



U.S. AIR FORCE

Policy Letter

Digest

News and Issues from Headquarters U.S. Air Force

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Aerospace Expeditionary Force Enters Second Cycle

The first full cycle of Aerospace Expeditionary Force has ended, and Dec. 1, 2000, marked the start of Cycle 2 of the 15-month AEF. Experiences during Cycle 1 have generated refinements to the AEF process that will make the second cycle even more successful than the first.

The goal of the Expeditionary Air Force is to improve our ability to rapidly deploy light, lean and lethal elements of aerospace forces anywhere on the globe, while providing predictability and stability for all airmen. To meet this challenge, the Air Force assigned people and equipment from active-duty, Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve units into 10 aerospace expeditionary forces, two crisis-response aerospace expeditionary wings and five lead mobility wings.

"Since the first AEF cycle began, we have greatly improved deployment predictability and stability to our Air Force members," said Brig. Gen. Dennis Larsen, commander of the

AEF Center at Langley Air Force Base, Va. "We do this by providing a three-month deployment eligibility window in the 15-month AEF cycle. This allows our people to predict when they are eligible for deployment, and the stability to plan training, leave and other activities."

Gen. Michael E. Ryan, Air Force chief of staff, said, "The first year of deployments under the AEF schedule has produced many successes, along with some anticipated challenges."

The pool of eligible people participating in AEF deployments grew from 89,000 to more than 122,000. Nearly 6,000 additional expeditionary combat support positions were allocated from fiscal 2000 through 2002. Also, more right-sized unit type codes at more bases were created to help share the burden.

According to General Ryan, the mechanism that identifies stressed units and career fields has been refined, and operational tempo decreases in F-16CJs, F-15Es, ABCCCs, KC-135s, B-52s and U-2s over the past year were realized. Standup of additional AWACS aircrews has recently been approved.

The long-term predictability of the AEF schedule allowed the Air Guard and Reserve components to participate in a significant percentage of AEF aviation taskings in Cycle 1 and helped reduce airlift requirement by 22 percent.

"Some systems, such as the RC-135 and a few other low density/high demand assets, displayed that full spectrum continuous engagement is more demanding for some than the requirements associated with fighting two nearly-simultaneous major theater wars," General Ryan acknowledged. "Solving the shortfall is a complicated mix of curbing the insatiable collection appetite, modernization and recapitalization —

we will continue to work all these problems aggressively."

At the EAF foundation, which supports all other

Just as the Air Force has revamped its concept of operations to meet the challenges of today's environment, it must also re-evaluate its processes to better fit ongoing and future expeditionary challenges

Gen. Michael E. Ryan

expeditionary activities, there is an on-going effort in the logistics arena to enhance the combat readiness of the EAF. The Air Force logistics community recently completed the Chief of Staff Logistics Review. "This was an opportunity to conduct an end-to-end analysis of how we conduct operations and maintenance, supply and transportation, and logistics planning at the unit level," said Lt. Gen. Michael E. Zettler, deputy chief of staff for installations and logistics, at the Pentagon.

According to General Zettler, more than 5,000 inputs were received from the major commands and compiled into about 425 issues that focused on four basic logistics processes: enlisted technical training and officer development, materiel management, contingency planning, and sortie production and fleet management. Test implementation plans are being developed from these recommendations.

"While the EAF/AEF concept has been a success story, we continue to seek improvements to the process with each AEF rotation," said General Larsen.

Civilian Personnel Management Improvement Strategy

Downsizing in the Air Force over the past decade has highlighted the importance of each element of the total force. In today's environment, all components — military, civilian, Reserve and Guard — must function as an integrated whole to achieve mission success.

To meet the needs of an increasingly technical aerospace force, the Air Force needs the right mix of new, mid-level and senior civilian employees with the right skills. During the drawdown, new hiring was reduced to minimize the impact of the force reductions on civilian employees, resulting in a workforce that is out of balance. Today, less than 10 percent of the civilian career force is in their first five years of service. At the same time, more than 40 percent of the Air Force's civilian workforce will be eligible for optional or early retirement in the next five years.

At the request of Ms. Carol DiBattiste, undersecretary of the Air Force, Air Force senior civilian personnel leaders, functional managers, career program representatives and Air Staff action officers developed a strategy to help meet the challenges of a 21st century Air Force.

"Our goal was to design a strategic plan aimed at maintaining a high quality civilian workforce through recruiting, training and development, and retention and separation management," said James Carlock, the Air Force Civilian Workforce Shaping program manager.

In April and May of this year, Air Staff personnelists met with 445 Air Force continental U.S. employees and supervisors in the field to get their input and ideas on the proposed strategic plan. Benchmarking surveys were also conducted with General Electric, United Airlines, USAA and Bath Iron Works to determine how they were meeting similar challenges. In August, a summit of senior human resource officers met to discuss and validate the initiatives. The next step

was a symposium attended by senior leaders from industry and academia who provided feedback on the initiatives and offered additional ideas and best practices. Data from these efforts was used to refine and prioritize the initiatives that make up the Air Force's civilian personnel management improvement strategy:

√ **Accession Planning:** Develop and implement methods to attract and recruit the talent needed to support the aerospace mission. Accession initiatives were developed to make the Air Force more competitive with the private sector. Specific initiatives were developed to streamline the hiring process, maximize the use of existing candidate pools and expand the use of recruiting incentives.

√ **Force Development:** Ensure the civilian workforce is mission-ready by investing in job proficiency training, leadership development, academic courses or degrees, and retraining civilians into shortage categories, like the military are cross-trained into new specialties.

√ **Retention and Separation Management:** Develop methods to help retain valuable employees and at the same time create vacancies in a strategic manner so that the work force is continuously refreshed with new talent. Initiatives include pay comparability and compensation, quality of life issues and voluntary early retirement/voluntary separation incentive pay for workforce shaping.

√ **Enablers:** Reinforce the strategic direction by increasing our personnel modeling capabilities, capturing data on new and separating employees and reinforcing a Total Force perspective in marketing efforts.

These initiatives and strategies serve as a blueprint for actions necessary to attract, develop and retain the civilian employees the Air Force needs to meet readiness challenges.

Air Force Launches Strategy to Modernize Information Systems

"One Air Force...One Network" is the new strategy embraced by senior leaders that has put the Air Force on a fast track to modernize its information systems. The strategy is based on adapting the latest commercially available information technologies to give Air Force people worldwide instant desktop access to information they need to conduct peacetime and combat operations. The objective is to ensure the Air Force maintains the advantages of information superiority and decision dominance. The key is a standards-based approach working within the existing architectural framework to make developing and delivering Web-enabled applications easier.

The strategy emerged after Secretary of the Air Force F. Whitten Peters and the Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Michael E. Ryan, conferred with industry information technology experts this summer and then convened an Air Force IT Summit in July with major command leaders. As a result, the Air Force resolved to change the way it leverages information technology.

"General Ryan and I are convinced that we can no longer run the Air Force with one foot in the future and one foot in prehistoric times," Secretary Peters said. "We need an over-arching Air Force information technology architecture that draws on the Internet and

best commercial practices and a migration plan that moves us over time into compliance with this architecture. Equally important — indeed, perhaps more important — we need to reshape our business processes to make optimal use of information technology.”

“Modernizing our information systems ranks with other top Air Force modernization priorities,” General Ryan said. “The combat power of our top-of-the-line weapon systems is enabled by our information network’s ability to tie critical information together faster than anyone else can.”

After the IT Summit, General Ryan explained the immediate actions needed. “Our first task was to design the overall concept of operations that will deliver a global Air Force ‘e-tone,’ which like the global ‘dial tone,’ delivers the same robust service anywhere in the world. (This) is about increasing our combat power by leveraging the advantages information technology offers. It is about providing every airman access to rich training resources, simple and intuitive self-service Web-based tools, and the ability to communicate reliably, securely, globally all the time.”

Eleven focus groups were chartered to lead the way in adopting

industry’s best practices. The key IT initiative under development by one of the focus groups is “My.AF,” the Air Force portal that will give users continuous single-point network access to hundreds of Air Force on-line information resources and services. While the portal will tie applications together into one view, it will also give users the ability to tailor it to a particular job. My.AF will serve as the primary entry point to current Web-enabled applications, as well as new IT features and capabilities under development.

Another group is focusing on the Air Force Enterprise Concept of Operations, which is defining an Air Force-wide vision and a roadmap for achieving an integrated IT environment that can support Air Force mission requirements.

The e-mail server consolidation, another major IT initiative, will lead to fewer servers, reduced training, more commonality, less complexity, greater information assurance and lower cost.

Several self-service applications were also formulated:

√ **Air Force “White Pages”** is an on-line directory providing access to Air Force-wide locator information combined from base e-mail global address lists and selected personnel data. This information includes an individual’s name,

rank, duty section, duty location, duty phone and duty e-mail address and may be used to locate or e-mail active duty, Guard, Reserve or civilian employees.

√ **“AFORMS”** demonstrates the vision for Web-enabled access to the Air Force Resource Management System to extract real-time training and flight data from any personal computer.

√ **“My Money”** allows people to make pay inquiries, while “eLES” will give access to leave and earnings statement information. Customers calling with a question share the same data, so the calls are about solving the problem rather than getting information.

√ **“vMPF”** (virtual Military Personnel Flight) already provides active-duty members on-line access to information such as duty history, designated location move, humanitarian assignment program, re-enlistment eligibility, overseas returnee counseling, early return of dependents and the Exceptional Family Member Program. Members may also obtain “proof

of service” letters to support Veterans Administration mortgage loans. “vMPF” reduces the number of times members visit their local military personnel flight by giving them online capabilities. Additional applica-

tions are under development, including the capability to update selected information, while other capabilities are ready to field immediately on the Air Force portal.

Functional applications offer on-line mission-related tools. “vIL” (installations and logistics) was the first family of functional applications to join the Air Force portal, providing key decision makers more effective command and control via live status for aircraft, equipment and asset balances at select locations from a single log-in at the user’s desktop.

Already sold on the combat power of the network, the IL community was developing their own portal when were asked to partner with the SC community under the IT Summit umbrella. Together, they brought “vIL” on line 10 months early and demonstrated simultaneous access to information from six different databases on one PC to Corona Fall attendees.

Information services include downward directed and local subscription information, such as the Chief’s Notices to Airmen, AEF updates, news (e.g., CNN, Early Bird, Air Force News) via Air Force Link and local mission weather.

To complement these efforts, other IT focus groups are working on such issues as short-

“*The combat power of our top-of-the-line weapon systems is enabled by our information network’s ability to tie critical information together faster than anyone else can.*”

term and long-term funding, communications and computing transport layer architectures, and information assurance architectures. As the focus groups outline courses of action, they are taking advantage of lessons learned from the Defense Information Systems Agency e-mail server consolidation effort, the Navy and Marine Corps Intranet and similar efforts in industry. The driver is to provide the same or better network service and to do it cheaper by changing the approach to how the Air Force operates and manages networks and uses network applications.

“Gathering, moving and manipulating information is fundamental to everything we do in our Air Force,” said General Ryan. “Air Force Vision 2020 acknowledges information superiority as a core Air Force competency because it provides our joint team the ability to control and exploit information to our nation’s advantage and ensures we have decision dominance. Decision dominance means we can make smart decisions faster than our adversaries can. Wiser use of information technology is our edge... We must continue to expand this decisive, network-enabled combat edge,” General Ryan said.

Expanded Health Care Benefits Authorized

Legislation signed by President Clinton Oct. 30, expands health care benefits for active-duty members and their families as well as Medicare-eligible retirees and their spouses and survivors.

“The 2001 National Defense Authorization Act directly reflects the hard work and dedication of many senior leaders in DOD Health Affairs, the services, Congress and our retiree community to push for and obtain these benefits,” Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Michael E. Ryan said.

Dr. H. James Sears, executive director of the TRICARE Management Activity, called the changes outlined in this year’s budget legislation “the biggest platter of benefit changes” since the mid-1960s. TRICARE, he said, is adding benefits and continues to lower beneficiaries’ out of pocket costs and, in the process, is taking the irritants out of the TRICARE program and improving accessibility.”

For active-duty members and their families, some of the benefits being added to TRICARE include:

- ♦ Active-duty family members enrolled in TRICARE Prime will no longer have to make co-payments for care from a civilian provider after April 28, 2001.

- ♦ Family members of active-duty troops in remote locations become eligible for the TRICARE Prime Remote program Oct. 1, 2001.

- ♦ DoD will have a five-year period to phase in making chiropractic care available to active-duty troops at selected medical treatment facilities.

TRICARE managers are also working to increase access to school physicals, eliminate the need for some nonavailability statements and some referrals for specialty care.

Col. Frank Cumberland, TRICARE management activity director of communications and customer service said, “TRICARE and health affairs officials are still working out the details on these changes and will announce them when plans are complete.”

For Medicare-eligible retirees, their spouses and survivors, some of the expanded benefits include:

- ♦ Beginning April 1, 2001, eligible beneficiaries will receive pharmacy benefits to include access to the National Mail Order Pharmacy program and retail pharmacies in addition to military treatment facility pharmacies.

- ♦ Effective October 1, 2001, Medicare-eligible military retirees enrolled in Medicare Part B will be authorized military health care as full TRICARE participants. This is a permanent entitlement resulting in military health care for life.

For those retirees who don’t have access to military facilities for their health care, TRICARE will act as a “medigap” type insurance to cover co-pays and costs not covered by Medicare.

Eligible seniors should not cancel their current “medigap” insurance coverage just yet. The DOD is working with the Health Care Financing Administration to provide the most accurate information on the appropriateness of continued enrollment in “medigap” insurance policies.

In addition, the TRICARE Senior Prime Demonstration Project will be extended by an additional year. At the end of that time, the option is open to negotiate with Health Care Financing Agency to continue the program permanently.

To ensure adequate funding for health benefits for military seniors, an accrual financing system will be in place by October 1, 2002. Similar to how military retirement benefits are currently funded, this account within the Treasury Department will be dedicated solely to funding health care for military seniors. The annual budget process will not affect senior health care funding.

TRICARE Management Activity officials said eligible beneficiaries should do two things now to ensure their future eligibility for TRICARE benefits:

♦First, they should update their DEERS record with their correct address and any changes in family status such as marriage, divorce, birth or adoption.

♦Second, eligible retired beneficiaries should enroll in Medicare Part B if they haven't already done so. Open Season extends from Jan. 1 through March 31 with Part B benefits taking effect July 1.

Acting Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs J. Jarrett Clinton said, "We have begun to work out the many details for each new authority and will continue to update our Web site as we progress. This new authority gives us the ability to keep the faith with America's military."

Related Web sites: TRICARE: www.tricare.osd.mil/ndaa/fast_facts.htm and Medicare: medicare.gov

DOD Reaches Out to Military Children in Public Schools

The Department of Defense's new Educational Opportunities Directorate hopes to provide for "quality education" of all 870,000 children in the military family — not just the 110,000 who attend DOD schools.

Victor Vasquez, deputy assistant secretary of defense for military community and family policy, stressed civilian schools do provide a quality education, but added "military children have other issues that they bring to the table."

He said the purpose of the new directorate is to "facilitate, advocate and support" open communications between DOD and local school systems

In September, more than 100 state and local education experts, teachers, military parents and students, and DOD officials attended a regional roundtable in San Antonio. Officials have scheduled a series of six more regional roundtable discussions over the next two years in areas with a high concentration of military bases.

Some issues discussed at the Texas meeting were:

□Reciprocity of standardized test scores. A

student may get tested in one state, then move to another state and get tested again. "Will there be reciprocity for that process, or do our children spend their entire school careers being tested?" Vasquez said.

□Standardization of transcripts. "We want young people to know that if they get a grade in one school, it'll be similar to what's accepted in another school," he said.

□Continuity of extracurricular activities. "When young people are in transition, how can they continue an extracurricular activity from one school to another without being left out because they missed a tryout or because they missed a sign-up deadline?" he said.

"It was clear to me as I listened to this dialogue that they have worked with military children long enough to know that there are issues children from an average civilian community don't deal with," he said, adding that cooperation could do more than just help military children.

"Ultimately our goal is to build an education system that all will benefit from," he said. "In the long run, it will serve our nation better."

Web Site Updated to Promote Global Community

The Air Force's official community Web site, www.afcrossroads.com, has added three new forums and a chat room to promote the service's dedication to maintaining its sense of global community.

Spouse, employment and cooking bulletin board message centers were added to the existing Crossroads Web site, which pools Internet resources from across the Air Force and Department of Defense into a single location, to help Air Force families deal with the stress incurred from frequent moves and separations.

The spouse forum, which provides access to resources Air Force-wide on a variety of topics, recognizes the role spouses play in managing the family during deployments, and assists them with routine, as well as extraordinary, circumstances that often occur when the active-duty member is away.

"Today's global Air Force often calls upon the military member to perform his or her duties away from home, leaving the spouse alone to maintain the family unit," said Stefanie Myers, the community programs research assistant who moderates the three new forums. "Spouses are invited to join the spouse forum to learn from each other, and to share their experiences, information and resources from both home and abroad."

Along with the spouse forum, the Crossroads employment forum offers an avenue for spouses to share knowledge of employment opportunities in their area with newcomers.

Crossroads also offers a traditional and telework job bank filled with commercial and government opportunities and server space for subscribers to place their resumes. A search feature allows them to look for job

announcements in a variety of career fields.

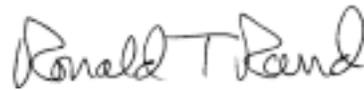
"Spouses were often overlooked when the active-duty member got an assignment," she said. "We have many professional spouses who had to start over with each new assignment. The job bank helps them retain some continuity with their careers by allowing spouses the option to telecommute and take their job with them without having to start over."

The recipe forum, a feature requested by Crossroads members will offer a place to exchange recipes, ask for cooking guidance, and provide a chat room for spouses and other members of the Air Force community to discuss a variety of topics in real time.

Air Force Crossroads is publicly accessible

from home to members of the Air Force community. Forum membership is certified through verification of personal information such as last name, date of birth and social security number by the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System. Registration requires creation of a user name and password.

"Because quality people are key to readiness, our Air Force seeks to provide its members and their families access to resources and information to assist them with the daily demands of the military lifestyle," Air Force Chief of Staff General Michael E. Ryan said. "We encourage everyone to use Crossroads; it's an excellent tool to promote community and family programs."



RONALD T. RAND
Brigadier General, USAF
Director of Public Affairs

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QUOTABLE QUOTE

"In the Air Force, we realize that, while we recruit individuals, we retain families. In addition, as large parts of our force deploy for extended periods, our ability to care for their families becomes increasingly important."

Gen. Michael E. Ryan, Air Force Chief of Staff

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