



U.S. AIR FORCE

Policy Letter

Digest

News and Issues from Headquarters U.S. Air Force

March 2001

**CSAF
Addresses
Strategic
Reviews,
Focuses on
People,
Recapitalization**

Understanding that many people may be nervous, have questions or are concerned about rumors in the press regarding the new administration's budget stance, the Air Force's top military leader says, "Don't worry."

"What the president has said is that there will be no early supplemental," said Air Force Chief of Staff, Gen. Michael E. Ryan.

"The president wants to look at where we need to go with respect to force structure and modernization and to take some time to study and work through what the alternatives may be before proclaiming any great changes or increases in funding," the general said.

"Quite honestly, this is a very rational approach, since the new administration is still coming on board and the secretary of defense is putting people into place," he said. "They need to have time to organize and familiarize themselves with all of the issues.

"We will participate in these strategic reviews and also the Quadrennial Defense Review," General Ryan said. "We have been through several such reviews and will do so again this year." Throughout the reviews, the chief of staff wants to focus on two major areas of concern, people and recapitalization of the force.

"Taking care of people is terribly important to the effectiveness of our force," the chief of staff said. "We are a family Air Force. "Our people want to know that their families are both safe and provided for. Addressing their concerns lets our people focus on the jobs before them."

However, the Air Force is not just a quality-of-life force, he said. "It's a quality-of-service force. Our people also want to have the best tools to do the tough jobs that we ask of them. They deserve only the best when asked to provide this nation's security."

"Therefore, in both short- and long-term,

the Air Force not only must take care of its people but also provide the tools they need to be the best they can be," he said. "Recapitalization of our aging aircraft fleet and infrastructure is also important."

Recapitalization also ensures airmen not only have the proper equipment to accomplish the mission but are able to do so at a much lower risk to themselves.

However important a new piece of equipment is to mission accomplishment, the chief of staff feels that without the men and women needed to make it work, it is just a piece of machinery on the flight line.

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Gen. Michael E. Ryan

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"That is why over the past several years, the Air Force has put a lot of emphasis and resources toward improving the service's recruiting and retention," he said.

"I am encouraged by the

trend of our current (recruiting and retention) figures," he said, "but I think we can do more. Recruiting and retention is an ongoing struggle. Therefore, we must always continue our efforts to make sure we have not only the quantity of people needed to maintain the end strength of the Air Force but also people of the right quality," he explained.

When recruiting figures were at a 20-year low, General Ryan stood firm in his decision not to relax standards. "We were not going to lower our standards just to bring in the numbers of troops necessary to meet our goals. And I am proud to say that we did not," he said.

The Air Force has also put a lot of emphasis over the last several years on retaining its corps of professional men and women.

"We have focused on pay raises, fixing the retirement system, increasing housing allowances properly to buy down the out-of-pocket expenses of our members, and expanding medical benefits for not just the

active duty and their families but also our retirees,” General Ryan said.

“I am optimistic that our efforts are starting to turn around the near-term retention issues, but we cannot rest on the past and we can’t declare victory over retention based only on a three-month upswing in rates,” he said. “We will continue our quality-of-life efforts to make sure our Total Force is properly provided for.

“I would like to tell our Air Force men and

women just how much I appreciate their dedication and hard work,” General Ryan said. “We ask a lot of them and we ask a lot of their families.

“But what always impresses me is how our people step up to the tasks before them. Our people don’t consider what they do as a job; they consider it a profession and they make this world a safer place for the next generations and this great country of ours.”

Top-Up Provides 100% Tuition Assistance

A new program provides active-duty Air Force people with essentially 100 percent tuition assistance, by allowing them to combine the current 75 percent TA benefit with their Montgomery GI Bill, said Air Force education officials.

The program called, Top-Up, is available to all active-duty airmen eligible for both Montgomery GI Bill benefits and tuition assistance, said Jim Sweizer, Air Force voluntary education branch chief.

This eligibility also extends to those people who converted to the MGIB from the Veterans Educational Assistance Program and have paid their \$2,700 contribution, Mr. Sweizer said.

“Top-Up benefits, retroactive for courses starting on or after Oct. 30, 2000, provide students with up to 36 months of payments which do not impact the 36 months of (MGIB) benefits,” Mr. Sweizer said.

“If a student claims 24 months of Top-Up while on active duty and, after separating from the service, enters school, they are still eligible for the full 36 months of MGIB benefits.”

However, students should remember Top-Up payments are borrowed against future GI Bill benefits, education officials said.

Future monthly GI Bill benefits are reduced by the amount of Top-Up dollars claimed, divided by 36 (the total number of months of MGIB benefits). Therefore, a student who received a total of \$360 in Top-Up payments would receive

\$640 per month instead of the current maximum MGIB benefit of \$650.

“Top-Up benefits are dependent on course length and generally not cost, although total Top-Up benefits in any given term cannot exceed the MGIB full-time rate of \$650 per month,” Mr. Sweizer said.

“One student may enroll in an eight-week course and receive \$150 in Top-Up while another may enroll in a different eight-week course and receive \$300. At the end of each term, each student will still have 34 months of remaining Top-Up benefits. However, the student who received more Top-Up money will also receive a lesser amount in future regular MGIB payments.

“This is a wonderful initiative that essentially establishes 100 percent tuition assistance for our active-duty military members,” Mr. Sweizer said. “It will greatly enhance their opportunity to pursue continuing education.”

Congress approved the Top-Up program as part of the Veterans Benefit and Healthcare Improvement Act of 2000.

Government-funded Top-Up benefits cannot be used to supplement spouse tuition assistance that receives its funding from private sources.

Students wishing to receive Top-Up benefits should contact their local base education offices.

Web Security— Not Just Luck

*by Maj. Barry Jones
Information Assurance
Policy Branch
Air Force deputy
chief of staff for
communications and
information*

In a manner similar to the Internet, the Air Force worldwide information system network has evolved and taken on an unforeseen life of its own.

But unlike many commercial entities, we have experienced no lasting adverse impact from an outside threat within our Web. Why? Because of positive and diligent Web security policies and procedures practiced by conscientious Air Force members. We’ve been very

good and maybe even a little lucky.

With increasing numbers of software applications becoming Web-based, and with the advent of the Air Force Portal, virtually every major functional application will be accessible through the Web.

The Air Force Web has recently been singled out as an integral part of combat operations in the Department of Defense’s Kosovo After-Action Report, where it stated,

“Several important communications capabilities saw their first significant combat application: use of Web-based technologies for coordination and information sharing...”

As we are becoming increasingly reliant on the Web, we must also increase our level of vigilance in securing our Web-enabled information systems and the data available on the Web.

Most of our communications and information professionals are keenly aware of the requirements to secure our information systems through certification and accreditation, finding and fixing vulnerabilities, virus protection, and so on. But not everyone may fully appreciate the impact of those vulnerabilities associated with our information or data on the Web.

For example, the Web can provide foreign intelligence agencies, terrorist groups and other malevolent organizations located anywhere in the world with incredible amounts of information and resources—all available at the click of a mouse.

Former Undersecretary of Defense Dr. John Hamre realized this in 1998 and directed a government-wide scrub of all Web pages for sensitive and personal information. He also directed DOD and its components establish a unit charged with reviewing DOD Web pages for sensitive or inappropriate information.

By March 1999, the Defense Information Systems Agency had established the Joint Web Risk Assessment Cell, manned by two active-duty personnel and 20 guardsmen and Reservists. They continually evaluate DOD’s Web presence for violations of operations security, privacy and information security.

While their efforts were initially carried out manually, they’ve since partnered with other government agencies to use automated tools to significantly simplify their search and evaluation process. And it is well known that our adversaries can use the same tools for their harvesting.

The JWRAC chief, Maj. Jim Lyons,

routinely briefs senior DOD officials on findings to raise awareness of the problem.

“Education is the key,” Maj. Lyons said. “... preventing sensitive information from getting on the Web in the first place should be our ultimate goal. The moment we post something on the Web, someone we don’t want to have it will have already downloaded it.”

In the Air Force, we’re continuing to work to establish the Air Force Web Risk Assessment Cell. The deputy chief of staff for Air and Space Operations leads this effort as a part of the operations security program.

“We’re still working out details such as the concept of operations, manning resources and chain of command,” said Capt. Eric Lambert, Air Force OPSEC program manager. “Learning from the JWRAC’s growing pains and partnering with them should help our team mature quickly.”

Everyone should continually scrutinize information placed on the Web. There is no mission-related reason to post birth dates, detailed base maps or flight schedules on

the Web, which makes it easily accessible to foreign agents and terrorists. Also, we shouldn’t rely on the supposition that only users in the “dot-mil” domain have access to our “military-only” Web pages. This level of protection

is mythical and these pages should be treated as if they were available to the public.

While Air Force Instructions and training materials are being updated to refine our Web posting processes, everyone needs to apply common sense and a large dose of awareness when developing, implementing and maintaining the information we make a part of our network weapon system.

The bottom line ... if we leave a weakness in our Web, the odds are that it will not only be found, but exploited by a person or group intending to do harm. Information assurance is everyone’s job. We must all do our part to ensure Web security ... and to take luck completely out of the picture.

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New TRICARE Dental Program Begins

The Department of Defense began a new dental plan Feb. 1. The TRICARE Dental Program combines the former TRICARE Family Member Dental Plan and the TRICARE Selected Reserve Dental Programs. The new plan provides expanded dental coverage to enrolled active-duty family members, members of the Selected Reserve and Individual Ready Reserve and their family members.

The TRICARE Retiree Dental Program, which provides dental coverage for eligible military retirees, remains a separate program and is unchanged.

Enrollment in the TDP is voluntary, continuous and portable worldwide. The contractor, United Concordia Companies, Inc., will administer all enrollment functions. A major improvement over the previous dental programs is the reduction of the mandatory 24-month enrollment obligation for the member. Under the new dental program, the enrollment commitment is reduced to 12 months. Exceptions are made for Reservists who have fewer than 12 months left but are called up to active duty for certain contingencies.

"Enrollment in the new TDP will be user friendly and efficient," said Capt. Lawrence McKinley, a senior dental consultant with TRICARE Management Activity. "United Concordia Companies, Inc., will take over enrollment from the personnel departments of the uniformed services, and have secure on-line access to the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System, or DEERS, to validate eligibility and enrollment."

The new TDP has an expanded comprehensive dental benefits package that includes diagnostic, preventive and restorative services, including dental X-rays, periodic examinations, cleanings, fluoride treatments, fillings, root canals, dental crowns and bridges, and orthodontics. It also covers athletic mouthpieces, an additional oral evaluation, orthodontic coverage for spouses, Selected Reserve and IRR members up to age 23.

"One of the primary goals for the TRICARE

Dental Program is to urge sponsors and family members to seek early preventive dental care in order to avoid more costly and serious dental disease in the future," said Captain McKinley. "United Concordia will automatically enroll children at age 4 and notify the sponsor, however, sponsors may voluntarily enroll their children at the age of 1."

Reserve component members may enroll their family members in the new program without being enrolled themselves. Certain reservists and family members previously excluded because of not having an active payroll account will also now be able to enroll in TDP. United Concordia will bill these sponsors directly for all monthly premiums.

"To avoid enrollment problems, it is important that prior to enrolling in the TDP, sponsors check their DEERS information to ensure it contains the most up-to-date information," said Captain McKinley.

Members who were enrolled in the two earlier dental programs were automatically transferred to the TDP on Feb. 1. In addition, dental benefits packages and identification cards were sent to enrolled members in December 2000.

Members who have not received their benefits packages and ID cards or who do not see the allotment on their January Leave and Earnings Statement should contact United Concordia at 1-888-622-2256.

Anyone who is eligible and interested in enrolling in the TRICARE Dental Program can obtain an application and additional information from United Concordia, the dental program administrator, by calling 1-888-622-2256. For general information on the TRICARE Dental Program, members may call United Concordia at 1-800-866-8499, or visit the UCCI Web site at www.ucci.com.

Members may also obtain information on the TDP by contacting their local health benefits adviser, beneficiary counseling assistance coordinator, dental treatment facility or uniformed services personnel office.

Air Force Assignment System

Since the Air Force Assignment System was first implemented in 1998, nearly two-thirds of the officer force has been reassigned under AFAS.

A survey done two years after implementation of the system showed that AFAS better balances Air Force and individual needs than previous assignment systems and is working well.

However, to continue being successful, AFAS needs continued emphasis, particularly in the area of commander involvement and mentorship. One of the key tenets of AFAS was formally "hard wiring" the unit commander back into the assignment process.

"The commander's role is absolutely critical to the effectiveness and success of

the assignment system,” said Col. James A. Whitmore, Air Staff’s director of assignments.

“Commanders must counsel their officers, work with them to develop well-defined goals, and ensure they receive realistic feedback. The officer assignment teams use commander comments on the preference worksheet as one of the primary considerations when making assignments. Commanders who focus their preference worksheet comments on getting members to a base of choice significantly reduce the usefulness of their input. The most effective

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Because the previous method for notifying officers of their vulnerability for an assignment was labor intensive and time consuming, AFPC recently developed several Web-based tools to assist commanders in these mentoring tasks.

As of Feb. 1, new functionality was added to the Web-based Assignment Management

System, shifting the processing of the Vulnerable to Move List to the World Wide Web. This places most, if not all, of the information a commander might need to evaluate assignments for their officers at their fingertips.

In addition, commanders will soon have eVector, a comprehensive Web-based

mentoring tool. This application provides much more than the typical “SURF” currently available on each officer. eVector provides valuable information on other topics such as military pay and per diem, promotion

eligibility, decorations, joint and rated information, education and training information, and much more, all in one convenient format.

“These technologically enhanced tools enable commanders to execute their responsibilities much more effectively than the manual procedures that predated them,” said Colonel Whitmore.

“We need to ensure that we all take time regularly to engage these automated systems and provide officers the mentoring they deserve,” he said.

Air Force Implements New Recruiter Selection Process

In December 2000, the Air Force implemented a new process to select active duty personnel for one of its challenging special duty assignments—recruiting. The previous selection method was an all-volunteer process. Requirements were not filled until a volunteer was found, interviewed, screened, qualified and recommended by their commander.

“While the all-volunteer system served us well in a less competitive environment with fewer recruiters, it can’t sustain the number of recruiters with the necessary skills we need to meet our future requirements,” said Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Michael E. Ryan.

Non-prior service recruiter authorizations rose by 50 percent in early fiscal 1999 from 985 to 1,450 in response to increasing accession requirements and the competitive youth market. The goal is to have 1,650 NPS recruiters by the end of 2001. As of Jan. 1, Air Force Recruiting Service had 1,426 NPS recruiters fielded.

The new process first identifies a “pool” of

qualified individuals whose commanders have recommended them for recruiting duty. These members may volunteer for any advertised recruiter opening.

The initial phase of this new process will fill NPS recruiter positions first. These are the young men and women who recruit the 34,000-plus enlisted personnel the Air Force needs each year.

“With the number of recruiter candidates projected for training in the next six months coupled with those already performing this exciting duty, we are confident our goal of 1,650 recruiters by the end of the year will be met.” said Brig. Gen. Paul Hankins, former director of the Air Staff’s Recruiting and Retention Task Force. “While this process is new for recruiting duty, the philosophy is one we have used for assignments for more than 30 years—selecting a qualified individual to fill a valid Air Force requirement.”

“There are only so many recruiting assignments that will come open each year, against

a pool of several thousand people. Obviously, if no one in the candidate pool volunteers to take one of the assignments, a person will then be selected,” said General Hankins.

On Jan. 16, Air Education and Training Command advertised 17 NPS recruiter requirements on Equal Plus with reporting dates between August and October 2001. Within a week of the requirements being advertised, more than 50 candidates volunteered to fill these positions. Future requirements will be

advertised on subsequent Equal Plus listings.

For more information on the process or recruiting duty visit the following web sites:

HQ Air Force Recruiting Service:

<http://www.rs.af.mil/RTR.htm>

HQ AETC/DP Recruiter Assignments:

<http://www.aetc.randolph.af.mil/dp/dpa/dpaa/DPAAR/assignments.htm>

HQ AFPC/DPAA Airman Assignments:

<http://afas.afpc.randolph.af.mil/enlisted/enlisted.htm>



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

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QUOTABLE QUOTE

“The key to success to me isn’t how you get it right, but how you fix the things you don’t get right.”

Chief Master Sgt. of the Air Force Jim Finch to enlisted members at Tinker Air Force Base, Okla., in February concerning AEF cycles

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