

AIR COMMAND AND STAFF COLLEGE

AIR UNIVERSITY

**Air Command and Staff College Should Contribute to Educating Regional Affairs
Strategist Officers**

by

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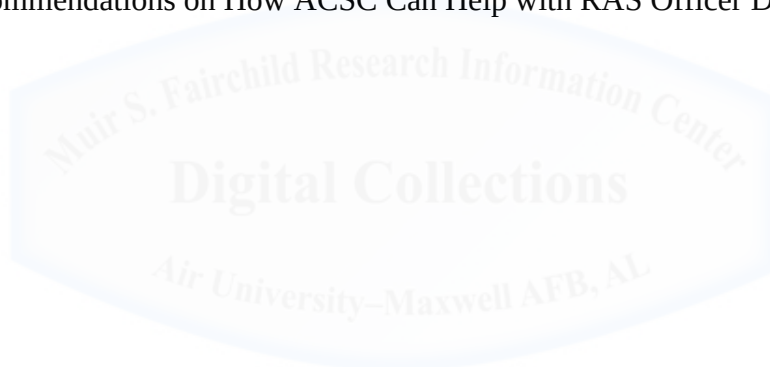
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Abstract

The United States has focused its national security strategy on today's interdependent international order to help build and maintain American and global security. This system has been around since the end of WWII and has evolved into one facilitating international cooperation, burden sharing, and accountability. Protecting American citizens is the U.S. Government's number one priority and to accomplish this involves addressing security issues at home and abroad. To achieve this, the U.S. continues to take a collaborative approach by supporting the international system through strong ties with capable partners. The U.S. Joint Forces are prepared to preserve regional stability, render humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, and build the capacity of our partners to join with us in meeting security challenges. The United States' increased push to address security concerns in coordination with partner nations places a larger number of military members in untraditional roles. These roles require close interaction with partners and senior U.S. leaders, military and civilian. To fulfill these requirements the Department of Defense (DoD) developed the Foreign Area Officer (FAO) program, creating officers educated in the politics, culture, economics, geography, and language of foreign countries or who have duty experience abroad. The USAF's International Affairs Specialist (IAS) program provides airpower expertise to the DoD's FAO program. IAS officers are developed in two categories, Regional Affairs Officers (RAS) and Political-Military Affairs Officers (PAS). The IAS program faces three substantial challenges: time involved in qualifying RAS officers, effects from budget reductions on RAS qualifications, and increasing demands of RAS certified officers. ACSC can help solve RAS certification problems by offering international relations advanced academic degrees: 1) online, 2) in-residence, and/or 3) in-resident through partnerships with local schools.

I. Introduction:

The United States has developed a national security strategy that relies on a prominent interdependent international order to help build and maintain American and global security. Success of this strategy is reliant on American and foreign partner relationships across all of the instruments of power. To strengthen the military instrument of power, the DoD created the FAO program to establish department-wide guidelines for the services to follow in developing officers operating in today's international environment. The Air Force has met this mandate by developing the Regional Affairs Strategist (RAS) officer and has been progressively building the program since 2005. Budgetary constraints and manning challenges are presenting the Air Force with difficulties in educating these officers. However, there are readily available resources within the Air Force to meet the education requirements. The Air Command and Staff College (ACSC) can help facilitate the certification of RAS officers by offering advanced academic degrees for RAS candidates. This can be accomplished by the following three recommendations: 1) ACSC offer an online international relations degree, 2) ACSC offer an in-residence international relations degree, and 3) ACSC partner with local schools to offer an international relations degree.

II. Today's Global Environment:

The end of WWII produced an international order that has evolved into a system in which many nations have prospered by becoming interdependent upon one another. This system, led by the United States, has transformed nearly all forms of society across the globe, benefiting many developed and developing states. Below is how the 2015 National Security Strategy describes today's current system:

The modern-day international system currently relies heavily on an international legal architecture, economic and political institutions, as well as alliances and partnerships the United States and other like-minded nations established after World War II. Sustained by robust American leadership, this system has served us well for 70 years, facilitating international cooperation, burden sharing, and accountability. It carried us through the Cold War and ushered in a wave of democratization. It reduced barriers to trade, expanded free markets, and enabled advances in human dignity and prosperity.¹

The modern-day system serves to distribute wealth and power from the traditional powers more evenly across the board, providing opportunities for developing states to prosper. In return, traditional powers see benefits as developing states become more stable and their economies grow.

Open trade, linked economies, and human rights are three critical elements promoting today's global environment. Open trade and linked economies provide opportunities that mutually benefit connected states. The connection fosters a rules-based system promoting international security.² The rules-based system "works best through empowered citizens, responsible states, and effective regional and international organizations."³ As states grow more connected, they have become more mindful to the security issues related to other states. This has created an international environment in which states are not just looking internally, but more commonly externally to address security issues.⁴ Global human rights have also taken on a much more prominent role. International human rights advancements promoting universal rights of man producing, "notions of "the responsibility to protect" [giving] the international community legal rights and obligations to intervene in the affairs of sovereign states."⁵ This is creating an

environment where responsible states are less likely to engage in conflict with other responsible states. However, responsible states are also more willing to step in to promote human rights across the globe on a grander scale.

While stability has grown in regards to reducing conflicts between states, new threats have emerged across the globe since the end of the Cold War. The collapse of the Soviet Union changed the makeup of the security structure around the world. Authors Kinzer and Ulrich explain from an American foreign policy perspective, “No longer are all issues colored by Cold War certainties of East versus West. Rather, we have become more aware of the complicated and uncertain nature of international issues more broadly defined. As the country’s foreign policy focus has shifted from issues of grand strategy, such as strategic arms balances, to more regionally specific concerns, such as ethnic conflict, so too has the US military.”⁶ Examples of these threats are “aggression, terrorism, and disease.”⁷ While there is less chance of conventional warfare today, irregular warfare, insurgencies, and acts of terrorism are drastically on the rise and will continue to be the dominate threat for the distant future.⁸ These threats thrive in unstable environments and pose a risk to the international order if not addressed.

Weak and failing states offer breeding grounds for violence, disorder, and chaos. Problems arising from weak and failing states exists as, “Within states, the nexus of weak governance and widespread grievance allows extremism to take root, violent non-state actors to rise up, and conflict to overtake state structures.”⁹ A prime example of weak and failing states currently exists with the rise of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) organization in Iraq and Syria. The governments of both countries were too weak to maintain control in their respective countries and ISIL capitalized on the situation and took possession of large portions of

land in both states.¹⁰ The organization is now terrorizing the population in that area and poses a threat to the entire region.

Another major concern with weak and failing states involves states controlled by authoritarian leaders struggling to maintain rule.¹¹ These weak and failing states pose threats to their own populations' welfare as the authoritarian rulers have little or no regard over their citizens' basic human rights and needs. In many cases, these rulers are willing to sacrifice the state's well-being in order to keep power. Citizens are often forced to live in poverty and go without basic necessities, with no hope of prosperity, because their country's leaders are failing to do their job of protecting the people.

The threat of terrorist organizations and insurgency groups are affecting the security of the international system. Operations in Iraq and Afghanistan over the last 14 years have shown a change in the "character of warfare."¹² Groups like ISIL, al-Qaeda, and their affiliates are examples of organizations that rely on terrorist tactics to spread fear and violence both locally and on an international level. To compound the issue, the level of violence is growing. ISIL's current actions are significantly more aggressive than other terrorist organizations in the past at committing "massive ethno-sectarian killing and cleansing."¹³ While terrorist organizations prosper from "South Asia through the Middle East and into Africa,"¹⁴ the terror threat is a global issue. Small terrorist cells have carried out individual attacks in many countries over the past few decades. The attacks on September 11, 2001 are a stark reminder to Americans that every country is vulnerable to terrorism. The events on that day claimed nearly three thousand innocent lives.¹⁵ In addition, they had a dramatic effect on the global economy lasting for months.

New threats challenging the security of the international system will be around for years to come. A RAND Corporation study reported, “The National Intelligence Council has projected that irregular and hybrid warfare – including terrorism, subversion, sabotage, insurgency, and criminal activities – will remain prominent features of the future threat environment.”¹⁶ To deal with these new threats the United States has evolved its National Security Strategy.

III. How the U.S. is Dealing with New Threats of Today’s Global Environment:

Protecting American citizens is the United States Government’s number one priority and to accomplish this involves addressing security issues at home and abroad.¹⁷ To achieve this, the U.S. will continue to take a collaborative approach by supporting the international system through strong ties with capable partners. The United States’ role as sole surviving superpower and its interests and relationships across the globe provides unique opportunities.¹⁸ While the very nature of today’s interdependent system limits the influence of individual states, the U.S. still maintains significant power in guiding international affairs. More elegantly put, “In an interconnected world, there are no global problems that can be solved without the U.S., and few that can be solved by the U.S. alone.”¹⁹ This emphasizes the need for states to work together to solve problems around the world and the United States plans to continue to lead those efforts.

America will maintain its long history of working with a variety of alliances, coalitions, and partner states to address international security issues. Limited resources, growing threats, and a desire to minimize American combat engagements, combined with a focus on helping to stabilize developing states have shifted American policy towards building partners’ capacity. Improving developing states’ security, political establishments, human services, and legal systems are examples of investments in building partnership capacity.²⁰ As developing states

becomes more stable and prosperous then security improves, reducing threats to the international system. This will require contributions from all of America's instruments of power working to "continuously expand the scope of cooperation to encompass other state partners, non-state and private actors, and international institutions—particularly the United Nations (U.N.), international financial institutions, and key regional organizations."²¹ From a military perspective, this is requiring even more interaction with partners from other countries to meet national security objectives.

IV. How the U.S. Military is Operating in Today's Global Environment:

While U.S. forces will continue to conduct missions across the entire range of military operations, today's global environment is altering how they are accomplished. Air Force Instruction 16-109 explains, "Changes in the international security environment and the nature of threats to U.S. national security have increased the range of potential conflict zones and expanded the number of likely coalition partners with whom U.S. forces will work."²² Today's U.S. Joint Forces are prepared to "preserve regional stability, render humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, and build the capacity of our partners to join with us in meeting security challenges."²³ Partner capacity building efforts in regards to the military focus on improving a government's military force to overcome security challenges. This includes organizing, equipping, training, and conducting multinational exercises and operations. In the past, U.S. Special Operations Forces have filled a large majority of these roles. However, the increasing demand for partnership capacity building has expanded, demanding a larger role for conventional forces across the Joint Forces in partnership building.²⁴

The U.S. military also works with allies, coalitions, and partner states in combat operations to conduct various stability operations across the globe. This practice will grow even more important in dealing with the threats in today's global environment. Currently the United States is leading a worldwide campaign composed of over 60 partners to defeat ISIL.²⁵ Working with other states provides substantial benefits to the United States. Multinational efforts help establish legitimacy of combat engagements. Acting multilaterally reinforces the international system and sends a message to adversaries there is a unified consensus against their actions. Multinational engagements also reduce many burdens for the United States.²⁶ Partner nations provide resources to the cause in the form of forces, equipment, and funding to execute operations. This reduces the drain on limited U.S. resources. As more states participate in security operations, a larger portion of the world's security issues will improve, at a lower cost to the U.S.

The United States' steady increasing push to address security concerns in coordination with partner nations is placing a larger number of U.S. military members in untraditional roles. These roles require close interaction with partners and senior U.S. leaders, both military and civilian. Properly serving in these positions requires U.S. military members to possess "sociocultural, political, and historical knowledge"²⁷ of the respective regions of the world they are dealing with to help further U.S. policy and strategy. In 2005, to better prepare service members to fulfill the needs of the changing U.S. strategy, the DoD formally established the Military Department of FAO program. DoD 1315.20 describes the makeup of a FAO as, "FAOs will possess a unique combination of strategic focus, regional expertise (including cultural awareness and foreign language proficiency), and professional military skills and experiences that are critical competencies essential to the DoD mission...in support of the DoD global

mission.²⁸ DoD 1315.20 established the policy and guidelines for all U.S. military services to follow in developing their respective FAO programs. Kinzer and Ulrich explain the significance of the directive, “This initiative, after years in development, recognizes that close interaction with foreign governments is needed to further US interest and that this requires officers who are educated in the politics, culture, economics, geography, and language of foreign countries or who have duty experience abroad.”²⁹ In response, the United States Air Force developed its own program to meet their FAO mission.

V. The USAF’s International Affairs Specialist (IAS) Program:

The USAF’s IAS program provides airpower capabilities and expertise to the DoD FAO program. IAS is important to strengthening U.S. relations with and improving the abilities of international partners. This is evident in the IAS vision statement, “To be the recognized AF leader for maintaining and building cooperation, capability, and capacity with international partners.”³⁰ These efforts are in coordination with America’s grand military strategy and national objectives. The IAS mission statement provides a more detailed view of the role the USAF plays in addressing global security concerns, “SAF/IA strengthens US and global security through partnerships in air, space, and cyberspace by integrating security cooperation activities, advancing partner capabilities and interoperability, and developing international Airmen.”³¹ Through these efforts, U.S. international partners’ airpower capabilities are growing stronger, increasing their ability to defend themselves and contribute in helping solve international security issues. This in turn helps make the USAF more successful in performing its mission. As expressed by Ms. Heidi Grant, Deputy Under Secretary of the Air Force, International Affairs, “Global vigilance, global reach, and global power need global partnerships.”³²

The IAS program is managed by the Deputy Under Secretary of the Air Force, International Affairs (SAF/IA). The Deputy Under Secretary provides “oversight and guidance for international policy and programs supporting national security objectives through politico-military affairs; security assistance programs; technology and information disclosure; education and training; cooperative research and development; and attaché affairs.”³³ These efforts, combined with the FAO programs of the other Services, promote national strategy. They involve a variety of IAS initiatives. Examples of the initiatives IAS manages include foreign aircrew training, USAF professional military education for international students, international military exercises, foreign military sales, coordination of international air shows, senior air forces leadership engagements, and military personnel exchange programs.³⁴ To accomplish the IAS’s diverse mission the Air Force relies on a unique cadre of officers.

To meet today’s global challenges the IAS program has created a group of officers across all Air Force Specialty Codes (AFSC) with an international focused skillset. IAS officers apply their core military skills with developed cultural and political-military understanding of particular countries and regions to determine how to apply air, space, and cyberspace power to building relationships and addressing security concerns across the globe.³⁵ These officers serve in a variety of billets within the Air Force, Joint community, DoD agencies, and other organizations working with international partners.³⁶ IAS officers are critical as they “provide regional expertise from the political-military and strategic perspective for planning and executing operations; observe and report on international military issues; serve in liaison attaché/military-diplomat, and representational roles to other nations; serve as arms control inspectors; and oversee military security assistance.”³⁷

Currently, there are over 1,000 IAS officers performing missions in 105 countries across the globe.³⁸ These billets are all field grade officer positions.³⁹ IAS officers are developed in one of two categories, RAS and Political-Military Affairs Strategists (PAS). Candidates for both categories are vectored into the IAS program by their respective career-field development team.⁴⁰ RAS officers serve in the traditional FAO role. While there are some opportunities to enter the RAS program in senior developmental education, the normal stage in an officer's career is between 7-10 years of service.⁴¹ RAS officers must meet all requirements of the DoD directive for the FAO program to become certified.⁴² This consists of language qualifications, international relations advanced academic degree that is regionally focused, and have spent time in the region they will perform RAS duties.⁴³ Upon completion of RAS qualifications, the officer will receive a RAS AFSC of 16FXX.⁴⁴ RAS officers follow a dual career track, rotating between jobs in their primary AFSC and RAS assignments.⁴⁵

PAS officers are not FAO certified. The PAS program's intent is to produce "senior leaders with political-military experience, not specific to a region of the world."⁴⁶ However, PAS officers do fill many IAS positions that would go vacant because of a lack of RAS officers. Lt Col Julie Grundahl, Chief of the Air Force's International Affairs, International Airmen Division explains, "While PAS does not meet the FAO mandate the program makes up for it by utilizing super-high quality officers."⁴⁷ The IAS program educates PAS officers on a wide-range of political-military affairs topics, with an emphasis on interagency relationships.⁴⁸ The majority of PAS officers are developed while attending in-residence intermediate developmental education at the Air Command and Staff College (ACSC).⁴⁹ Upon completion of PAS education, the officer will receive a PAS AFSC of 16X.⁵⁰ PAS is the only program that ACSC awards an AFSC.⁵¹ PAS officers typically serve one developmental assignment in an IAS billet

at some point after education; however, additional opportunities exist if the officer's career field is willing to release them for another PAS tour.⁵²

RAS and PAS officers fill many critical jobs across the world contributing to today's national strategy. A snapshot from 2012 shows how the IAS program is working to meet global security concerns in an interconnected environment. Five regions of the world accounted for 94% of RAS officer requirements, Europe (28%), United States (26%), Asia Pacific (20%), Middle East/North Africa (11%), and Latin America (9%). PAS officer postings were mainly in three regions, United States (66%), Europe (21%), and Asia Pacific (11%).⁵³ 85% of the RAS officer corps was assigned to the following three job categories, attachés (41%), building partnership capacity (26%), and Air or Joint Planning Staff positions (18%). The top four PAS job categories accounted for 79% of overall assignments consisting of building partnership capacity (29%), Air or Joint Planning Staff positions (29%), advisors (12%), and liaisons (9%).⁵⁴ The IAS requirements come from a variety of organizations. For RAS officers the majority of requirements came in from four categories (97%), Combat Support Agencies (including attachés), Combatant Commands (32%), USAF-major command level (17%), and USAF-headquarters level (7%). The majority of PAS officer requirements by organizations came from a group of seven categories (96%), Combatant Commands (25%), USAF-headquarters level (17%), USAF-major command level (17%), DoD (12%), Combat Support Agencies (10%), Interagency (8%), and Joint Chief of Staffs (7%).⁵⁵ What distinguishes the type of IAS officer filling a position, RAS or PAS, is determined by the organization owning the requirement.⁵⁶ For example, if a combatant commander requests a security cooperation officer it is at that commander's discretion if the IAS officer has to be FAO qualified. Meeting the demands of filling IAS positions presents challenges to the program.

VI. Challenges to IAS Program:

The IAS program faces three substantial challenges in meeting the demands of fulfilling RAS requirements. They consist of the time involved in qualifying RAS officers, effects from budget reductions on RAS qualifications, and potential for increased demands of RAS requirements. Since the DoD officially established Service FAO requirements in 2005 the USAF has been working to meet all air, space, and cyberspace IAS requirements. Prior to 2005, the Air Force relied on officers with preexisting skills to fill international affairs positions.⁵⁷ Today's IAS program has established an institutional approach to "access, develop, and manage a sustainable body of Regional Affairs Strategist (RAS) officers, who meet the DoD FAO mandates of language proficiency, regionally-specific advanced academic degree, and time spent in region."⁵⁸

Becoming a certified RAS officer can be a timely endeavor. To meet language certification, RAS candidates must possess a minimum Defense Language Proficiency Test score of "2/2 in any two modalities for a foreign language"⁵⁹ in the region they will be assigned. They are also required to have earned a regionally focused advanced academics degree.⁶⁰ In addition, RAS candidates must fulfill a six-month immersion tour specific to the regional they will serve prior to becoming certified.⁶¹ For RAS candidates that do not meet any of these requirements upon acceptance into the program, certification training will take an average of two to three years; depending on the region the RAS officer will be assigned.⁶² The typical training track for RAS officers starts with language training at the Defense Language Institute Foreign Language School, ranging from seven to 17 months - depending on particular language required for region they will be serving.⁶³ Upon completion of language qualification, a typical RAS candidate will attend the Naval Postgraduate School (NPS) for 12 months to earn their regionally focused

advanced academic degree.⁶⁴ After spending 17 to 29 months on language and advanced academic degree completion, a typical candidate must still accomplish the RAS immersion before becoming certified. The immersion consists of a “minimum of six months experience in the country and region of specialty.”⁶⁵ The substantial amount of time involved with typical RAS training track can make the program less appealing to potential RAS candidates and functional development teams. The amount of time for RAS certification for typical candidates is only one problem facing the IAS certification, budgetary constraints pose another.

The negative effects from budget reductions sweeping across the Air Force are also impacting the IAS program. Author Diem Nguyen Salmon highlights the seriousness of the situation from a Department of Defense perspective, “Six years of defense cuts, totaling 25 percent reductions in annual spending, have degraded the U.S. military.”⁶⁶ The IAS program has seen a reduction in its operation and maintenance budget of over 30% for fiscal year 2015.⁶⁷ Additional damage to the IAS program from Air Force budgetary cuts directly affects the certification of typical RAS candidates. The Air Force Education Board warned IAS program leadership to expect a 100% cut in student man-years for fiscal year 2017.⁶⁸ Without allocated student man-years, the IAS program will not be able to send any RAS candidates to NPS for advanced academic degrees. This is problematic as an average 83% of RAS candidates receive their advanced academic degree from NPS every year.⁶⁹ While budget issues present immense tests for certifying RAS officers, the demand for RAS requirements also presents challenges to the IAS program.

The IAS program is steadily building its cadre of certified RAS officers. Currently there are 325 RAS requirements the USAF has the responsibility of filling to meet customer needs.⁷⁰ This demand is projected to increase by nearly 25% within the few years. Since RAS officers

are dual-tracked between their core career field and IAS duties, the program calculated a need for 2.3 RAS officers for each requirement to ensure all positions are filled at all times.⁷¹ This brings the total number of RAS officer to meet the IAS mission to 748. Current manning levels only permit 60% of RAS requirements to be filled by RAS officers, the remaining are filled by “best fit” such as PAS officers, or go unfilled.⁷² With an average of 70 RAS accessions per year, the IAS program is on track to reaching an 85% RAS officer fill-rate goal by 2019.⁷³ However, reductions in Air Force personnel end strength and shortages in critical career fields threaten the accession rate. Since 1990, the USAF’s personnel end strength has seen a 43.5% reduction.⁷⁴ This challenge does not escape the Deputy Under Secretary of the AF, International Affairs, who describes the organization as the “smallest AF in our history.” After current Air Force force-shaping measures conclude, end strength numbers could come in below 315,000.⁷⁵ As the functional career fields feel the pressure of force reductions so does the IAS program, since they are the source of RAS officers. This is already evident in undermanned communities. Rated officers account for nearly half of the field grade officer (FGO) force in the USAF.⁷⁶ However, due to shortages the rated community only supplies 15% of the RAS officer corps (which are all FGO positions).⁷⁷ Future increases to RAS requirements, such as a current proposal to mandate 100% of USAF Security Coordination Officers (SCO) to be RAS certified, will place a larger demand on the IAS program. The SCO proposal creates a need for an additional 99 RAS billets, requiring 228 additional RAS officers.⁷⁸ This would push back the estimated 85% RAS officer fill-rate goal to 2024.⁷⁹ Add to this any additional requests from existing customers for RAS requirements and the problem will continue to grow.

VII. Steps IAS Program is Taking to Mitigate RAS Officer Development Issues:

The IAS program is continuously trying to find ways meet its mission and mitigate the challenges associated with certifying RAS officers. One approach focuses on gaining RAS candidates with preexisting qualifications to reduce the time and cost associated with certification. The IAS program is requesting functional development teams, when considering officers for RAS vectoring, to look for candidates that have already met any of the program requirements.⁸⁰ For example, if an officer has a Defense Language Proficiency Tests score of 2/2 or has a regionally focused advanced academics degree on record then that could substantially reduce the time and money needed to certify them as a RAS officer. Another approach involves advanced academic degree waivers. The IAS program has been authorized to use constructive credit waivers to substitute regionally focused advanced academic degrees in limited situations. In cases where an officer has completed the Olmsted Scholarship Program or a foreign-speaking I/SDE program, yet did not receive an advanced academic degree, a constructive credit waiver can be granted to meet the degree requirement.⁸¹ A waiver can also be granted for an advanced academic degree if an officer has served at least six months “in the country/region of specialty, involving significant interaction with host-nation nationals and/or host-nation entities in the foreign countries or region in which they specialize.”⁸² A third approach is an ad hoc route to fill the RAS vacancies. Since there are not enough certified RAS officers available, the IAS program is forced to use non-deliberately developed officers. Typically, these officers will come from the PAS corps; however, other highly-qualified officers can fill these roles on a case-by-case basis if they possess unique experience.⁸³ The greater reliance on non-deliberately developed officers to fill RAS requirements is not an ideal situation and threatens the integrity of the program. While the IAS program is working diligently to

mitigate challenges it faces, the program needs help in meeting the RAS demands in today's operating environment.

VIII. Three Recommendations on How ACSC Can Help with RAS Officer Development:

ACSC would help the IAS program overcome RAS officer certification challenges by developing an international relations advanced academics degree program. This falls in line with Air University's Vision "to deliver military education and inspire to challenges to national and international security for the Air Force."⁸⁴ With an ACSC international relations degree, a RAS candidate would only need to spend three months at NPS to receive their region-specific certification.⁸⁵ ACSC already offers an advanced academic degree: Master of Military Operational Art and Science degree, delivered through in-residence and online programs, to its professional military education students. There is substantial costs savings as well. Providing the education through an Air Force institution removes the need for RAS student man-years, which averages \$183,000 per student to attend NPS.⁸⁶ Creating an international relations degree program at ACSC would create an organic method for the Air Force to help manage and develop RAS officers more effectively and efficiently during uncertain times. It would also comply with the Chief of Staff of the Air Force guidance on advanced academic degrees, in which they "are meant for professional development."⁸⁷

#1: ACSC Offer Online International Relations Degree:

Adding an international relations degree to ACSC's current Online Master's Program (OLMP) would drastically reduce time and costs associated with certifying RAS officers. SAF/IA and ACSC staffs are currently investigating this proposal. The recommendation prescribes to the Air University Commander's transformation directive, which emphasizes a

focus to “Expand distance learning programs...Across all AU programs, improve our ability to deliver as much of our curricula as we can...to reach a wider Air Force audience.”⁸⁸ A study by SAF/IA determined only four new courses would need to be added to the curriculum to meet the international relations degree criteria.⁸⁹ The study also concluded ACSC’s OLMP current staff, not including professors, could support the addition of 50 to 100 students annually.⁹⁰

To truly meet the RAS certification needs, the program would have to be opened to all officers in the ranks of captain and major since the IAS program starts taking RAS candidates between seven and ten years of an officer’s career.⁹¹ While the current ACSC OLMP course is designed to offer both a master’s degree and Joint Professional Military Education (JPME) for major-selects and majors,⁹² the international relations OLMP course could be split to offer just a master’s degree for captains since they do not qualify for JPME. Upon selection to major, they could take a condensed JPME course to complete the remaining requirements.

Offering an OLMP with an international relations focus would not only present cost savings to the Air Force, it would also offer other benefits. Examples include a nine to 12 month decrease in RAS certification, easier identification of motivated RAS candidates to development teams and the IAS program, and a larger pool of officers for the RAS selection.⁹³

#2: ACSC Offer In-Residence International Relations Degree:

ACSC adding an International relations degree to their in-residence program would also help in certifying RAS officers. This is in line with the spirit of AU’s task ahead to “expand depth and breadth of AWC [Air War College] and ACSC resident programs by increasing elective offerings.”⁹⁴ Taking the same approach as recommendation one for qualified JPME candidates, ACSC would modify its existing in-residence master’s degree curriculum to tailor it

towards an international relations advanced academics degree for RAS vectored in-residence IDE students. ACSC could offer one RAS seminar per class, consisting of no more than 13 students. This is similar to ACSC's current Cross-Domain Operational Strategist Concentration (CDOS) program. The 2015 Air University Course Catalog's description of CDOS "is an advanced program open to a limited number of students that introduces the challenges associated with planning and executing operations across domains."⁹⁵ Determining participants of the RAS seminar should be a coordinated effort between the development teams, for identifying RAS candidates attending IDE, and SAF/IA, for selecting RAS candidates to deliberately develop for that particular year.

Developing RAS officers through ACSC offers many benefits. The in-residence program would be ideal for candidates that join the program later in their career. As stated earlier, typically RAS candidates enter the program before attending IDE. From an IAS program perspective, having a source to deliberately develop RAS officers which have passed the ten-year mark of their career could be beneficial to achieving proper manning levels. For example, the 13 ACSC educated RAS students would account for nearly 20% of the annual accession requirement. ACSC has already proved effective in training IAS officers in-residence. The move to educate PAS candidates from NPS to ACSC has expedited the development of the PAS officer corps. Nearly 100% of PAS requirements are currently being filled.⁹⁶

#3: ACSC Partner with Local Schools to Offer International Relations Degree:

ACSC could partner with local universities in the Montgomery, Alabama area to add an international relations degree to its in-residence program for educating RAS officers. By drawing on the resources already existing within the local community, partnering may be the

most cost effective manner for ACSC to implement an in-residence international relations degree into its current IDE program. Two ways to accomplish this would be to contract local schools to teach the RAS seminar on the ACSC campus or to send the RAS seminar students to the local campuses to attend the required international relations classes needed for the specialized degree.

This approach highlights the AU's transformation per the Commander's guidance, "We should be able to accept courses and credits from other programs – military and civilian – as credit worthy in our schools and programs as well."⁹⁷ ACSC's in-resident program educates an average of 500 students a year.⁹⁸ With the proposed 13 positions dedicated to officers in the RAS seminar earning international relations degrees, this effort would only account for less than three percent of an entire ACSC class. Although educating these students through ACSC would be substantially cheaper for the Air Force than sending them to NPS, the school may find it more cost effective to outsource the international affairs classes. With the few changes required to the current ACSC curriculum, estimated four courses, outsourcing presents an attractive option, at least for the short-term. A long-term view may prove cost effective to teach the international relation specific classes at ACSC, with ACSC instructors. However, partnering with local universities can pay off in this manner as well. ACSC can contract local schools to develop the initial curriculum for the international relations courses.

IX. Conclusion:

In conclusion, I feel confident the recommendations are viable means for helping the IAS program fill the Air Forces' role in meeting American national objectives. The United States has developed a national security strategy relying heavily on an international order focused on cooperation, burden sharing, and accountability to help build and maintain American and global

security. To achieve its primary mission of protecting American citizens, the United States Government recognizes a need for strong ties with capable partners, involving all instruments of national power. Today's U.S. Joint Force recognizes a growing requirement in working with foreign partners and building the partnership capacity to meet security challenges. This places a larger number of U.S. military members in untraditional roles, requiring close interaction with partners and senior U.S. leaders, both military and civilian. The DoD developed the FAO program to prepare officers for close interaction with foreign governments to further US interest. The USAF's IAS program provides airpower capabilities to the DoD FAO program. IAS officers are developed in one of two categories, RAS and PAS. RAS officers are FAO certified. The IAS program faces three substantial challenges fulfilling RAS requirements. They consist of the time involved in qualifying RAS officers, effects from budget reductions on RAS qualifications, and potential for increased demands of RAS requirements. The IAS program is continuously trying to find ways meet its mission and mitigate the challenges associated with certifying RAS officers. ACSC can help facilitate the certification of RAS officers by offering advanced academic degrees for RAS candidates. This can be accomplished by offering RAS candidates an online international relations degree, offering an in-residence international relations degree, and partnering with local schools to offer an in-residence international relations degree. All three recommendations are cost effective means for overcoming serious threats to certifying RAS officers and align with Air University transformation efforts. By developing RAS education options at ACSC, the Air Force strengthens its ability to meet national security strategy and objectives.

ENDNOTES

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