairman proposed a public hearing to investigate the matter. Remaining a diplomat to the end, Quesada

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<sup>122</sup> Elwood Quesada, interview by Steve Long and Ralph Stevenson, 222.

<sup>123</sup> John Schlight, “Elwood R. Quesada: Tac Air Comes of Age,” 202.

<sup>124</sup> Thomas Alexander Hughes, *Over Lord*, 304-305.

<sup>125</sup> John Schlight, “Elwood R. Quesada: Tac Air Comes of Age,” 202.

<sup>126</sup> John Schlight, “Elwood R. Quesada: Tac Air Comes of Age,” 203.

made it clear to all involved in the dispute that he would not engage in any mud-slinging. Without his cooperation, the chairman was forced to drop the investigation.<sup>127</sup>

From the time he was a child up through the end of his military career, Gen Quesada always tried to let logic prevail and do what was best in a situation. The way he ended his military service is a great example. He understood that if the Air Force was not willing to commit the resources required to sufficiently provide tactical air support to the Army, then he was no longer the right person to lead such an organization. Therefore he declined to command CAC and requested to retire. When finally allowed to retire among perceived controversy, Pete realized that airing the Air Forces dirty laundry in a public forum would not benefit the Air Force or the country. Thus, he refused to participate in such activities.

### **Conclusion**

Looking back on Gen Quesada's life it is not hard to see that he was a man of outstanding character. He also possessed some traits that assist in avoiding groupthink. Gen Quesada was a critical thinker, independent personality, outstanding leader, innovator, recognized expert, and effective communicator. Although his religion played a role in how he conducted himself, it alone was not a significant factor in developing these traits. Nor was his race or gender a major factor. The primary factor in developing these traits was Gen Quesada's life and career experience.

As a young man, he excelled at many sports, which led to educational opportunities. His football prowess enabled him to attend Wyoming Seminary, where he began to take his education seriously and learned to work hard as well as take advantage of the opportunities

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<sup>127</sup> Thomas Alexander Hughes, *Over Lord*, 305-306.

provided to him. Football also led to his recruitment into the air service. Tiny Harmon recognized Pete's athleticism and realized he made a great candidate for pilot training. The experience in the air service really affected Pete's development as a critical thinker.

Following pilot training, Pete filled many executive officer and flying aide positions for some very influential military leaders, civilians, and diplomats. Entering the service with no preconceived notions, his experiences working closely with high level leaders offered Quesada the opportunity to view both military and national issues with a broad perspective. These experiences allowed him to rise above service parochialism and form his own independent view and opinions. He also learned the skills required to maneuver among the political landscape and become a diplomat as well as an effective communicator.

Following his executive officer and aide positions, Pete continued to broaden his mind and communication skills through PME. At ACTS, despite the attempted indoctrination into strategic bombing by most of the faculty, Pete's previous assignments allowed him to keep an open mind. He understood the possible benefits of strategic bombing theory. He also thought, however, that tactical air had a significant role when applying air power during war. Quesada further developed his concepts for the role of tactical air power at CGSS where he and others developed the concepts of tactical air that they would later apply during WWII.

In WWII, Gen Quesada really developed his leadership skills and established his reputation as an independent thinker, innovator, and expert in tactical air operations. He also displayed his willingness not to let conformity impede expressing his opinion or doing what was best for the mission. Immediately upon his arrival in Africa, he expressed his displeasure in a meeting of superiors when he did not agree with the British generals' contention they were better qualified than Americans to lead the combined air units being formed as a result of the Casablanca Conference. Also in Africa, his assignment as Air Marshal Lloyd's deputy

in NACAF provided the patient and forgiving mentorship required for Gen Quesada to refine his leadership skills. Finally, his experience in NACAF provided Pete the opportunity to learn from Maori Coningham and further refine the tactical air concepts Pete used in Europe.

As much as Africa is the place where Pete developed his leadership experience, Europe represents the theater where Gen Quesada established his credibility as a tactical air expert and innovator. His ability to allow him and his men to improvise in using equipment and tactics resulted in great success. He and his men were critical to the success at Normandy, the breakout at St. Lo, and the Battle of the Bulge. Gen Quesada did not allow Air Corps parochialism to affect his action in Europe. He applied tactical air power in a way that he thought would most effectively and efficiently accomplish the mission regardless of what other ground or air commanders thought. As a result, he received criticism from some and praise from others. Nonetheless, coming out of Europe, both air and ground leaders alike recognized Gen Quesada as the leading expert in tactical air operations. This designation became a critical factor in the Air Force's independence from the Army in 1947.

## Chapter 4

### Colonel John Ashley Warden III

*His true achievement is that he took a series of unconnected ideas and gathered them into a coherent theory; matched the theory to the new technology that could implement it; and had the strength of character and the opportunity to push the theory through a huge bureaucracy, despite serious opposition...Warden served as a catalyst, an intellectual leader who returned air power theory to its rightful place on the air force agenda. As such, Warden has become the main symbol of the renaissance in aerospace thinking that has characterized the 1990s and continues to this day.*

-- John Andreas Olsen

*John Warden and the Renaissance of American Air Power*

Like Gen Quesada, Colonel John Ashley Warden III was an innovative thinker who challenged the USAF corporate mindset. Their two careers are interesting because while Gen Quesada pushed for tactical air power in a strategic bombing era, Col Warden pursued a strategic bombing-like strategy nearly fifty years later in a fighter pilot-dominated air force where tactical air power reigned supreme. Immediately following WWII and up through the Vietnam conflict, the United States found itself in a Cold War with the Soviet Union. As a result, the Department of Defense began focusing on further development of nuclear weapons and warfare. The country's emphasis of nuclear warfare and deterrence caused the military branches to pursue nuclear weapons and doctrine to the detriment of conventional weapons and doctrine. This was most evident within the air force.

Following the USAF's independence in 1947, the Tactical Air Command was gutted in favor of the Strategic Air Command. Gen LeMay and the rest of the "bomber mafia" ran the USAF up through Vietnam. While the tactical air mission did get some attention, the primary focus remained in the delivery of nuclear

weapons by bombers and intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs). As a result, “The air force found itself in a position where its leaders had devoted a great deal of thought and doctrinal ink to the extreme poles of the conflict spectrum—nuclear war and the tactical air battle. The area between these extremes—conventional air war at the operational and strategic levels—had been ignored.”<sup>1</sup> The USAF culture changed from the “bomber mafia” to the “fighter mafia” following the Vietnam Conflict.<sup>2</sup>

Col John A. Warden III, a fighter pilot by trade, witnessed this transformation during his Air Force career. He was not the typical fighter pilot, however. Col Warden was a rare breed of airman. Instant Thunder—an air campaign strategy that revolutionized the way the US Air Force and the world thought about air power—is the product of Col Warden’s extraordinary intellect and fearless challenge of USAF leadership and doctrine. His roots as an innovative thinker began well before he joined the military, however. This Chapter briefly explores Col Warden’s life and education before he entered the Air Force Academy. Then it looks at his life as a budding air strategist throughout his military career. Finally, the chapter cover two specific cases—the Instant Thunder air campaign and his time as Commandant, Air Command and Staff College—in which Col Warden confronted opposition in his quest to change air force corporate thought.

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<sup>1</sup> John Andreas Olsen, *John Warden and the Renaissance of American Air Power* (Washington, DC: Potomac Books, 2007), vii.

<sup>2</sup> The following sources provide details concerning why and how the USAF cultured evolved following WWII up through the end of the Vietnam War. Conrad C. Crane, *American Airpower Strategy in Korea, 1950-1953* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2000, 56-75; Mark Clodfelter, *The Limits of Air Power: the American Bombing of North Vietnam* (Lincoln NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), 26-72, 147-146; Tom Clancy with Gen (ret) Chuck Horner, *Every Man a Tiger: The Gulf War Air Campaign* (New York: Berkley Books, 2000) 111-133.



## **Early Life and Education**

Born on 21 December 1943, John Ashley Warden III is the only child of John A. Warden Jr. and his wife Kathleen. He was the fifth in his family to pursue a military career. His great-grandfather fought for the Confederacy in the Civil War, his grandfather John Ashley Warden retired as a Brigadier General in the US Army during both WWI and WWII, and his uncle Henry Edward “Pete” Warden flew P-40s in WWII. Pete is considered a founding father of the B-52 bomber program. One could make the case that Col Warden inherited his controversial, or maverick-like, traits from his Uncle Pete who exercised far greater authority than he actually possessed while involved in the B-52’s development. Like Col Warden later in his career, Pete’s reputation prevented his promotion to general officer.<sup>3</sup> Nonetheless, Col Warden’s parents, especially his mother, represent the primary influence that shaped John’s inquisitive mind.

John Jr., an engineer, and Kathleen, a homemaker, raised Col Warden in a traditional Christian family setting. They shared the view that people have the power to determine their own future and most limitations placed on individuals were self-imposed. While John Jr. attended college at Texas A&M, Kathleen, an excellent student in her own right, did not attend college for economic reasons. In spite of this, she remained engaged in educating herself by studying and reading on her own. She was an autodidact who instilled the same quality in Col Warden beginning at a young age. Both John Jr. and Kathleen were well read in classical literature, history, politics, and current affairs. From the time he was able to read, his parents encouraged Col Warden to read various books, magazines, newspapers, and other forms of literature in order to develop a foundation from which to develop and express his own views on various topics. Many nights at the dinner table during Col

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<sup>3</sup> John Andreas Olsen, *John Warden and the Renaissance of American Air Power*, 7-11.

Warden's childhood, the family discussed and debated a wide range of topics based on their readings.<sup>4</sup> They taught John to use "reason and logic rather than emotion to support his positions." His parents also raised John to be self-reliant and to "retain a certain formality in behavior, dress, and conversation." These lessons influenced how Col Warden conducted himself throughout the rest of his life, both personally and professionally. They provided him the ability to effectively support his positions, question conventional wisdom, and have the courage to express his views even when they were not popular with others.

### **Military Career, Education, and Training**

Young Warden did well in secondary school and received acceptance letters from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Indiana University. Although these two offers were attractive, John felt the calling to continue his family's military tradition and lobbied his Pennsylvania congressman for a USAF Academy nomination. The efforts paid off when the academy offered John a position as a cadet. Once enrolled in the academy, Warden continued his thirst for knowledge instilled by his parents.<sup>5</sup>

On top of the heavy course load for which he chose to register, Cadet Warden, an autodidact like his mother, continued to study various topics not offered in the curriculum. Warden explained the courses at the academy were too broadly focused and did not allocate the appropriate amount of time required for in-depth analysis of the subjects. Therefore, he studied particular topics of interest outside of class. Military history interested Cadet Warden and he had a particular interest in J.F.C. Fuller's writings on Alexander the Great. Like Fuller, he believed studying military campaigns provided military officers with

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<sup>4</sup> John Andreas Olsen, *John Warden and the Renaissance of American Air Power*, 11-12.

<sup>5</sup> John Andreas Olsen, *John Warden and the Renaissance of American Air Power*, 12-13.

good insight into the art and science of war. In particular, he found Alexander's desire to avoid confrontation between fielded forces intriguing. From his study of Fuller's accounting of Alexander's strategy during the Battle of Arbela and other campaigns, John began developing the idea that targeting enemy leadership was a more effective strategy than attacking fielded forces.<sup>6</sup> This line of thought represents the foundation of the Instant Thunder campaign plan discussed later.

John's thirst for learning and his propensity for formality became a factor in his inability to fit in with the others at the academy; a fact that did not concern Warden. His classmates recalled that John "obviously read more than the other students and the range of his interests was also unusual. He earned respect for being intellectually agile, thoughtful, and an articulate debater, but he was never fully accepted as 'one of the guys'...his preference for wearing a coat and tie rather than t-shirt and jeans outside of class set him apart from the rest. He gave the impression of being serious, formal, and determined for his age."<sup>7</sup> This trait became the status quo for Col Warden throughout his career. He did not care about fitting in socially and rarely attended social functions unless absolutely necessary. "He was not a schmoozer."<sup>8</sup> The fact that John did not care about fitting in with the crowd represents another

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<sup>6</sup> Col John A. Warden, in *Desert Story Collection*, May 30, 1991, 2; J.F.C. Fuller, *The Generalship of Alexander the Great* (Cambridge: Da Capo Press, 2004), 7. The *Desert Story Collection* is a compilation of interviews (audio and transcript) of leaders involved in the planning and execution of Desert Shield/Desert Storm. The collection is a part of the Air Force Historical Research Agency collection at Maxwell AFB, AL. J.F.C. Fuller's book provides a wide selection of Alexander's battles. Alexander triumphed in the Battle of Arbela by directly attacking Darius III instead of going after his military forces.

<sup>7</sup> John Andreas Olsen, *John Warden and the Renaissance of American Air Power*, 16. Olsen interviewed Warden's classmates Michael C. Short, Howard M. Estes III, and Michael E. Ryan, all of whom became generals and held key leadership positions in their careers.

<sup>8</sup> Dr. Richard R. Muller (School of Advanced Air and Space Studies), interview by author, 15 May 2015. Dr. Muller is on the faculty at the School of Air and Space Studies. He worked for Col Warden as one of the first civilian professors at ACSC. Col Warden later promoted Dr. Muller to lead the War Theory and Campaign Studies Department.

valuable trait that enables one to resist the peer pressure aspect of groupthink.

In spite of his social awkwardness, Cadet Warden graduated from the Air Force Academy in 1965. Following graduation, he attended flight school where he was assigned the F-4 Phantom, a multi-role fighter used for both air-to-air and air-to-ground combat missions.<sup>9</sup> He was then assigned to the 4th Tactical Fighter Wing (TFW) with whom he deployed to South Korea in response to the North Korean attack on the USS *Pueblo*, a signals intelligence ship collecting in the Sea of Japan.<sup>10</sup>

As one of the largest and fastest US deployments since the 1958 Lebanon crisis, there was confusion as to how the USAF would use the 4th TFW, if at all. When the wing arrived at Kunsan Air Base within 48 hours of notification, they found themselves parked wing-tip to wing-tip on the runway with no operational contingency orders describing how and what their mission entailed while in theater. Once they finally did receive orders, they were told to be prepared to attack possible targets in Wonsan with dangerous tactics. The orders instructed the 4th TFW to plan and execute their strikes by flying straight and level at 20,000 feet without the use of electronic countermeasures. “It was an open invitation to be shot down...the short operational experience gave Warden a glimpse of a sobering reality: the air force was ready to deploy at short notice, but it lacked operational plans for employing its forces in any coherent fashion.”<sup>11</sup> This experience in South Korea resonated within John’s mind and would later become a factor in planning Instant Thunder. However, Warden’s experience in Vietnam following Operation Rolling Thunder would become the primary motivation behind his 1991 air campaign.

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<sup>9</sup> David R. Mets, *The Air Campaign: John Warden and the Classical Airpower Theorists* (Maxwell Air Force Base, AL: Air University Press, 1999), 55.

<sup>10</sup> Jack Cheevers, *Act of War: Lyndon Johnson, North Korea, and the Capture of the Spy Ship Pueblo*, reprint edition (New York: New American Publishing, 2014), 1-6.

<sup>11</sup> John Andreas Olsen, *John Warden and the Renaissance of American Air Power*, 18.

Shortly following the experience in South Korea, Warden found himself deployed to Southeast Asia. In Vietnam, John witnessed what he considered the ineffective use of air power, strict rules of engagement, and restrictions against key enemy targets. Another reason Rolling Thunder did not work is because US leadership, both military and civilian, failed to recognize the enemy's determination and did not understand the nature of the conflict.<sup>12</sup> This was the scene in which Warden found himself when he arrived in Vietnam in January 1969.

John began his tour in Vietnam flying the OV-10 Bronco in both a forward-air-controller (FAC) and reconnaissance role. His squadron conducted joint operations with the First Air Cavalry Division to provide CAS and reconnaissance support for ground forces. He considered CAS an ineffective use of USAF air power. He drew this conclusion based upon the fact that most of the ground battles only lasted a short period of time—usually not long enough for any meaningful assistance from the USAF. Later in his tour, John found himself conducting AI missions, which he considered much more useful than CAS. In Vietnam, however, the rules of engagement restricted the effectiveness of the AI mission. Warden cites the inability to strike above the 20th parallel as one of these restrictions. During the day, the North Vietnamese staged trucks in areas they knew coalition aircraft were restricted from attacking. Then under the cover of darkness, the trucks crossed into South Vietnam to supply enemy fighters. This frustrated Warden and the other pilots. They realized that although this strategy prevented the North Vietnamese from establishing a major supply base in the south, air power could be much more effective if authorized to attack the enemy LOCs and supply bases deep inside North Vietnam.<sup>13</sup> Once again, Warden displayed his “maverick” style when he publicly voiced his

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<sup>12</sup> Mark Clodfelter, “Air Power Versus Asymmetric Enemies: A Framework for Evaluating Effectiveness,” *Air and Space Power Journal* 16, no.3 (Fall 2002): 37-46.

<sup>13</sup> Col John A. Warden, in *Desert Story Collection*, May 30, 1991, 6.

displeasure with the strategy in Vietnam, something many other pilots were reluctant to do. In his farewell speech, he voiced his displeasure with the rules of engagement and argued the US strategy applied force incorrectly. He stated “air power was being misused by politicians who picked targets in the White House...and by a gradualist approach that sought to send signals rather than win the war.”<sup>14</sup>

One can extract evidence of traits that may be beneficial in resisting the pitfalls of groupthink by studying Warden’s experience in Vietnam. First, Warden spent many hours in personal study. His studies provided the information require to allow him to develop his own opinions, independent of those shared by others. Just like at the Academy, Warden’s peers viewed him as a very competent pilot and scholar who could articulately debate with others and convincingly defend his position. Second, he did not shy away from expressing himself, even if his convictions alienated him. Finally, Warden continued to learn and develop his views concerning air power theory from personal experiences throughout his career. These lessons from Vietnam, especially the ineffective gradual response strategy of Operation Rolling Thunder, significantly shaped Warden’s opinion on the effective use of air power.

Following Vietnam, John began to further develop and document his air power theory. A theory that became somewhat controversial. Following Vietnam, the “fighter mafia” began to take control in the air force because they believed the “bomber mafia” failed to recognize the importance of tactical air power. As a result, the “fighter mafia” believed that many fighter pilots died needlessly because they were not properly trained for the air war in which they were engaged. Therefore, when the “fighter mafia” took control of the air force, the pendulum swung from

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<sup>14</sup> John Andreas Olsen, *John Warden and the Renaissance of American Air Power*, 21-22. The information compiled in this excerpt is a result of multiple interviews with Col Warden and others with whom he was deployed to Southeast Asia.



one extreme to the other. The air force now began to focus on tactical fighter operations at the expense of conventional bombing operations. This became clear when John received an assignment to Europe.

In 1970, Warden's assignment with the 613th TFS at Torrejon Air Base, Spain, put him back in the F-4 cockpit. Warden and his squadron were responsible for implementing the Single Integrated Operational Plan (SIOP) in the event NATO found itself engaged in a nuclear war with the Soviet Union. Warden believed that a nuclear exchange with the Soviets was highly unlikely and that the most likely scenario pitted the air force against the Soviets in conventional air battles. With this thought, Warden penned, "Employment of Tactical Air in Europe." The essay argued that in its conventional role, the United States Air Forces Europe (USAFE) focused too much on CAS when it should be dedicating training to defensive counter-air operations that attack the enemy air force in the air and on the ground. Warden opined this would allow NATO air power to achieve air superiority over its own territory. In seeking air superiority, he emphasized the need to concentrate USAFE forces at a given time and place.<sup>15</sup>

Warden's essay reveals four things about the young Captain. First, it demonstrates Warden's interest in planning air operations and his skepticism concerning NATO and USAFE's planning efforts. Second, it displays Warden's belief that air forces must be concentrated in time and space through big-wing tactics, the implementation of which would later get him in hot water while commanding the 36th TFW at Bitburg Air Base Germany. Third, it is an example of Warden's belief that the air force had an important role other than the nuclear mission and conventional CAS for ground forces. He argued air power's primary mission is to gain and maintain air superiority. The final revelation of

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<sup>15</sup> John Andreas Olsen, *John Warden and the Renaissance of American Air Power*, 23-24.



Warden's essay, and most important for the purpose of this paper, is that it highlights "Warden's characteristically deductive and methodical approach to analysis; after identifying the problems he suggested concrete solutions without apologizing for not adhering to conventional wisdom—all features that would become his trademark."<sup>16</sup>

The "Employment of Tactical Air in Europe" only represents the beginning of John Warden's written thought concerning air power and strategy. Texas Tech accepted him to study for his master's degree in political science. While there, Warden wrote his thesis titled, "The Grand Alliance: Strategy and Decision." The paper examined Great Britain and the United States strategy and the manner in which their leaders made decisions before and during WWII. In his thesis, Warden tackled strategy on a grand scale. He argued that the American leaders—President Franklin Roosevelt, Gen George Marshall, and Gen Dwight Eisenhower—did not produce an effective strategy that integrated military and political affairs. Therefore, new problems arose as old problems were solved. The complete military destruction of the Axis, he argued, overshadowed any post-war political vision. Warden wrote, "there was nobody in charge of the most important part of the war—its political purpose."<sup>17</sup> In the end, Warden agreed with his intellectual mentor, J.F.C. Fuller, who wrote, "In war victory is no more than a means to an end; peace is the end and should victory lead to a disastrous peace, then politically, the war will have been lost."<sup>18</sup> Fuller's influence was even more clear in the below passage taken from Warden's thesis.

The two countries of the Grand Alliance, with "inveterate antipathy" and mesmerized by the evil of Hitler, went blindly

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<sup>16</sup> John Andreas Olsen, *John Warden and the Renaissance of American Air Power*, 25.

<sup>17</sup> John Ashley Warden III, "The Grand Alliance: Strategy and Decision" (master's thesis, Texas Tech University, 1975), 1-3, 17, 142. <https://repositories.tdl.org/ttu-ir/bitstream/handle/2346/15136/31295004685748.pdf?sequence=1> (accessed 20 April 2015).

<sup>18</sup> J.F.C. Fuller, *The Generalship of Alexander the Great* (Cambridge: Da Capo Press, 2004), 312.

to war dressed in shining armor and mounted on magnificent white charges. They were predominantly unable to see across Germany to the equal peril that lay to the East [Russia].

Rather than attain a satisfactory postwar balance of power, the Allies set their sights on military victory. Only the British—and they only late in the game—showed any real appreciation of what had so long been fundamental British policy. There are explanations for these failures, but they do not exculpate the Alliance leaders...

The over-riding requirement for an agreed and sound grand strategy is the most important lesson to be derived from a study of the experiences of Great Britain and the United States in World War II. Had there been a sound Alliance Grand Strategy, the world would certainly be different today. The Alliance would have recognized that, “A Russian state from the Urals to the Northern Sea can be no great improvement over a German state from the North Sea to the Urals.” The lessons and the rules of grand strategy, known to the discerning since the days of Alexander the Great, might have been applied more effectively in order to steer the Ship of State safely down the eddying currents of the tumultuous history of our times.<sup>19</sup>

Warden’s study of connecting grand and military strategy became a major focus of his study throughout his career, especially in regards to air power’s role.

While at the National War College in 1986, Col Warden “began a serious and sustained study of air warfare”<sup>20</sup> in regards to planning air operations from the theater level in support of military and grand strategy. The thesis he produced was published as a book shortly following graduation. *The Air Campaign: Planning for Combat* is probably Warden’s most influential work on the employment of air power in the late 20th century. In the preface Warden explains the book “is an attempt to come to grips with the very complex philosophy and theory

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<sup>19</sup> John Ashley Warden III, “The Grand Alliance: Strategy and Decision,” 143, 151.

<sup>20</sup> Col Phillip S. Meilinger, *Airmen and Air Theory: A Review of the Sources* (Maxwell Air Force Base, AL: Air University Press, 2001), 143.

associated with air war at the operational level...it is for the air officer who wants to think about air campaigns before called on to command or staff one. It is devoted to how and why air power can be used to attain the military objectives needed to win a war.”<sup>21</sup> Warden’s book made quite an impact on many air force leaders including Gen Charles Donnelly Jr., the former USAFE commander, who wrote the introduction to the book.<sup>22</sup> Whereas the literature out of ACTS dedicated much ink to strategic bombing theory, he focused his attention to addressing the operational level of air power planning.

Col Warden sets the foundation by defining the four levels of strategy for war. These include the grand strategic level, the strategic level, the operational level, and the tactical level—the area where opposing forces meet physically. Warden then focuses on air campaign planning. He builds upon his earlier claims that air superiority is crucial to success. He wrote, “It is not possible to win a war if the enemy has air superiority. Indeed, no nation enjoying air superiority has ever lost a war by the force of enemy arms...Thus, the prudent commander will do what is necessary to become superior in the air.”<sup>23</sup> Warden develops this concept further than he did in his essay “Employment of Tactical Air in Europe,” in which he focused mainly on the defensive.

In *The Air Campaign*, Warden discusses using both the offensive and defensive in trying to obtain air superiority. He wrote that “two theoretical approaches to winning air superiority exist...The first is to put the emphasis on defending against enemy air, and the second is to concentrate on offensive operations that will reduce the enemy’s air capability directly and force him to devote more of his resources to defense.” Warden realized that there is not a black and white division

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<sup>21</sup> John A. Warden III, *The Air Campaign: Planning for Combat*, rev. ed. (New York: toExcel, 1998), xiii.

<sup>22</sup> Gen Charles L. Donnelly Jr., in John A. Warden III, *The Air Campaign*, xvii.

<sup>23</sup> John A. Warden III, *The Air Campaign*, 1-3, 13, 129.

between the two extremes when he stated, “Naturally, some combination of these two extremes can be available; unfortunately, when they are combined, the availability of forces and time for both necessarily decreases.” However, after offering the positives and negatives of both offensive and defensive air options, Warden concludes, “Whenever possible, the offensive course should be selected—if for no other reason than that it is a positive measure that will lead to positive results.” Building upon the concept of air superiority, Warden introduced his “center of gravity” concept.<sup>24</sup>

Whereas ACTS industrial web theory focused on what they believed to be a nations centers of gravity, Warden argues that centers of gravity exist at every level of war. He defines the term as “that point where the enemy is most vulnerable and the point where an attack will have the best chance of being decisive.” In the case of gaining air superiority at the operational level, Wardens argues that the center of gravity may include enemy aircraft, missiles, logistics, personnel, and command and control, or any combination of these or other areas. In order to determine the appropriate center(s) of gravity the “disposition of enemy forces can be especially important.” Once identified, the air commander must focus on destroying the enemy centers of gravity that provide the best opportunity to gain air superiority.<sup>25</sup>

Warden concludes the book by restating his argument that “air superiority is crucial...a campaign will be lost if the enemy has it, that in many circumstances it alone can win a war, and that its possession is needed before other actions on the ground or in the air can be undertaken.” He also makes several additional conclusions from his study of history. First, numbers are important. “They are so important that a primary goal of the operational commander ought to be to make

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<sup>24</sup> John A. Warden III, *The Air Campaign*, 21, 23.

<sup>25</sup> John A. Warden III, *The Air Campaign*, 7, 116-117.

sure that his forces outnumber the enemy every time they meet.” Warden was not referring to total numbers in theater; rather, he was addressing massing numbers for an engagement. This leads to the second conclusion—it is important to maintain air reserves in order to commit them at “decisive points in the campaign.” Third, war plans require well defined objectives and the identification of key forces, both friendly and enemy, if they are to lead to victory. Finally, the operational commander must effectively integrate all weapons at his disposal to produce a coherent air campaign plan. This includes the use of naval and ground forces, as well as air forces, “to win the air superiority that is vital to all.”<sup>26</sup>

While Col Warden lays out a sound argument for planning air campaigns at the operational level, he does not shy away from stirring up controversy. Although he acknowledges the value of all military branches in winning a war, he makes the controversial claim that “in many circumstances it [air superiority] alone can win a war.”<sup>27</sup> Warden’s comments were a direct assault on current DoD thought. At the time he wrote his thesis, the corporate air force had shifted focus from conventional strategic bombing towards nuclear deterrence and tactical support of ground forces. Nonetheless, Warden’s comments harken back to the days of the early air theorists like Douhet, Trenchard, and Mitchell who argued that air power alone could win wars. John Olsen wrote, “By arguing against the air force’s prevailing doctrine of subordinating air power to ground forces, highlighting the crucial importance of air superiority...and asserting that air power could win a war independent of ground force engagements, the book contradicted the prevailing wisdom of the mid-1980s.”<sup>28</sup> As evidenced by his this book and the other

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<sup>26</sup> John A. Warden III, *The Air Campaign*, 141-143.

<sup>27</sup> John A. Warden III, *The Air Campaign*, 141.

<sup>28</sup> John Andreas Olsen, *John Warden and the Renaissance of American Air Power*, 74-75.

examples provided thus far, Col Warden did not shy away from controversial issues. In fact, he seemed very comfortable in challenging the status quo.

Col Warden continued to develop his air theory to include strategic bombing through use of precision guided conventional munitions. He also maintained that the effective use of air power is decisive in war. Col Philip Meilinger acknowledged that while “This book [*The Air Campaign*] has had major impact on Air Force thinking, its calls for strategic airpower are relatively modest. That would come later.”<sup>29</sup> The “later” to which Meilinger refers is Col Warden’s air campaign plan for defeating Iraq after it invaded Kuwait.

### **Instant Thunder**

Col Warden was assigned as director of the Deputy Directorate for Warfighting Concepts in the Pentagon when Iraqi forces invaded Kuwait in August of 1990. The directorate, newly created when Warden was assigned in 1988, contained five divisions—Doctrine, Strategy, Requirements, Long-Range Planning, and Concepts—staffed by a total of approximately eighty officers from each of the USAF’s major commands. “In essence, it constituted the intellectual core of the Air Staff”<sup>30</sup> with strong connections to the DoD, Congress, Joint Staff, national intelligence agencies, and many major think tanks throughout the United States.

Col Warden’s directorate received great latitude in fulfilling its charter to contemplate air power in terms of what it was, reasons for using it, how and when to employ it, and how to sell it. Warden encouraged his staff to exercise their minds without limitations. In an

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<sup>29</sup> Diane T. Putney, *Airpower Advantage: Planning the Gulf War Air Campaign 1989-1991* (Washington DC: Air Force History and Museums Program, 2004), 38; Col Phillip S. Meilinger, *Airmen and Air Theory*, 143.

<sup>30</sup> John Andreas Olsen, *John Warden and the Renaissance of American Air Power*, 106.



address to the staff in 1988, he said, “Our charter is to think, and we can think any kind of thoughts that we want to think. It’s okay. In fact, that is what we are supposed to be doing.”<sup>31</sup> Thus, with Warden’s direction, the directorate began exploring and developing thoughts on the many different possibilities for air power. Therefore, when Warden and his team, regularly referred to as “Checkmate,” were called upon to provide a strategic air campaign for the imminent war with Iraq, they were eager to respond.

Even before they were tasked by Air Force Chief of Staff, Gen Michael Dugan, Checkmate began devising an air campaign plan to address the situation with Iraq. Warden feared that the Operational Plan (OPLAN) developed for dealing with such a situation in the Middle-East, OPLAN 1002-90, did not effectively address the proper use of air. In fact, the plan primarily called for air power to support ground forces in a land war. Essentially, OPLAN 1002-90, representative of AirLand Battle doctrine, contained three phases. The first phase, deterrence, planned to use a show of military force to prevent Iraq from attacking neighboring countries. The second phase, defense, involved defensive counter-air operations in an attempt to gain air superiority as well and AI missions to delay, disrupt, or destroy enemy forces. The final phase, ground-based counteroffensive, used air power to provide CAS for friendly ground forces to repel the enemy back inside their borders.<sup>32</sup> Warden believed he had a better solution for using air power. His plan would once again challenge the conventional way of thinking and stir up controversy.

Warden developed an offensive strategic air campaign based upon a paper he wrote in March 1990 titled, “Centers of Gravity—The Key to Success in War.” In this paper, he further built upon his previous works

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<sup>31</sup> Col John A. Warden, in *Desert Story Collection*, October 22, 1991, 21.

<sup>32</sup> Elliot A. Cohen et al., *Gulf War Air Power Survey*, vol. 1, *Planning and Command and Control* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1993), 21-54.



by arguing that the best way to wage war in the current age of technology was not a clash between fielded forces on the battlefield, but instead to concentrate efforts elsewhere. The paper continued by presenting the Five Rings Model theory of defeating an enemy (see figure 7). The rings represent the concept of attacking an enemy from a strategic perspective using any combination of a state's instruments of power, in this case the military.<sup>33</sup> In developing his theory, Warden clearly defined the objectives of war and proposed a strategy to efficiently and effectively achieve the objectives.

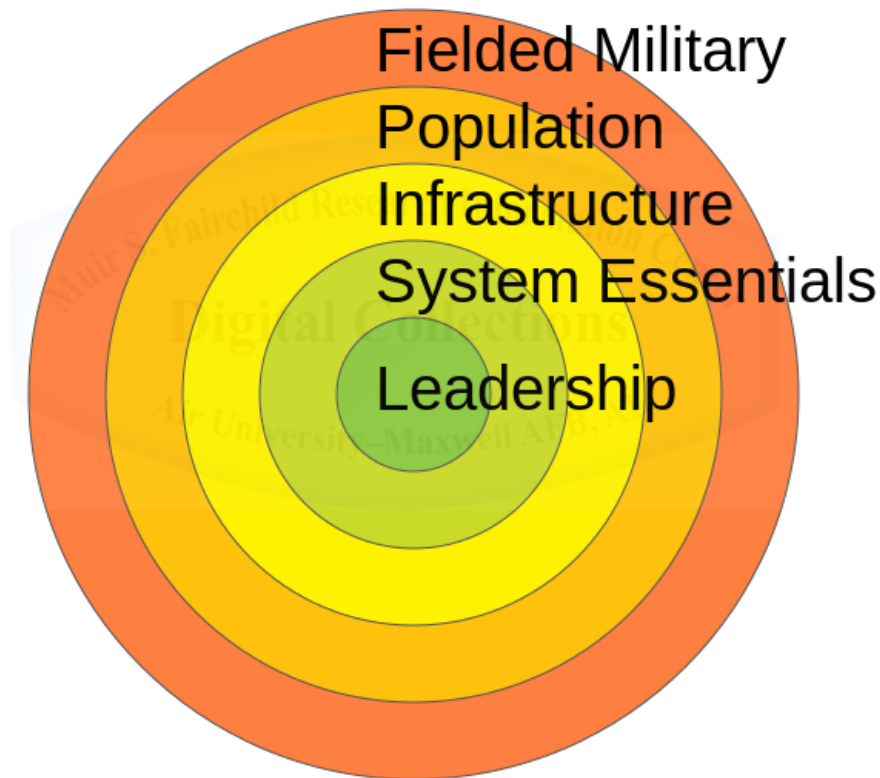


Figure 7. Five Rings Model

Source: John A Warden III, "Planning to Win" (Fairbairn, AU: Royal Australian Air Force Air Power Studies Centre, 1998)

<sup>33</sup> John A Warden III, "Planning to Win" (Fairbairn, AU: Royal Australian Air Force Air Power Studies Centre, 1998). Warden does not limit his use of the Five Rings Model to military action. He explains that it applies to a state using all of its instruments in a concerted effort to defeat the enemy. Although in military circles the model is usually referred to in regards to attacking an enemy with air power, Warden claims that the model also applies to business strategy and many other areas outside of national and military strategy.

The strategy is to defeat the enemy by attacking them from the inside out. The leadership is the bull's-eye, representing the most important and most fragile target. Targets may include direct attack on the leaders themselves or their connections for internal control. Essentially, the plan involves a continuous focus on leadership as the primary target. Even if they are not vulnerable to direct attack, the strategy must focus on the mind of leadership when attacking the other rings.<sup>34</sup> The next ring, system essentials, includes the state's production centers such as energy facilities (gas, oil, electricity) and the industry of the state or its allies. Destroying these targets could deny the enemy from employing modern weapons and force them to concede. The third ring, infrastructure, consists of LOCs critical in supporting the enemy's war efforts. The next ring, population, takes into account support personnel who keep the enemies war machine running as well as the citizens of the enemy state. Although not ruled out, this does not necessarily involve direct kinetic strikes on the population. It may include psychological operations—eliminating modern conveniences like electricity or dropping leaflets in urban areas—aimed at turning the citizenry against their government. The outermost ring, fielded forces, is the shell that protects the rest of the ring and is the hardest to defeat because it is designed to be tough. It includes any enemy ground, air, and naval forces, to include personnel, equipment, and facilities.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Maj David S. Fadok, "John Boyd and John Warden: Air Power's Quest for Strategic Paralysis" (master's thesis, School of Advanced Airpower Studies, 1995), 25, 30. Fadok explains Wardens argument that the leadership bull's-eye "can be described and targeted in either Model I (rational actor), Model II (organizational process), or Model III (governmental politics)." For more on these three models see Graham Allison and Philip Zelikow, *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis*, 2nd ed. (New York: Pearson, 1999).

<sup>35</sup> Col Edward C. Mann III, *Thunder and Lightning: Desert Storm and the Airpower Debates* (Maxwell AFB, AL: Air University Press, 1995), 35-37; John Andreas Olsen, *John Warden and the Renaissance of American Air Power*, 108-109; Diane T. Putney, *Airpower Advantage*, 38-41.

Warden's theory is reminiscent of the industrial web theory that came out of ACTS in preparation for WWII. It may also be compared to the school's argument that an independent, strategic air force could win decisive victory through high-altitude daylight precision bombing of a state's vital points (centers of gravity). However, there exists two major differences.<sup>36</sup> Whereas ACTS focused on the population as the proper objective of strategic air warfare, Warden concentrated on the enemy's leadership as the most important objective. In addition, the technology required to execute many of the ACTS concepts was not available at the time. Conversely, Warden had the luxury of modern technology—GPS navigation, precision guided munitions, standoff weaponry, stealth aircraft—that could accomplish his objectives with minimal collateral damage and loss of life.

When Gen Dugan, the vice CSAF, gave Warden and his team the order to develop an air campaign for dealing with Iraq they derived national objectives from President George H.W. Bush's comments in speeches and media reports. These included: (1) immediate and unconditional withdrawal of all Iraqi forces from Kuwait, (2) complete restoration of Kuwait's legitimate government, and (3) protect American citizens abroad in the region. The team used the five rings model as the basis to plan their air campaign to meet these objectives. Their work formed the early planning stages of the air campaign. The final plan, which included the 12 target sets, resulted from many revisions by both Warden's team in the Pentagon and eventually Gen Chuck Horner's team in theater.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Robert T. Finney, *History of the Air Corps Tactical School, 1920-1940* (Maxwell AFB, AL: USAF Historical Division, Air University, 1955), 61-78

<sup>37</sup> Col Edward C. Mann III, *Thunder and Lightning*, 37-39; Department of Defense, *Conduct of the Persian Gulf War: Final Report to Congress* (Washington, DC: United States Government Printing, 1992), 126-130. The 12 target sets included (1) leadership and command facilities, (2) electricity production facilities, (3) telecommunications and command, control, and communications (C3) nodes, (4) strategic IADS, (5) air forces and airfields, (6) NBC research, production, and storage facilities, (7) Scud missiles, launchers, and production and storage facilities, (8) naval and port facilities, (9) oil

The Instant Thunder plan developed by Warden and his team caused controversy within the USAF. There are two specific USAF leaders in particular of whom Warden ran afoul. The first was the TAC commander and the second was the Joint Forces Air Component Commander (JFACC). In both instances, the friction points involved the planning team and the plan itself.

When the CSAF's office assigned the task of developing the operational air campaign to Warden's team in the Pentagon, they were not following normal planning procedures. Doctrinally, operational level planning should occur at the geographic combatant command level with inputs from the appropriate subordinate level commands. For various reasons, however, this did not happen. In addition, because the vice CSAF thought General Robert Russ and his staff were overly committed to using air power to support AirLand Battle doctrine, the TAC commander was bypassed in the planning process as well. As a result of the significantly streamlined planning process, Warden and his crew traveled down to CENTCOM to brief the initial plan to Gen Norman Schwarzkopf within three days of receiving their task.<sup>38</sup>

During the 45-minute briefing, Col Warden discussed the general details of the plan. Col Warden titled the campaign Instant Thunder because it was the antithesis of Operation Rolling Thunder in Vietnam. He and his planners attempted not to fall prey to the same mistakes that Warden believed caused the failure in Vietnam. He argued that if you are going to commit forces, you must use them in a quick and decisive manner, not gradually ratchet up the violence in hopes the enemy will capitulate at some point. Col Warden briefed Gen Schwarzkopf that with the mix of aircraft he had planned, air power alone could end the conflict

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refining and distribution, (10) railroads and bridges, (11) ground forces, to include the Republican Guard, and (12) military storage and production sites.

<sup>38</sup> Col Richard T. Reynolds, *Heart of the Storm: The Genesis of the Air Campaign against Iraq* (Maxwell AFB, AL: Air University Press, 1995), 22-56; Diane T. Putney, *Airpower Advantage*, 50-55.

in six to nine days. The CENTCOM commander loved the plan, but some USAF generals on his staff thought Warden made promises he could not keep. Before they could voice their objections, however, Schwarzkopf told Warden the plan called for exactly what he wanted and gave his complete approval. The CENTCOM commander scheduled Warden and his team to brief Gen Colin Powell, the CJCS, for the next morning.<sup>39</sup>

While Gen Powell liked the plan he was concerned that it involved little action from ground forces. He did not believe that air power alone could win decisive victory. He was not the only one. The TAC commander, Gen Robert Russ, believed staff officers in Washington DC should not be planning the air campaign without the input from the JFACC. He compared this to the Vietnam War when leaders in Washington selected targets and planned operations instead of those in the theater conducting the operations. He also argued that the plan Warden's team put together was too violent to garner the required political and public support, it did not pay appropriate attention to supporting ground forces, and that air power alone could not win decisive victory. Therefore, Gen Russ ordered his staff to put together an alternative air campaign.<sup>40</sup>

The TAC plan eerily resembled Operation Rolling Thunder. It closely followed AirLand Battle doctrine and already established contingency plans for the region. Although the plan consisted of both strategic and tactical components, the latter received higher priority. The tactical air portion concentrated on attacking enemy armor and artillery through massive air strikes. Meanwhile, the strategic air component focused on demonstrating resolve by attacking high-value targets in an escalatory manner until all significant targets were destroyed. The strategic portion was designed to gain the Iraqi leader's attention by

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<sup>39</sup> Col Richard T. Reynolds, *Heart of the Storm*, 55-58.

<sup>40</sup> Diane T. Putney, *Airpower Advantage*, 55-56.

attacking a high-value targets, pausing for a certain amount of time, attacking more high-value targets, pausing again, attacking more targets, and so on. The TAC planners claimed this gave Schwarzkopf a range of options that were not available with Instant Thunder's overwhelming use of force.<sup>41</sup> Although many authors have written about the disagreements between Gen Russ and Col Warden, John Andreas Olsen sums it up best below.

Beyond the differences over content, the animosity that Russ and his planners felt toward the Air Staff's involvement stemmed from their deep-seated belief that the established chain of command should plan all campaigns. If inputs were required from the outside, however, they should come from the warfighters at a major command, such as TAC, rather than from the administrators at the Air Staff. There was also a human dimension: Russ could not accept that Warden, of all people, should be spearheading the effort.<sup>42</sup>

Col Edward Mann wrote, "Considerable evidence indicates that this controversy [between Warden and Russ] emanated at least partially from a long-standing debate within the Air Force over the most efficient applications of airpower...—specifically, whether airpower should be used to carry out strategic attack or to support surface forces."<sup>43</sup> At this time, the "fighter mafia" ran the USAF and tactical air power reigned supreme, not conventional strategic bombing. In addition, Gen Russ held little regard for fighter pilots who spent more time in academia than in the cockpit. Therefore, he had a personal issue with Col Warden's involvement in planning the air campaign because he viewed Warden as an "academic aviator" not a "warrior aviator."<sup>44</sup> The CENTAF commander and JFACC also viewed Col Warden as more of an academic than a

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<sup>41</sup> Diane T. Putney, *Airpower Advantage*, 190; John Andreas Olsen, *John Warden and the Renaissance of American Air Power*, 163.

<sup>42</sup> John Andreas Olsen, *John Warden and the Renaissance of American Air Power*, 163.

<sup>43</sup> Col Edward C. Mann III, *Thunder and Lightning*, 3-4.

<sup>44</sup> John Andreas Olsen, *John Warden and the Renaissance of American Air Power*, 271; Col Edward C. Mann III, *Thunder and Lightning*, 164.



warrior—a point that became obvious when Warden presented the Instant Thunder plan to Horner.

Shortly after briefing Gen Powell, the CSAF, and the Secretary of the Air Force (SecAF), the team continued to make modifications to the plan. They briefed Gen Schwarzkopf the slightly revised plan again on 17 August 1990. At the end of the briefing, Gen Schwarzkopf could not contain his excitement. He stated, “This is what makes the US a superpower!” He pointed to the briefing slides and continued to praise the Instant Thunder plans. “This uses our strengths against their weaknesses, not our small army against their large army...Our air power against theirs is [the] way to go—that’s why I called you guys in the first place!” Then Gen Schwarzkopf ordered Col Warden and a few key Checkmate key planners to Riyadh, Saudi Arabia to hand the plan off. He explained, “My intention is to continue to plan, to refine it to [the] point of execution.” Following orders, Col Warden and three others prepared to depart for Riyadh.<sup>45</sup>

On 19 Aug 1990, the four-person team—Col Warden, Lt Col Dave Deptula, Lt Col Ben Harvey, and Lt Col Ron Stanfill—arrived in Saudi Arabia to deliver to the Instant Thunder briefing to key members of the CENTAF-forward staff prior to briefing Gen Horner. The CENTAF staff members included Maj Gen Tom Olsen, deputy commander; Brig Gen Pat Caruana, strategic forces advisor; Brig Gen Larry Henry, electronic warfare officer; Col Jim Crigger, director of operations; Col John Leonardo, director of intelligence; and Lt Col Sam Baptiste, weapons and tactics officer; and Lt Col Steve Wilson, an Air Staff officer already in theater. After the two-hour briefing, the Maj Gen Olsen and the staff seemed satisfied with the plan as a fine addition to CENTAF’s planning efforts. Olsen asked Warden if he and his team brought more than three days’ worth of clothing in theater because they would probably be

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<sup>45</sup> Col Richard T. Reynolds, *Heart of the Storm*, 110.



required to stay and help his staff further develop the plan. He continued to explain that his staff purposely did not plan many strategic targets in Iraq because they were focused on the near-term—planning to defend Saudi Arabia in case of an Iraqi attack. The team agreed to stay in theater as long as required. With that, the meeting adjourned. The next morning, Warden and his team were to brief the CENTAF commander and JFACC, Lt Gen Horner.<sup>46</sup>

Just five days earlier, Lt Col Baptiste briefed the Instant Thunder slides to Horner. Lt Col Wilson, who was at the briefing, recalled that the presentation did not receive a warm welcome. First, Horner did not agree with the Air Staff planning an air campaign for the JFACC. He argued that planning the war was the JFACC's responsibility. It was not the responsibility of the Air Staff who had no business planning the air campaign or selecting targets. To Horner, this was no different than the leaders in Washington planning and picking targets during Vietnam. Second, Gen Horner viewed the briefing as an academic exercise using "college boy" terms like "center of gravity."<sup>47</sup> He threw the slides across the room stating Instant Thunder would not work and it would force the Iraqis to attack Saudi Arabia—the defense of which was Horner's immediate concern.<sup>48</sup> From this perspective, Warden's team were lambs heading to the slaughter. Gen Horner, however, remembered the situation differently. He claimed that his staff told him Warden's team put a good air campaign plan together and that he should get the briefing from Col Warden. Therefore, he "was anxious to hear what John Warden had to say" and "made a spot for him on [the] next day's schedule."<sup>49</sup>

While debate exists concerning Gen Horner's feelings about Warden and the plan prior to Warden's presentation to the JFACC, there

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<sup>46</sup> Diane T. Putney, *Airpower Advantage*, 119-122.

<sup>47</sup> Diane T. Putney, *Airpower Advantage*, 123.

<sup>48</sup> Diane T. Putney, *Airpower Advantage*, 122-123; John Andreas Olsen, *John Warden and the Renaissance of American Air Power*, 175-176.

<sup>49</sup> Tom Clancy with Gen (ret) Chuck Horner, *Every Man a Tiger*, 260.

is universal agreement that Warden's Instant Thunder briefing was not well received. The entire event, from beginning to end, was a train wreck.<sup>50</sup> Warden did not tailor the briefing for his audience. He used the same briefing he gave Gen Schwarzkopf a few days earlier. He insulted Gen Horner by explaining the basics of airpower and the need for an offensive air campaign. Unfortunately for Col Warden, it went down-hill from there.

Although Gen Horner acknowledged that Col Warden's team did a commendable job developing a target list, he had issues with other portions of the plan. First, Horner did not agree with the plan to destroy Iraqi air bases and their command-and-control structure. He believed that if the Coalition could destroy Iraqi air defenses, then it was a waste of sorties to go after the other targets. Second, Horner had issues with Warden's plan to allocate targets to the Navy and USAF by areas. This reminded him of the route packages used in Vietnam. Third, in Horner's mind did not adequately address the Iraqi forces already in Kuwait and those sitting on the Saudi border. Forth, and what Horner considered the most important, was that Warden's plan could not be executed. The JFACC explained that Instant Thunder did not adequately address logistics, rules of engagement, and other important details required for execution.<sup>51</sup>

Col Warden and his plan did not stand a chance with the JFACC. Many of the issues that Horner addressed during the briefing were the same issues that Lt Col Wilson highlighted from the briefing that Lt Col Baptiste gave a few days prior. As with Gen Russ, Gen Horner did not appreciate the Air Staff planning the air campaign, he thought the priority, at least in the beginning of the campaign, should be defensive

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<sup>50</sup> The author consulted multiple sources, to include interviews of briefing attendees and books, concerning Col Warden's Instant Thunder presentation to Lt Gen Horner. The accounts were all similar and consistent in sharing their account of the event.

<sup>51</sup> Tom Clancy with Gen (ret) Chuck Horner, *Every Man a Tiger*, 261-264.

support to the ground forces, and he had a personal issue with Warden as an academic and not a warrior. Horner's following comments explain the personal aspect.

Where I expected intelligence (and Warden was certainly intelligent), I was getting a university academic teaching a 101 class...every question I asked that dealt with the Iraqi ground forces, he would dismiss my concerns as unimportant. Even if he was right (which I greatly doubt), he would have been wise to forgo the temptation to treat me like a boob. The commander on the scene may very well have been a boob, but he doesn't like to be treated like one...

Sadly, I realized that his brilliance as a thinker would not carry through working with the team in Riyadh...John Warden was too much in love with his own thinking, and too prickly to handle the give-and-take—the communicating—that Riyadh required. I decided he was better off away from the Gulf Theater. I did keep the lieutenant colonels he brought with him, to help form the nucleus of the planning cell that we would create.

John Warden went home, where he did continue to support us by sending forward a flow of valuable planning and targeting information. But as far as I was concerned, he was out of the war.<sup>52</sup>

While some of Gen Horner's criticism of Col Warden may have been warranted, an objective observer could argue that they shared many of the same traits. In reading Col Reynold's book, *Heart of the Storm: The Genesis of the Air Campaign against Iraq*, he describes the exchanges between Horner and Warden. He illustrates a scene where both of the men seemed to be speaking with each other on different frequencies. In Warden's defense, Reynolds' account also portrayed Horner's behavior as rude, impatient, and chock-full of expletives. He asked Warden questions without allowing the opportunity to answer. Horner kept interrupting with more questions. This obviously shook up Warden and

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<sup>52</sup> Tom Clancy with Gen (ret) Chuck Horner, *Every Man a Tiger*, 263-265.

may explain why he was short in his answers as Horner described.<sup>53</sup> The entire experience between Horner and Warden is best summed up by the CENTCOM staff as “a good plan, but a bad sell.”<sup>54</sup> Regardless of the personality clash, and as much as Horner may criticize the lack of detail in Warden’s overall plan, Instant Thunder formed the foundation on which Operation Desert Storm was built when it kicked off in early 1991.

As Gen Horner stated above, he kept the other three men that traveled to Riyadh with Col Warden. Lt Col Dave Deptula became the chief planner in the Special Planning Group. He stayed in contact with Col Warden back in DC and ensured that much of the Instant Thunder plan remained in the final plan. It is safe to assume that Col Warden had more influence in the final plan from back in DC than Gen Horner probably realized. Col Warden’s planners understood his objectives and they were able to carry them forward and communicate them to Horner—something that Col Warden was unable to accomplish himself.<sup>55</sup>

Col Warden’s involvement in developing and selling the Instant Thunder campaign offers the opportunity to highlight a few observations. First, Col Warden and his team were outside the normal planning cycle. He met resistance by both the TAC commander and the JFACC, two fighter pilots focused on a defensive air strategy in support of ground forces. In spite of this, Col Warden continued to pursue his offensive air strategy that essentially ignored fielded forces. Instead, he developed a conventional strategic bombing campaign that targeted the Iraqi leadership—separating them from the population and military forces—as the way to defeat Iraq and meet national objectives. Second, Col Warden allowed his planning team latitude to think outside the box. Like his

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<sup>53</sup> Col Richard T. Reynolds, *Heart of the Storm*, 120-130.

<sup>54</sup> Richard G. Davis, *On Target: Organizing and Executing the Strategic Air Campaign against Iraq* (Washington DC: Air Force History Museum Program, 2002), 84.

<sup>55</sup> John Andreas Olsen, *John Warden and the Renaissance of American Air Power*, 183-219. In chapter nine Olsen writes about Warden’s support to the air campaign planners in Riyadh.

parents did with him when he was young, Col Warden encouraged his team to educate themselves and use what they learned to develop ways to best use air power. The team's ability to explore options without restraint allowed them to develop a plan that was not constrained by current doctrine and corporate air force thought. Third, Col Warden and many of his team members also used their experiences throughout their career, like Vietnam, to shape their way of thinking. This is especially evident in Col Warden's case. Following his career up to this point, it is easy to see that he used what he learned from his studies and experiences to develop an offensive air campaign, which focused on gaining air superiority first and then tying the use of air power to meeting national objectives. Finally, all the observations are not good. While Col Warden is a highly intelligent man with an outstanding ability to think creatively, he had some issues with communicating his thoughts to Gen Horner. He remained determined, however, and effectively used his team to do what he could not.

United States and Coalition air power proved extremely effective during Operation Desert Storm. Using high tech weaponry, communications, and reconnaissance platforms, coalition Aircraft pummeled Iraqi targets for about 900 hours. By the time friendly ground forces began their trek to Baghdad Iraqi forces were in a state of "shock and awe" and in no condition to mount a defense. Therefore, it only took coalition ground forces an additional 100 hours to secure victory. The US officially declared the end of major combat operations on 28 February 1991. The quick success of air power in a war that many thought would be a long protracted ground war reignited the debate on air's ability bring decisive victory in war.<sup>56</sup>

Many air practitioners and government officials argued that new technologies allowed air power to win wars more quickly and decisively

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<sup>56</sup> Tom Clancy with Gen (ret) Chuck Horner, *Every Man a Tiger*, 501-505.

without massive loss of life and collateral damage. They proclaimed this was the new form of warfare that would replace other forms. US Senator Saxby Chambliss further supported this sentiment when he wrote, “the two-dimensional—horizontal—battlefield has its place in history; the focus has now shifted into a third dimension—the vertical. This is the realm of air and space forces”<sup>57</sup> Obviously, the army and navy have opposing views on the subject. No matter which side of the argument one falls, there is no doubt that the air campaign’s success in the Gulf War, the foundation of which rested on Col Warden’s Instant Thunder plan, reignited the old debate on air power’s proper role in war and became the example for which others used as the example of its decisiveness. As for Col Warden, he would continue to influence future air leaders on the strategic, operational, and tactical roles of air power following the war.

### **Air Command and Staff College**

After a short assignment as special assistant to Vice President Dan Quayle in 1991, Col Warden reported to Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama in the summer of 1992 as the USAF Air Command and Staff College (ACSC) commandant. Both Warden’s supporters and detractors supported his assignment as commandant. His supporters thought Warden’s concepts of air power deserved further exploration and ACSC was the right place for this to occur. Furthermore, they viewed Warden, an academically inclined airman whose dedication to air power and willingness to bypass bureaucracy when required, as the right person to transform ACSC. His detractors thought Warden could cause little damage from a non-operational assignment located far from Washington DC in “the backwater of Montgomery.”<sup>58</sup> His detractors were wrong.

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<sup>57</sup> Daniel Goure and Christopher M. Szara, *Air and Space Power in the New Millennium* (Washington DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2006), vii.

<sup>58</sup> John Andreas Olsen, *John Warden and the Renaissance of American Air Power*, 250.



Similar to his previous assignments, Col Warden shook things up and challenged the status quo. Dr. Joel Hayward and Dr. Tamir Libel wrote, “Operating with relative freedom...Warden increased the rigour [sic] and robustness of the ACSC and also proved helpful in developing and inculcating concepts of air power that undoubtedly changed thinking in the USAF.”<sup>59</sup> Col Warden transformed ACSC from a “sleepy hollow” assignment to one that intellectually challenged future air force leaders.

When he arrived, Warden inherited an institution that in recent years had lost the respect of leaders in the US Air Force and other government organizations. Just a few years prior, the school’s faculty and curriculum received harsh DoD and Congressional criticism. The school focused less on air power and more on leadership and staffing procedures. Essentially, the curriculum was a conglomeration of courses that followed no central theme. The courses were individual modules that were independent of one another. In addition, the curriculum developers did not teach the courses. They turned the lesson materials over to instructors who facilitated student-led seminars. Moreover, there was very little book-based curriculum. Instead, instructors, some of whom knew less about their course topic than the students, selected excerpts from various books, journals, etc. that they thought adequately addressed a particular subject.<sup>60</sup> This was hardly the shining example of an institution of higher learning whose roots began with ACTS. Col John Warden resolved to change ACSC and turn it into a “world-class educational institution” that educates “midcareer officers to develop, advance and apply air and space power in peace and war.”<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Dr. Joel Hayward and Dr. Tamir Libel, “Reflections on the Maxwell ‘Revolution’: John Warden and Reforms in Professional Military Education,” *Royal Air Force Air Power Review* 14, no. 1 (Spring 2011), 11.

<sup>60</sup> Dr. Richard R. Muller, interview by the author, 15 May 2015.

<sup>61</sup> Stephen L. Butler, “Toward the Twenty-First Century: Air Command and Staff College Curriculum from Theory to Practice,” (Auburn AL: Auburn University, 1995), 21, <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED391055.pdf> (accessed 15 May 2015).



Warden hit the ground running by establishing “a new regime under which air power theory would serve as the unifying theme and the instructors would participate in developing, presenting, and improving the curriculum.” Unfortunately, his arrival in the late summer did not allow time to install new curriculum before the 1992-1993 school year began. Therefore, he formed a small group of scholars to start work on developing new curriculum for the 1993-1994 school year. The group of scholars included Lt Col Larry Weaver, Lt Col Albert Mitchum, Dr. Richard R. Muller, and Dr. Earl Tilford. They began developing a curriculum that studied air power and air campaign planning using a book-based learning approach that included classic and contemporary military history. At the center was an air campaign course “designed to include all aspects of air and space power so that students would learn to view military operations from the national, strategic level all the way down to the minutiae of ‘bombs on target.’”<sup>62</sup>

Although the new curriculum was not intended to be implemented until the following academic year, Col Warden was pleased with the team’s progress and decided to implement a pilot program in the spring semester. Before the Thanksgiving break, and unbeknownst to the faculty, he informed the students that the new air campaign course would be offered on a voluntary basis. He warned the students that the course involved a heavy workload, which required significant reading of material and dedication of their time. It required even more dedication and time from the instructors of the new curriculum. They were expected to deliver both the old and new curriculum in the spring with the high level of quality that Col Warden expected from his faculty. By

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<sup>62</sup> John Andreas Olsen, *John Warden and the Renaissance of American Air Power*, 253-254.

spring semester, nearly 20 percent of the students (103) volunteered for the new air campaign course.<sup>63</sup>

The initial course started off a little rough, but began to generate thoughtful debate concerning the application of air power at the various levels of war, especially the operational level. It also taught planners how to marry military and political objectives through targeting for effect.<sup>64</sup> The curriculum did not solely focus on planning air campaigns. It included studying war concepts, tools for war, joint operations planning, and air power's role in these areas. There now existed a distinct relationship and a logical progression between the courses. However, it would be inaccurate to say that the majority of the syllabi did not focus on air power. Col Warden argued, "Individual service schools have an obligation to study joint operations and planning, but also a duty to study how their services fit in."<sup>65</sup>

The new course did have its critics. The thrust of their criticism focused on the use of the Five Rings Model as the heart of the course. They argued that the model was based on a scientific approach that was too mechanical and overly simplified the enemy. This criticism came from air force leaders and ACSC faculty members alike. In his criticism of Warden, Gen Horner said, "John Warden...looked at the problem of air campaign planning....as an almost Newtonian science."<sup>66</sup> Some faculty members stated the five-rings approach was difficult to apply against unconventional or asymmetric forces. In his defense, Warden would later argue that the five-rings model was simply a starting point to begin planning and should be modified as required when further details of the

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<sup>63</sup> Dr. Richard R. Muller, interview by the author; Mason Carpenter and George C. McClain, "Air Command and Staff College Air Campaign Course: The Air Corps Tactical School Reborn?," *Airpower Journal* 7, no. 3 (Fall 1993): 72-83.

<sup>64</sup> John Andreas Olsen, *John Warden and the Renaissance of American Air Power*, 255-256.

<sup>65</sup> Dr. Richard R. Muller, interview by the author.

<sup>66</sup> Tom Clancy with Gen (ret) Chuck Horner, *Every Man a Tiger*, 264.

enemy become available. Warden further explains this concept in “The Enemy as a System.”

To make the concept of an enemy system useful and understandable, we must make a simplified model. We all use models daily and we all understand that they do not mirror reality. They do, however, give us a comprehensible picture of a complex phenomenon so that we can do something with it. The best models at the strategic level are those that give us the simplest possible big picture. As we need more detail we expand portions of our model so that we can see finer and finer detail. It is important, however, that in constructing our model and using it, we always start from the big and work to the small. The model that we have found to be a good approximation of the real world is the five-ring model. It seems to describe most systems with acceptable accuracy and it is easily expandable to get finer detail as required.<sup>67</sup>

Regardless of whether the criticism was warranted, Warden regarded the pilot program a success and pressed forward with further developing the curriculum for the 1993-1994 academic year. Again, his approach did not follow the accepted norms.

In preparation for the next academic year, Col Warden completely reorganized his staff. He created three new academic departments manned by staff who developed, managed, and taught the courses. He placed people in charge of the departments based upon qualifications rather than rank. For instance, Dr. Muller explained that Warden made him the department chair of War Theory and Campaign Studies. This was a big deal because in the past, military members were placed in these positions in order to give them experience and prepare them for promotion. To Warden, placing the right person in the position was more important than following institutionally acceptable and encouraged practices. Dr. Muller explained that initially this caused some consternation within the staff. He cited a Lt Col that believed she should

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<sup>67</sup> John A. Warden III, “The Enemy as a System,” *Airpower Journal* 9, no. 1 (Spring 1995): 42.

have been in charge of Dr. Muller's department and voiced her objection to Dr. Muller as an example. While they were able to work through this issue, it provides some insight into the internal dynamics that were affecting the staff between the academic years. Some staff even privately joked that it was only a matter of time before Warden appointed a civilian as the student squadron commander for the class.<sup>68</sup>

During the 1993-1994 academic year, the staff continued to work through their issues as well as revising and updating the syllabi. By the time the 1994-1995 class reported for school, they were introduced to a "complete course that covered the conceptual and practical issues involved in mastering the art and science of air warfare. It centered on ten areas: professional skills; war, conflict, and military missions; military theory; strategic structures; operational structures; campaign concepts; air campaign; campaign termination; campaign 2000+; and terminal exercise."<sup>69</sup>

In an interview with the author, Dr. Mark Conversino discussed his experience as an ACSC student in 1994. In regards to the curriculum he explained that the pendulum had swung from one extreme to the other. Instead of primarily focusing on command and staff, the emphasis now overemphasized air campaign planning with Col Warden's Five Ring Model as the "school solution." In Conversino's view, the curriculum suffered from the dogma of the Combined Bomber Offensive with the use of precision munitions. Nonetheless, he appreciated the shift to a book-based curriculum and credited his assignment to ACSC as a major factor that influenced his decision to remain in the US Air Force.<sup>70</sup> Dr. Muller acknowledges that many

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<sup>68</sup> Dr. Richard R. Muller, interview by the author.

<sup>69</sup> John Andreas Olsen, *John Warden and the Renaissance of American Air Power*, 258.

<sup>70</sup> Dr. Mark Conversino (School of Advanced Air and Space Studies), interview by the author, 15 May 2015. Dr. Conversino already had his PhD and was a published author before attending ACSC as a maintenance officer. He explained that he was seriously considering separating from the air force before he attended ACSC. Following ACSC,

students believed there was an overemphasis on campaign planning and the Five Rings Model. However, he explained, “In truth, Warden never pushed his rings. Many untrained instructors used the rings as a crutch.”<sup>71</sup>

Dr. Muller also shared some interesting insights into Col Warden’s personality. Although Col Warden spent time promoting the school by hosting high-level visitors at Maxwell and presenting the new curriculum to politicians in DC, such activities were outside his comfort zone. Dr. Muller explained that part of Warden’s job “involved gripping and grinning, but he would rather be on the white board with his curriculum developers...He loved the life of the mind—working with ideas and debating them.” Therefore, Warden would regularly avoid social gatherings and events that detracted attention from his vision for the school. He would send the vice commandant, Col Howard Guiles, in his stead. Muller observed that Col Guiles was the “quiet warrior” who did the lion’s share of hosting visitors and attending required social gatherings. Warden also recognized that some of his staff and faculty did not agree with his vision for the school. Instead of becoming defensive he would explain that it was his fault because he must not be communicating something effectively. He thought that if only he could better express his vision and goals then his detractors would get on board. Dr. Muller shared that he thought Warden’s shakeup of ACSC was a “refreshing change...his crime—if it can be considered a crime—was that he was too enthusiastic and idealistic.”<sup>72</sup>

In the end Col Warden left a lasting impact on ACSC and future air force leaders. Dr. Conversino acknowledged that air campaign planning and operational level planning were legacies that still remain at the

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Dr. Conversino was assigned to the SAASS faculty in 1995 and the dean of the Air War College from 2008-2015. He returned to the SAASS faculty in 2015.

<sup>71</sup> Dr. Richard R. Muller, interview by the author.

<sup>72</sup> Dr. Richard R. Muller, interview by the author.

school.<sup>73</sup> Dr. Muller identified ACSC's current organizational structure of academic departments staffed with personnel who develop and manage courses and book-based curriculum as his legacy.<sup>74</sup> As a student in the 2013-2014 academic year, the author can identify with both of Dr. Conversino's and Dr. Muller's observations. The school is no longer a sleepy hollow where one can improve his golf handicap. It is a vigorous program that focuses on academics. A personal critique is consistent with one Dr. Conversino expressed earlier. The course still focuses heavily on campaign planning and very little on command and staff. This does not detract from the fact that Col Warden made a lasting impact.

### **Conclusion**

Like Gen Quesada, Col Warden challenged the corporate air force's company line. In the "fighter mafia" led USAF, Warden, also a fighter pilot, did not allow himself to be stifled by the tactical mindset prevalent at the time. He was an innovative critical thinker and independent person. Instead of accepting the popular or universally accepted answers to a particular issue, Warden studied a situation and he let what he learned and experienced guide his thought process. Neither Col Warden's religion, race, nor gender were significant factors that influenced his actions to challenge the system in which he worked. The most important factors that shaped his ability to avoid falling victim to groupthink were the critical thinking abilities he developed from a young age and continued to nurture throughout his career.

As a young boy, his parents encouraged him to read various forms of literature to learn and develop a foundation of knowledge from which he could form his own ideas and conclusions. His parents were a large

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<sup>73</sup> Dr. Mark Conversino, interview by the author.

<sup>74</sup> Dr. Richard R. Muller, interview by the author.

influence on Warden's life-long quest for knowledge through self-learning. They also encouraged him to share and debate his ideas when they sat down as a family at the dinner table. As a result, John learned how to synthesize information and develop individual thought. Finally his parents encouraged him to be his own person and not give into peer pressure. The traits his parent began instilling in John at such a young age guided him throughout his life.

Warden's quest for knowledge and education landed him at the US Air Force Academy where he continued to learn on his own to supplement the standard school curriculum. This is where he developed his interest in military history. He found J.F.C. Fuller's writing on Alexander the Great particularly interesting. From them he began to study grand strategy and military strategy. His interests in this topic influenced Warden's thoughts and started to shape his military mind. Eventually this led to developing his ideas on how to tie air power to national political objectives. As his studies continued and his career progressed, he began to write on these subjects.

The history books were not the sole inspiration for the papers, articles, and books that Col Warden penned. He used his career experiences and observations as motivation. For instance, when Col Warden was stationed in Europe, he surmised that a nuclear exchange between the super powers was not the most likely scenario during the Cold War. As a result, he wrote a paper criticizing NATO's focus on the SIOP and the use of fighter aircraft to deliver nuclear munitions. Instead, Warden argued that air power should be used to gain air superiority and keep the Soviet air force from being able to influence the conventional war that was most likely to occur between the NATO and Warsaw Pact nations. He also used his experience in Vietnam as a learning point from which he further developed his concepts. Col Warden used what he learned from critically studying history, political



science, and various other subjects in conjunction with his life and career experiences to develop his thoughts.

While *The Air Campaign* is probably his most popular literary work, it is his Five Rings Model that really shaped the use of air power in the late twentieth century. The theory behind his model provided the foundation in which the 1991 Gulf War air campaign was built. In the face of opposition from high ranking USAF leaders, Col Warden developed a theory of precision strategic bombing that made enemy leadership the priority over fielded forces. Many believed this harkened back to the day of the Combined Bomber Offensive of WWII and directly challenged the AirLand doctrine already in place. The JFACC, Gen Horner, and the TAC commander, Gen Russ, were opponents of the plan. They believed a defensive air campaign that both protected an Iraqi invasion of Saudi Arabia and supported a coalition ground offensive was the best strategy. Col Warden directly confronted both of these leaders to promote his Instant Thunder plan. While his presentation may not have been well received by the JFACC, Gen Horner acknowledged that the plan contained a lot of good work and had his staff continue to refine the plan. Consequently, while Warden may not have been in the planning cell in Riyadh, he did have significant influence with members of is planning team that were in the cell. He used his influence to continue to feed information to the planning cell and further refine the air-campaign plan. In the end, the air campaign successfully severed the Iraqi forces from the countries civilian and military leadership back in Baghdad. By the time the coalition ground campaign began, the Iraqi military was so demoralized that it only took one hundred hours to march into the Iraqi capital. The success of the Gulf War air campaign reignited debate and began to change the way people looked at air power's proper use in conflict—in large part due to Col Warden's challenge of current doctrine at the time.

Col Warden's reputation as an intelligent theorist and academic landed him as the ACSC commandant following the Gulf War. Here he continued to disrupt the system and reformed the school into a rigorous academic program. Although his disregard for acceptable norms caused some consternation among students and staff, the school eventually evolved into a highly regarded institution that taught future leaders the skills required to tie military operations and strategy to national and political strategy—an area Col Warden focused on his entire career.



## **Chapter 5**

### **Conclusion**

This paper attempted to answer the question: Is it possible to have diversity of thought among a group of people of the same race and/or gender, specifically Caucasian USAF male officers? The evidence supports the claim that it is possible to avoid groupthink among any group of demographically similar people by encouraging and nurturing diversity of thought—even if that group is all Caucasian USAF male officers. The evidence for this claim was presented in chapters two through five. Chapter two explored the USAF's diversity initiatives as they relate to avoiding groupthink. Then chapters three and four looked at two Caucasian USAF officers well known for their successful dissent against corporate air force norms of the time. The intent of this research design is to answer the primary question above through the exploration of the following secondary questions: (1) What is the US Air Force doing to increase diversity among its ranks? (2) What is the focus of the US Air Force' diversity initiative? (3) Is the US Air Force's diversity initiative working? (4) Is racial/ethnic and gender diversity the answer to solving groupthink? and (5) What are some factors that influence the traits to help an individual avoid falling victim to groupthink? This concluding chapter summarizes the findings relating to each of these questions followed by some recommendations on how US Air Force planning and strategy teams might use these findings to avoid groupthink.

#### ***What is the US Air Force doing to increase diversity among its ranks?***

In 2010, the USAF began its latest initiative to increase diversity within its military and civilian ranks. The service drafted and modified existing documents to outline its vision in this area and to coincide with

other federal and DoD initiatives. The 2013 edition of the *United States Air Force Diversity Strategic Roadmap*, lists the five priorities as (1) institutionalizing diversity to achieve mission success; (2) attracting high-quality, talented and diverse military and civilian Air Force employees; (3) recruiting these potential employees; (4) developing a high-quality, talented, and diverse total force of active duty, Guard, Reserve and civilian personnel; and (5) retaining the total force.<sup>1</sup> The USAF also commissioned a RAND Corporation study aimed at determining if and how the Service could improve diversity among the officer ranks. Following the study, the SecAF sent an e-mail to all USAF personnel in March of 2015. In the message she identified the following current and future diversity and inclusion initiatives: (1) establish D&I requirements for development team boards, (2) develop a standard Promotion Board Memorandum of Instruction, (3) Institute a Career Intermission Program, (4) identify high caliber enlisted airmen for OTS, (5) establish a ROTC rated height screening initiative that increases the pool of applicants eligible for pilot training, (6) use of panels in civilian hiring, (7) taking measures to increase the female officer applicant pool, (8) extending the post-pregnancy deployment deferment, and (9) developing a Career Path Too Transformation tool.”<sup>2</sup> It is evident that the US Air Force is taking measures to endure it has a diverse force. The actions taken thus far provide evidence that is critical to answering the next question.

### **What is the focus of the US Air Force’s diversity initiative?**

Many of the USAF’s initiatives address various types of diversity. These include demographic, cognitive, behavioral, global, and organizational/structural diversity.<sup>3</sup> However, the evidence shows that

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<sup>1</sup> Air Force Global Diversity Division (AF/A1DV), *United States Air Force Diversity Strategic Roadmap*, 12 March 2013, 9-16. <http://www.af.mil/Portals/1/documents/diversity/diversity-strategic-roadmap.pdf> (accessed 12 November 2014).

<sup>2</sup> The Secretary of the Air Force, to all Air Force personnel, e-mail, 6 March 2015.

<sup>3</sup> AF/A1DV, *United States Air Force Diversity Strategic Roadmap*, 12 March 2013, 5.

the thrust of the USAF's efforts center around the racial, ethnic and gender aspects of demographic diversity. For example, the RAND study specifically sought to understand the underlying causes for the low representation of women and minorities within its officer ranks. Further evidence is found in the current and future D&I initiatives outlined in the SecAF's e-mail. Four of the initiatives (3,5,6, and 8) directly target females, while the other five target all three of the demographic diversity aspects mentioned earlier. Finally, the words of many USAF leaders further support the findings that the US Air Force is primarily focused on demographic diversity.

General Breedlove's comments concerning groupthink implied that he believes a demographically diverse group that does not consist of all Caucasian males would likely not result in groupthink. In addition, a MAJCOM commander explained that two of his three diversity initiatives directly addressed increasing opportunities for racial, ethnic and gender diversity. He explained his reasoning as based upon metrics that can illustrate how his command is performing. The commander simply stated that demographic diversity is easier to measure and quantify than the others. This leads to the next question.

### **Is the Air Force's diversity initiative working?**

Unfortunately, the evidence available thus far makes it difficult to answer this question. In other words, the RAND Study provides mixed results and it is too early to evaluate the results to the SecAF's D&I initiatives. The RAND study concluded that while the numbers of African-Americans, Hispanics, and females increased in the USAF over the last twenty years, their representation decreases as rank increases. The study also found that the US Air Force is doing as well as can be expected in attracting and recruiting racial and ethnic minorities based on the percentages of these groups eligible for a commission. On the other hand, the Service is under performing in regards to attracting and

recruiting females. Although there is a higher percentage of women eligible than men for commission, significantly more males (82 percent) than females (18 percent) made up the cohort of newly commissioned officers in 2011. Retention represents another challenge.

Interestingly, the study found that the issue with retaining racial/ethnic minorities traces back to low accession numbers. There is essentially no difference in retention rates between these demographics and white officers. In order to increase the numbers in this area the USAF would have to reduce its commissioning eligibility requirements or develop methods to increase retention rates for racial and ethnic minorities above those of white officers. Again, the story with women is different. There is a difference in the retention rate between men and women. While the study explains this difference has to do with the attracting, recruiting, and accessions of women, it also hypothesizes family concerns may be a causal factor. This may explain why four of the nine SecAF D&I initiatives directly address women. It is too early, however, to determine the success or failure of these efforts. Even if successful, the D&I initiatives will take years to increase the numbers.

### **Is racial/ethnic and gender diversity the answer to solving the groupthink?**

The evidence shows that although racial, ethnic and gender diversity may play a minor role, it is not the most important type of diversity that contributes to avoiding groupthink. The MAJCOM commander referenced earlier commented that of the five categories of diversity, cognitive diversity is the most important when developing strategy. This is consistent with experts who spent years studying groupthink, to include the man who coined the term, Irving Janis. Janis acknowledges teams that are not demographically diverse may fall victim to groupthink. He and other researchers do not acknowledge this is a forgone conclusion, however. In fact, the author was surprised to

discover that the experts spend very little effort addressing demographic diversity as a remedy to groupthink. They conclude the most important factors in avoiding group think involve group leadership as well as administrative and organizational policies that dictate how groups operate when assembled to address issues. However, this does not eliminate cognitive diversity as the most important form of diversity in avoiding groupthink.

Janis and Hart regularly reference cognitive diversity, in the form of critical thinking, as an important individual trait within groups. They identified two methods in which an individual's ability to think critically may contribute to avoiding groupthink—appointing every team member as a critical evaluator or assigning a least one member the role of devil's advocate. In these roles, the individuals must also have the ability and be willing to resist peer pressure, question group norms and decisions, and communicate effectively.

**What are some factors that influence the traits to help an individual avoid falling victim to groupthink?**

Chapters three and four examined two Caucasian male air force officers in an attempt to learn how they developed the traits that enabled critical thought and the ability to successfully counter prevailing USAF norms. There were similarities and differences in their backgrounds. One similarity between the two is their family's influence. While Gen Quesada was essentially raised in a single-parent home and Col Warden a more traditional setting, both of their home lives included parents who were actively involved in their lives. Gen Quesada's mother was a strict Catholic woman who made sure that Pete lived a life of integrity and did well in his studies. He had such respect for his mother that he would make career decisions based on her influence. Col Warden's parental influence is much more obvious. They developed John into an autodidact who enjoyed reading and debating. Both gentlemen



benefitted from loving parents who were actively involved in their lives and provided a stable home life in which family and education were important. This provided a good foundation for both men. While family helped shape both men, so did their experiences in school.

When it comes to formal education, their experiences were quite different. While Pete always performed well in school, he was more interested in playing sports than getting an education. This was not all bad. His experience as an athlete in both high school and college allowed him to develop leadership traits. When he attended Wyoming Seminary his senior year of high school, however, he did learn the value of education. His coaches instilled within him a desire to take advantage of, and learn from, the opportunities given him. Col Warden, however, was not the athletic type. He was academically inclined. When he attended the USAF Academy, Warden supplemented his formal education through self-study of subjects and literature not offered at the academy. He thrived on learning and debating topics with whoever would engage with him. Quesada enjoyed this as well. When he was a student at CGSS, he would regularly spend time with classmates outside of class engaging in academic discussions. Although both men shared different experiences in school, they understood the value of education and life-long learning. While Warden understood this fact early on, Quesada learned this lesson late in high school. Nonetheless, the value placed on life-long learning, whether formal or informal, played a vital role in both men's careers and was significant in developing their critical thinking and other skills required to avoid groupthink.

### **Recommendations**

This paper set out to dispute the claim that you must have demographic diversity in order to avoid group think. There is no question that this type of diversity offers many benefits to any group tasked with developing plans and strategies. It does not play a major

role, however, in avoiding groupthink. As expressed earlier, groups must have good leadership as well as administrative and organizational procedures in place. With this, the group can operate in a manner that allows them to openly express and share ideas with each other. They are also free to challenge each other in a constructive manner. This is where the individual traits have a role in preventing group think. Regardless of race, religion, or gender, individuals must be able to think critically, communicate effectively, and have the courage to challenge the status quo. These are all traits that Gen Quesada and Col Warden possessed as a result of their early life, educational, and career experiences. So how can a leader of a strategy or planning team look for these traits when putting together? Here are a few recommendation.

The team leader can look for diversity in a person's family, education, and career. For example, a person raised in a single-parent family may have different perspectives than those raised in a home with both parents. Likewise, those with a private education may think differently than those with a public education. The same may be true with the type of college a person attended. Finally, the leader can look for diversity in careers. For example, a prior enlisted officer with a background in logistics will likely have a different view on an issue than a career officer who flies fighter aircraft. Similarly, like Gen Quesada, officers can gain experience performing unusual jobs that will prove beneficial to the group.

Communication represents another area in which leaders can investigate when assembling a team. This can be accomplished in various ways. It may involve examining a potential team member's written correspondence such as e-mail messages, letters, and publications, if applicable. It could also involve conducting interviews. These methods provide the opportunity to examine a person's ability to effectively communicate in both written and oral form. Can the person

write professionally and succinctly? Do they write and speak in full and clear sentences?

Another method that examines both critical thinking and communication skills involves assigning the potential members a topic to present in the form of an oral or written presentation. The topic may or may not be relevant to the group's current issues. For example, in order to apply for SAASS, potential candidates must submit a short essay with their application package on a topic assigned by the school. The board reviews the essays to determine a candidate's ability to research, organize, and present the material in a professional and convincing manner. It also allows one to observe if the potential member is capable of original and independent thought. At the end of SAASS, the student is required to complete an oral comprehensive examination prior to graduation. The intent is to assess the student's ability to learn the course material throughout the year, form and organize conclusions based off of the material and other sources, and effectively present the ideas orally to a panel of three professors.

While all of the above recommendations will likely provide a leader with a sense of the potential member's ability to challenge the status quo in an educated and logical manner, there are no guarantees this will occur. Therefore, the leader should talk to people who know the member. Talk to their current and former bosses, their peers, and their subordinates when appropriate. They should also review performance reports. The objective is to look for signs that the member is motivated to improve processes and procedures. They see a problem and actively address the issue. These may be signs that a person is willing to speak up or take action to challenge the status quo.

Finally, while a leader can do everything in his power to get members on his team who are critical thinkers, effective communicators, and willing to challenge the status quo, it is all for naught if members are not empowered to apply their skills. Similar to President Kennedy during

the Cuban Missile Crisis, leaders must allow an atmosphere that encourages debate of opposing views, constructive criticism, and the thorough exploration of all options before making a decision.

In closing, General Breedlove's comments at the beginning of this paper implied that a group must be demographically diverse if it is to avoid the pitfalls of groupthink. This paper set out to explore the validity of that statement. The bottom line is that while demographic diversity offers advantages to groups it is not a significant factor in preventing groupthink. The largest influences that affect a group's ability to avoid groupthink are leadership, administrative, and organizational processes and procedure. These processes and procedure are the catalyst that enables an individual's traits to contribute to dodging the pitfalls of the groupthink phenomenon. Therefore, it is possible to have diversity of thought, and avoid groupthink, among a group of the same race and/or gender, including a group that consists of Caucasian male officers in the USAF.

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