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INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS PROGRAMS: THE AIR FORCE VERSUS THE ARMY

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by

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ABSTRACT

Building international partnership and cooperation is a major objective in the United States National Security Strategy (NSS). The primary conduit for the Air Force and Army to implement those international affairs programs are Air Force Regional Affairs Strategist (RAS) and Army Foreign Area Officers programs. These programs were created in response to Department of Defense (DoD) Directive 1315.17 and DoD Instruction 1315.20, which directs the formation of Foreign Assistance Officers to support international affairs. These programs, however, were not created the same.

If RAS/FAO programs are not effectively meeting the objectives as outlined in Department of Defense (DoD) Directive 1315.17 and DoD Instruction 1315.20, the result is personnel who do not possess the regional expertise, cultural awareness and appropriate training to implement Security Cooperation, Building Partner Capacity (BPC) and other international affairs programs. An evaluation research framework was utilized to determine if the Army FAO or the Air Force RAS program better fulfilled the objectives set by DoD Directive 1315.17 and DoD Instruction 1315.20 for international affairs programs. An analysis of the results showed that both programs require improvements, but the Army FAO program exceeded the Air Force RAS program in many areas. Recommendations for improvement for the Air Force RAS program included creating a single-track RAS program, creating a RAS Reserve Component, creating a NCO RAS career field and providing a common name as other services. These improvements would result in professionals who are better qualified to implement Security Cooperation and BPC programs.

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INTRODUCTION

Foreign affairs has always been a major component in the United States' national security strategy, but now more than ever the United States is finding that the security of the nation cannot be maintained alone. Maintaining not only national security, but global security requires partnerships between the United States' military and the militaries of many other countries. In 2012, the Secretary of Defense, Leon Panetta, gave a lecture on *Building Partnership in the 21st Century*. He stressed due to fiscal challenges, the defense strategy will place greater emphasis on "building the capabilities of others to help meet the security challenges of the future."[1] He also stated the Department of Defense (DoD) initiative focuses on security cooperation, enhancing skillsets to sustain partnership and streamlining security cooperation programs.[2] The 2014 Quadrennial Defense Review mirrors this strategy stating that the United States will "sustain efforts to strengthen key alliances and partnerships, placing more focus on deepening existing cooperation as well as building new and innovative partnerships."[3] One of the primary conduits for engaging international partners and coordinating Security Cooperation programs are the Air Force Regional Affairs Strategist (RAS) and the Army Foreign Area Officer (FAO) career fields. Department of Defense (DoD) Instruction 1315.20 states these career fields are to operate, "in support of the DoD global mission" and will "provide critical competencies and capabilities….in security cooperation and international capacity building objectives."[4]

Military departments created RAS/FAO personnel in response to Department of Defense (DoD) Directive 1315.17 which directs each military service to have Foreign Assistance Officers to support international affairs and which outlines specific criteria for those programs.[5] DoD Instruction 1315.20 further defines specific objectives in meeting criteria set by DoD Directive 1315.17. The Air Force and Army developed RAS and FAO personnel that were trained in

foreign language, international affairs and regional culture.[6] These personnel operate in Combatant Commands (COCOM), Security Cooperation Offices (SCO), Defense Attaches' and in various other arenas where international affairs programs are coordinated with international partners.[7] These programs however, were not created the same.

The Problem

If RAS/FAO programs are not effectively meeting the objectives as outlined in Department of Defense (DoD) Directive 1315.17 and DoD Instruction 1315.20, the result is personnel who do not possess the regional expertise, cultural awareness and appropriate training to implement Security Cooperation, Building Partner Capacity (BPC) and other international affairs programs. One problem identified by Combatant Commands (COCOMs) and the Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA) in the 2009 and 2011 Annual FAO reports was that some services were providing unqualified RAS/FAOs called "best fit" due to the lack of certified RAS/FAO officers, which caused degraded mission capabilities when implementing Security Cooperation and BPC programs.[8] A second problem identified in the 2009, 2010 and 2011 Annual FAO Reports was the demand for RAS/FAO billets was rapidly increasing, but the RAS/FAO fill rate remained low.[9]

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate if the RAS program is meeting the primary objectives as outlined in DoD Directive 1315.17 and DoD Instruction 1315.20 and to determine how the program compares to the Army FAO Program and if lessons can be learned from how each service implements their program. This analysis may bring to light issues regarding how the Air Force or the Army manages their international affairs programs.

Research Question

Which international affairs program, the Army Foreign Affairs Officer or the Air Force Regional Affairs Strategist program, better fulfills the objectives set by DoD Directive 1315.17 and DoD Instruction 1315.20 for international affairs programs?

Research Methodology

This paper employs an evaluation research framework and will provide a history of the RAS/FAO programs, discuss the problem, give a short synapsis of each program, present and analyze the criteria, discuss the implications of the results and recommend solutions.

The criteria for this evaluation was based on the Section 3 of DoD Directive 1315.17 and will include how well personnel are trained in language, regional expertise and cultural awareness, their ability to interact with foreign militaries, if officers are retained for international affairs assignments and if officers are provided opportunities for competitive career advancement. DoD Instruction 1315.20 will be utilized to provide further definition of how the criterion is meant to be carried out. The evaluation will examine traits from both the RAS and FAO programs and information for that evaluation will be obtained from sources such as the United States Air Force (USAF) Instruction (AFI) 16-109 International Affairs Specialist and the Department of the Army Pamphlet P600-3-48. The Army and Air Force International Affairs Program proponents and the FAO Annual reports will be used to evaluate RAS and FAO personnel numbers, retention and promotion rates. Accomplishing this analysis may lead to a hypothesis regarding the current effectiveness of the RAS and FAO programs and if these programs successfully meet the objectives of DoD Directive 1315.17.

BACKGROUND

"Foreign political-military relationships" date back to 1889 when the Unites States started sending military attaches' to various countries. In 1953, the United States Army developed the first official FAO program, the Foreign Area Specialist Training (FAST) program.[10] Initially, Army FAOs rotated between their FAO positions and their primary military occupation specialty.[11] The Army FAO program evolved until 1997 when Security Cooperation was introduced and was a catalyst for the DoD to establish DoD Directive 1315.17 which directed the development of FAO programs in support of Security Cooperation initiatives.[12] This resulted in the Army creating its current Foreign Area Officer (FAO) program and a single-track career program.[13] On 28 Sept 2007, additional DoD Instruction 1315.20 was signed which provided supplementary guidance and directed a standardized format for the Annual FAO report.[14]

The Air Force international affairs program is a newer program than the Army program and was not formally implemented until 1997, also in response to DoD directive 1315.17.[15] However, no formal commitment was made for the deliberate development of an Air Force international affairs program until DoD Directive 1315.17 was signed in 2005.[16] The current program is named the International Affairs Specialist (IAS) Program. It includes Political Affairs Strategists (PAS) who are officers selected to serve in a political military affairs capacity and the Regional Affairs Strategists (RAS) who are officers selected to serve in a similar capacity as the Army FAO program.[17] The RAS program is what will be addressed in this paper, since they serve in a traditional FAO role whereas PAS officers serve in one-time career broadening tour. United States Air Force (USAF) Instruction (AFI) 16-109 International Affairs Specialist provides guidance on the PAS and RAS programs and states that these two programs were established to "to meet the challenges [of the international security environment] by deliberately

developing a cadre of Airmen with international insight, foreign language proficiency, and cultural understanding."[18]

Problem Background and the Significance

RAS and FAO programs are integral in meeting the objectives of Security Cooperation, BPC and the United States National Security Strategy (NSS). Therefore, evaluating the effectiveness of RAS and FAO programs provides a direct correlation to their effectiveness in carrying out the objectives of the NSS and the 2014 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR). DoD Directive 1315.17 states that the primary objective of the international affairs programs is to support the NSS in regards to international relations.[19] The NSS stresses the importance of international partnerships, ensuring strong alliances, creating allies and promoting democracy and also states that the United States cannot meet these objectives alone.[20]

Security Cooperation and BPC are activities that the DoD utilizes to encourage international partners to work with the United States and includes items such as defense articles, training and other defense services.[21] The Security Assistance Management Manual (SAMM) also defines BPC saying they are "programs that encompass Security Cooperation and provide assistance to foreign militaries to support counter-terrorism, counter-drug, counter insurgency and various other programs."[22] The main goal of BPC is to train foreign governments to maintain stability operations, so that the United States does not need to become involved. The 2014 QDR stresses this saying that "building security globally not only assures allies and partners and builds partnership capacity, but also helps protect the homeland by deterring conflict and increasing stability."[23] RAS/FAO personnel play a significant role in this equation.

While international affairs activities can take place in many arenas, most of the activities that involve Security Cooperation and BPC take place in Defense Attaches' and Security Cooperation

Offices (SCO). The Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA) provides policy on Security Cooperation programs. It states that "Security Cooperation is an important tool of national security and foreign policy and is an integral element of the DoD mission. Security Cooperation activities shall be planned, programmed, budgeted, and executed with the same high degree of attention and efficiency as other integral DoD activities."[24] Since Security Cooperation programs are to be executed with a "high degree of attention and efficiency" RAS/FAO personnel must be fully trained in those programs, in cultural awareness and have the regional expertise to meet the needs of international partners.

The product of not having properly trained and effective RAS/FAO personnel can result in less effective implementation of Security Cooperation programs, issues with cultural understanding and a decline in regional experience. Combatant Commands stated that when services found "best fit" solutions for RAS/FAO billets that it was not an appropriate substitute for having fully trained personnel.[25] DSCA stated that officers put in positions that lacked FAO skill had a steep learning curve when it came to understanding the political mission and Security Cooperation programs.[26] To add to this, international affairs professionals who are not qualified or properly trained can often recommend solutions to international customers that are more expensive or that cannot be sustained by the international customer. A testimony from the United States Government Accountability Office (GAO) identified one of the issues with BPC programs was planning for sustainment, as many partner nations do not have the ability or willingness to sustain many of programs that are recommended.[27] Well versed professionals can provide solutions, such as training or engagements that are cheaper, but might be more effective in both meeting international partners' needs and building cooperation and interoperability.

The significance of this evaluation is to ensure qualified RAS professionals are utilized in places where international affairs activities are implemented and coordinated, thereby ensuring they are able to effectively carry out their purpose, implementing the objectives of international partnership in the National Security Strategy (NSS). RAS/FAO personnel require the knowledge and skills necessary to guide foreign militaries in improving their capabilities, competency and effectiveness; they must assist the United States in strengthening international relationships and assist in developing military cooperation and interoperability.[28] All of these are crucial steps in developing trust with international partners and ensuring the capability provided to a country will be used to the United States benefit, should the need arise, which is the ultimate goal.

The Air Force RAS Program Overview

The RAS program is a voluntary, dual career track program, that recruits officers at the seven to ten year of commission, who are trained through both deliberate and non-deliberate development, depending on the qualifications of the officer.[29] Deliberate development means the officers are selected and trained to have the appropriate qualifications, and non-deliberate means officers are selected who already have many of the required qualifications. A dual career track means officers alternate between their primary Air Force Career Specialty (AFSC) and RAS assignments.[30] AFI 16-109 does not describe in detail the duties of RAS personnel and only states that the IAS career field will "employ this unique combination of knowledge and skills to understand the specific regional context in which air, space, and Cyberspace power may be applied, integrate this understanding into plans and operations, and build effective relationships with our global partners."[31] The current RAS program is overseen by the Deputy Under Secretary of the Air Force, International Affairs (SAF/IA) who is responsible for ensuring

IAS programs comply with DoD Instruction 1315.20, but also executes the day to day management and monitoring of the career field.[32]

The Army FAO Program Overview

The Army FAO program is a single career track program that recruits officers at approximately seven to nine years after their primary military occupational specialty (MOS) and are trained through deliberate development and non-deliberate development.[33] A single-track program means that once Army officers are selected to be a FAO, they remain in that career field for the remainder of their military career. The Army trains FAOs to be Security Cooperation professionals who are experts in their region and whose primary objective is to support the United States' goals in Building Partner Capacity.[34] The Army FAO is tasked with advising senior military and civilian leaders, engaging foreign military leaders and training future leaders at various service academies in support of facilitating international affairs objectives.[35] The Army FAO is managed by the Director of Strategic Plans and Policy, known as the FAO proponent.[36] Of note, in 2012, in order for the Army to address a critical shortage of Army FAOs and focus on more Security Cooperation efforts, the Army initiated a Foreign Area Noncommissioned Officer program.[37]

COMPARISON: INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS PROGRAMS AIR FORCE VERSUS ARMY

This evaluation will investigate how well the RAS and FAO programs meet criteria developed from DoD Directive 1315.17 which states the RAS/FAO personnel shall be educated and trained, will be put in positions that allow interaction with foreign militaries, have their careers managed to ensure they are retained for RAS/FAO assignments, and will be managed to ensure competitive career advancement. [38] Further instruction on how various agencies are

tasked carry out this guidance is provided in DoD Instruction 1315.20. This comparison utilizes data from the 2009, 2010 and 2011 Annual FAO Reports. The 2011 Annual FAO Report was the last Annual FAO Report published. Current data was received from the Air Force and Army proponents; however, some criteria may lack data for Fiscal Years (FY) after 2011 and before 2014, due to unavailability.

Training in language, regional expertise and cultural awareness

DoD Instruction 1315.20 sets minimum standards for secretaries of military departments in implementing language and regional culture requirements for RAS/FAO personnel. The instruction states that RAS/FAO personnel should have a graduate level education that focuses on a country or region, foreign language skills in their region of focus, at least six months of experience working directly with host nation, preferably a year, and that there should be standardized criteria "language skill and regional expertise requirements" for their positions.[39] DoD Directive 1315.17 requires "foreign language skills at the professional level, (i.e., Interagency Language Roundtable Level Reading 3/Listening 3 and with a goal of Speaking 3), in the dominant language used by the populations of the countries or regions in which they specialize."[40] DoD Directive 1315.17 and DoD Instruction 1315.20 direct that minimum levels of regional expertise should also be to the professional level.[41] A professional level of regional expertise is further defined in DoD Instruction 5160.70, Management of Language and Regional Proficiency Capabilities. DoD Instruction 5160.70 establishes language proficiency goals and publishes regional proficiency skill guidelines.[42] The instruction outlines six regional proficiency skill levels, with level 3 defined as professional.[43] Professional means officers have two to four years of experience working in their regional area of focus at least 75 percent of the time, can demonstrate enough knowledge and critical thinking to make judgments, have the

cultural experience of a person who has lived in the region for 1 year and is likely to have an ILR level of 2+ to level 3.[44]

Two methods will be utilized to evaluate how well personnel are trained in language and regional cultural awareness in relation to DoD Instruction 1315.20. The first method is to determine the type and length of training each RAS/FAO must obtain prior to their assignments to their regional area of expertise and if there are standardized levels they must maintain. The second criteria will involve an evaluation of how dual versus single career tracking affects RAS/FAO levels of cultural awareness and regional expertise skills.

Air Force RAS officers according AFI 16-109 are required to obtain a "regionally focused master's degree", complete six to 15 months of foreign language training, to obtain and maintain language proficiency at 2/2 Defense Language Proficiency Test (DLPT) level and ultimately gain knowledge of regional history, culture, language, and political-military affairs.[45] Once officers have completed their training, they are required to have a minimum of six months of immersion in their country/regions of specialty called the Regional Affairs Strategist Immersion (RASI). [46] RAS officers are required to take a DLPT and Oral Proficiency Interview annually and maintain a 2/2 DLPT.[47] In order to maintain their competency RAS personnel are offered online language training programs, a one month immersion course called the Language and Area Studies Immersion Program (LASI), and individual tutoring programs. Additionally RAS personnel are offered regional enhancement studies opportunities at several facilities.[48] RAS personnel must maintain proficiency in their language and regional skill while concurrently maintaining proficiency in their core career field.[49]

The Army's FAO program also requires a regionally focused master's degree and language training that lasts four to nine months with the goal of achieving 2/2 DLPT level and eventually

attaining a level 3. [50] Army FAOs must also maintain a language competency of 2/2 DLPT, tested annually. [51] Army FAO's must also attend 1 year of in region intern-like training that includes familiarization with the region, advanced language studies, regional research and travel to attain improved cultural awareness.[52] The Army also has two additional requirements 1) is a Joint FAO Course that provides a 1 week introduction to being a FAO and covers “FAO roles and responsibilities, cross-cultural competence, security cooperation/assistance” and various other topics to prepare officers for becoming a FAO. [53] 2) The Army also requires the additional qualification of a "regional proficiency skill level at level 3 (Professional), 4 (Senior Professional), or 5 (Expert), per DODI 5160.70." [54] Qualification to the regional proficiency skill level 3 can be attained through initial training; however, FAOs are expected to attain higher skill levels. Only senior FAOs have the time and regional expertise to obtain those higher proficiency levels and only through repetitive FAO assignments and structured self-development.[55]

The Army and the Air Force both take steps to ensure their international affairs personnel are adequately trained, however the best way to learn regional expertise and cultural awareness is for officers to immerse themselves in their areas of responsibility. DoD Instruction 1315.20 defines regional expertise as an understanding of various factors (historical, political, military, etc.) of a foreign country and geographic region, knowledge of United States goals for that country or region and the ability to apply critical thinking to achieve outcomes in that country or region.[56] This instruction also defines cultural awareness as "a subset of regional expertise that includes language, religion, norms, values, beliefs, behaviors, gestures, attitudes, etc."[57]

The Air Force and Army are trained in cultural awareness and regional expertise when they attend language, graduate and immersion training; however, becoming an expert requires time

and personal experiences. Learning “cultural effectiveness” is best promoted by using knowledge and skill to engage in and solve problems, through activating previous experiences and through demonstration and transferring cultural skills to everyday life.[58] A study commissioned by the Army, but done by Rutgers University on *Training, Developing, and Assessing Cross-Cultural Competence in Military Personnel* found that cultural competence is not just about the facts a person learns about another country, but that "cultural agility" comes from high quality experiences and interactions with people from other countries so that a person may test their knowledge and abilities in that competency.[59] Dual-tracking versus single-tracking effects regional expertise and cultural competency, because single-tracking allows personnel to spend more time in their regional area of focus learning and developing those skills, that are a significant part of RAS/FAO continuing education. Dual-tracking provides breaks in this education, that can result in the loss of a perishable skill set.

Ability to interact with foreign militaries

DoD Instruction 1315.20 states secretaries of military departments must "develop, resource, and sustain Service FAO programs designed to access, train, motivate, promote, and retain a cadre of officers to meet present and future defense needs" and "ensure that FAO designated billets are filled by qualified personnel with military occupation skill/specialty code/designations of FAOs."[60] The instruction also states RAS/FAO’s should serve in "Joint and Service Staffs, COCOM Staffs, Defense Agencies, other DoD Component Staffs, and in combined headquarters or standing Joint Task Forces."[61] Based on this, analysis of the ability for RAS/FAO personnel to interact with foreign militaries relies on the number of RAS/FAO personnel, what positions they are filling, and how well those existing billets are being filled.

According to AFI 16-109 RAS personnel have an occupation specialty code of 16F and typically serve as attachés, security cooperation officers, regional planning staff officers, country desk officers at Headquarters Air Force or Combatant Commands (COCOM), and other Air Force components.[62] Data received from the Air Force RAS proponent as of September 2015 showed, 36% of RAS served as attaches, 21% in Joint Staff, 19% as Security Cooperation Officers, and 16% in Air Force Staff.[63] The rest of RAS personnel were split in various other billets. The 2011 Annual FAO reports showed that for Fiscal Year (FY)09, FY10 and FY11 the FAO utilization rate (percentage of billets filled) was low, but has increased every year from 21%, 35% and 43% respectively.[64] The SAF/IA IAS Overview dated January 2014 stated there were 318 billets, with 361 certified RAS available to fill those billets.[65] Due to dual-tracking, all certified RAS personnel are not necessarily filling a billet, so the certified RAS utilization rate was actually 67%.[66] The SAF/IA IAS Overview as of September 2015 identified 324 RAS billets with 458 certified RAS officers.[67] The fill rate was not identified.

According to Army Pamphlet 600-3, FAOs have an occupation code specialty of FA48 and serve as defense and Army attachés, security cooperation officers in United States embassies and host nation ministries of defense, political-military advisors to deployed military commanders and liaison officers to foreign militaries.[68] Data provided by the United States Army FAO proponent for FY15 showed that 22% of FAOs served in Defense Attachés, 17% in Security Assistance, 13% in COCOMs and 11% in Army Service Component Commands.[69] The rest of the FAO force served in various other capacities in Army Staff, Defense Intelligence Agency Headquarters, State Department, Training and Doctrine Command and various other billets.[70] The annual FAO reports for FY09, FY10 and FY11 showed the Army's utilization rate was at 84%, 86% and 81% respectively.[71] As of July 2015 there were 888 FAO billets and 778

certified FAO available to fill those billets. The FAO utilization rate as of that date was at 88%.[72]

Retention for International Affairs Assignments

DoD Directive 1315.17 states that RAS/FAO personnel will have their careers managed to ensure they are retained for international affairs assignments and DoD Instruction 1315.20 states that the utilization of FAOs should ensure "the maintenance of perishable language and regional skills and return on Service investment in the FAO program."[73] To evaluate whether or not officers are retained for international affairs assignments, the career path of officers after assigned to international affairs positions will be evaluated, resulting in a discussion of how dual versus single-tracking affects retention for international affairs assignments and return on service investment.

The typical career path for Air Force RAS personnel is to enter into RAS training at approximately seven to ten years of commission; they attend training for two to three years and then go to their first IAS assignment that lasts from six to 12 months.[74] Next, they go to their primary AFSC for several years in a leadership position and then back to another IAS assignment. Each time the RAS officer returns to their primary AFSC they must complete/update their core AFSC certifications.[75] Because of this, RAS professionals are not retained specifically for international affairs assignments. In addition, when assessing the career track of RAS personnel, given a 20 year career, by the time they are trained it is likely only two RAS assignments will be obtained from the officer.

The typical career path for Army FAO personnel is to enter training at seven to nine years of commission, from that point the Army FAO career is managed so that they remain in FAO assignments until retirement. FAOs have a similar two to three year training period, but are then

retained for international affairs assignments that given a 20 year career can result in up to four to five international affairs assignments.[76]

Opportunities for competitive career advancement

DoDI 1315.20 states that secretaries of military departments shall "ensure Service FAO programs provide for a career path and develop officers who have opportunities for promotion into the G/FO ranks" by identifying positions that require FAO related skills.[77] To measure this, data on RAS/FAO promotion rates will be analyzed to compare how well their promotion rates compare with the rest of their service averages. This information is important as it ensures that RAS/FAO positions have programs that allow an officer to progress into leadership positions. This data may also identify if dual-tracking versus single-tracking has an effect on promotion rates.

The below Figure 1 and Figure 2 represent the percentage of O-5 and O-6 candidates selected for promotion in relation to the total number who applied for promotion for the whole Air Force, RAS officers only, the whole Army and FAO officers only.

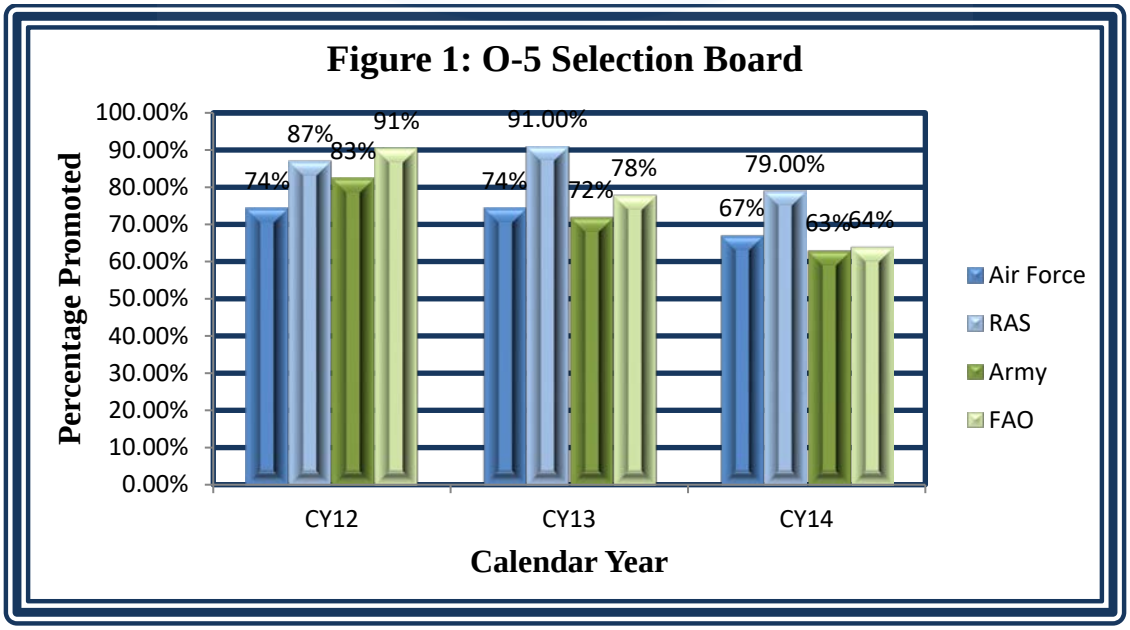

Figure 1. O-5 Selection board promotion rates. (Adapted from Tilbrook, Kathleen. "The US

Air Force International Affairs Specialist Program." The FAO Journal International Affairs, April 2012: 15-16. and United States Army Foreign Area Officers Corp. Foreign Area Officer Branch. Program Overview, Army FAO Proponent, 15 July 2015.)[78]

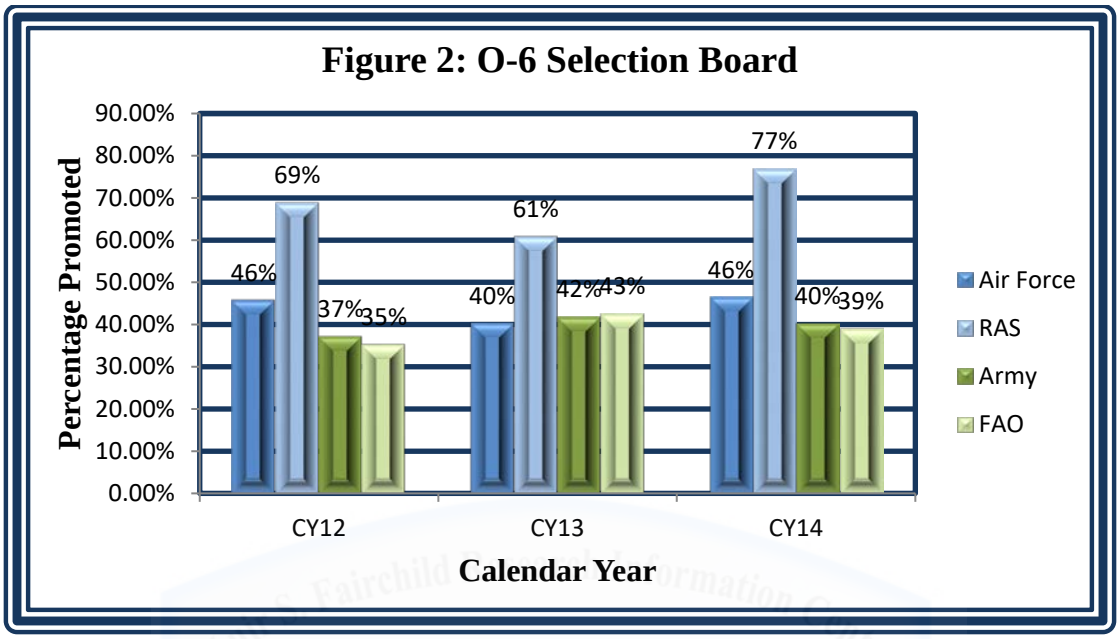

Figure 2. O-6 Selection board promotion rates. (Adapted from Tanner, Katie Maj Chief International Affairs Assignments. "International affairs Specialist Program Engabling Air Force Expeditionary Air and Space Operations." Headquarters United States Air Force, n.d. and United States Army Foreign Area Officers Corp. Foreign Area Officer Branch. Program Overview, Army FAO Proponent, 15 July 2015).[79]

In calendar years 12 to 14 the RAS promotion rates have been higher than the rest of the Air Force promotion rates and the Army promotion rates have been comparable to their service rates for those same years.

ANALYSIS OF COMPARISON

An analysis of the above results showed that the Air Force RAS and Army FAO programs both have areas that require improvement in meeting the objectives outlined in DoD Directive 1315.17 and DoD Instruction 1315.20; however, in many areas the Army exceeded the Air Force. The Air Force made significant strides and continued to improve, but additional steps are required to meet DoD objectives.

Training in language, regional expertise and cultural awareness

The Army and Air Force met the minimum education standards for RAS and FAO personnel entering into the career field; however, they were both deficient in minimum language requirements and the Air Force was deficient in regional expertise requirements. The Army and the Air Force programs had comparable education requirements; however the Army FAO had an additional requirement of maintaining a regional expertise level. Both services did not meet the minimum DoD goal for language which is ILR 3/3/3 and not 2/2. The Army requires FAOs to not only maintain their language proficiency; they also must maintain and attain higher regional expertise levels. DoD Directive 1315.20 states "the goal is to attain and maintain FAO language skills and regional expertise at the professional-level."[80] This means both services should require an ILR of 3/3/3 and require a standard for attaining and maintaining regional expertise to professional level (level 3).

The Army FAO exceeded the Air Force RAS in maintaining regional expertise and cultural awareness because FAO had more time in their region of focus to develop those skills. The Army FAO program is a single-track program and does not have to rotate to another career field. Additionally, they spend approximately one year attending intern-like regional training specifically focused on developing cultural awareness. In terms of proficiency in cultural awareness and regional expertise, single-tracking gives the Army more opportunities to develop those skills. Dual-tracking puts the RAS program at a greater disadvantage since they spend less time in their area of responsibility.

Ability to interact with foreign militaries

The Army FAO exceeded the Air Force RAS in the ability to interact with foreign militaries since it had a greater number of personnel; the Army filled a larger percentage of their billets and

afforded more opportunities to interact with its regional areas of responsibility. Both programs were not completely filling their billets and were not meeting the DoD Instruction 1315.20 requirement to "retain a cadre of officers to meet present and future defense needs."[81] Both the RAS and FAO were in line with DoD Instruction, regarding where the FAO positions are primarily located.

The Army FAO program outnumbered the RAS program, but more significantly were filling more of their billets. Data showed that the Air Force had taken significant steps to improve this situation, but in terms of meeting DoD Instruction were still deficient. This is concerning because according to the 2011 Annual FAO report, due to military budget cuts the DoD anticipates additional emphasis on BPC programs, which means the FAO program is expected to continue to increase not only in its role, but in importance.[82] The total number of RAS/FAO personnel was increasing, but not enough to fill the demand, that is primarily coming from the COCOMs.[83] This means that both services must find ways to either increase the number of FAO/RAS accessions or find other ways to fill the gaps with qualified personnel who can meet not only the growing demand, but the unique needs of Security Cooperation and BPC programs.

Retention for International Affairs Assignments

The Army FAO was more effective in the area of officers being retained for international affairs assignments, since it had a single internationally focused career path. Because the Air Force dual-tracks and must return to their primary AFSC, RAS personnel were not fully retained for international affairs assignments and additionally there was less return on investment. This did not meet the DoD Directive 1315.17.

As outlined in the evaluation, only two assignments were gained from RAS personnel in a program that requires between two to three years of education, while multiple assignments may

be gained from the Army FAO in their area of responsibility. DoD 1315.20 states as one of the minimum standards that "FAO utilization ensures the maintenance of perishable language and regional skills and return on service investment in the FAO program."[84]

Another important point to address in regards to retention was for the Air Force RAS his/her original AFSC still has primary oversight. SAF/IA is responsible for developing and managing "the IAS secondary career field prioritization plan."[85] The primary AFSC still retains overall control and decision authority over an officer's career management which means the RAS personnel must compete between that AFSC and their international affairs assignments.[86]

Opportunities for competitive career advancement

The Air Force exceeded the Army in the area of competitive career advancement; however the Army was still comparable to their respective service promotion rates. This means that both services were being offered opportunities for promotion and were meeting DoD objectives. This data could indicate that dual-tracking versus single-tracking may have some impact on RAS/FAO promotion rates.

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IMPLICATIONS TO RAS, SECURITY COOPERATION AND BPC

The above data illustrated the Air Force made improvements since FY09 to the RAS career field; however further steps need to be taken. Both the Army and Air Force require improvements in meeting DoD objectives, but other than the area of promotion rates, the Army was surpassing the Air Force. An important consideration is the Air Force program was much newer than the Army program.

Personnel Not Dedicated/Not Fully Engaged

A major problem with the current RAS program is dual-tracking because it results in personnel who are not fully engaged in the RAS career field and must split their time and efforts

between two careers. This split in time and effort means RAS are either not fully effective in either career field or end up choosing one career field over the other. Since RAS are promoted based upon their primary AFSC, their choice of focus seems obvious. Additionally, reintegrating into each billet results in a period of adjustment and relearning changes that have occurred in the career field. In regards to Security Cooperation and BPC, this results in a period of reintroduction to Security Cooperation changes and procedures in an already shortened RAS life-cycle.

The second issue with dual-tracking involves regional and cultural expertise. As identified in the results of this evaluation, RAS personnel spend less time in their assigned regions and therefore are more likely to lose the perishable skills of language, cultural awareness and regional expertise. In a research paper done by the Institute of Defense Analysis, *The Strategic Value of Foreign Area Officers*, 97 percent of surveyed FAOs indicated that "in country or in region training experience was either valuable or very valuable."[87] Jason Nicholson, an Army FAO who wrote an article for the FAO Journal, experienced both single and dual-tracking and stated that "a single-track career contributed to a higher degree of expertise in critical FAO skills in the community."[88] Not having to compete in two career fields allowed the Army a greater return on investment since FAOs could hone their skills through repetitive assignments.[89]

This leads to the third issue with dual-tracking, which is return on investment. The FY11 Annual FAO report identified the cost to train one RAS officer as $196,300, a price that is likely to have increased over the years.[90] Additionally, it takes approximately two to three years of education and training to obtain a fully qualified RAS. As identified in the above evaluation, given a 20 year career, only two RAS assignments are gained. This is a significant cost and time investment for the Air Force to bear to receive such small return.

Two reasons the RAS program dual-tracks are to keep officers competitive for promotion and to allow officers to remain operationally relevant when interacting with international customers. In the FY09 Annual FAO report the Air Force identified its commitment to dual-tracking saying that "RAS officers increase the relevancy and the credibility of their military bona fides in the international affairs environment,…they can translate their regional expertise and insights into military utility…and it allows RAS officers to remain competent and competitive in their primary career field."[91] In regards to remaining operationally relevant, Colonel Hetherington in an interview for the Institute for Defense Analysis study explained why he supports a dual-track approach saying it is important for an officer to maintain their combat ability and stay up to date on Air Force equipment and procedures, otherwise they will be a less effective "warrior diplomat" with foreign partners.[92] This same study observed one of the biggest issues with single-tracking as maintaining operational relevance.[93]

The above concerns may be legitimate; however, RAS personnel do not operate in a vacuum. They have the ability to pull from multiple civilian and military agencies, such as military personnel in embassies or reach back to squadrons in the United States to remain operationally relevant. Additionally, international customers work with a variety of equipment and procedures; RAS personnel cannot be experts in all areas and must rely on other military professionals to provide gaps in knowledge.

In regards to promotion rates, data in this evaluation supported that the RAS promotion rates have been higher than the Army FAO rates, but Army rates are comparable with their respective service promotion rates. Additionally, data does not support that dual-tracking versus single-tracking is the reason for the higher promotion rates. Higher promotion rates for RAS officers could be a result of the superior quality and training of officers selected for the program. The

Air Force accepts tradeoffs, that include not meeting the objectives of DoD Directive 1315.17 for these two benefits.

Less Effective Implementation

Another issue with RAS not effectively meeting the criteria outlined in DoD 1315.17 results in the Air Force not having qualified professionals implementing Security Cooperation and BPC programs. One reason for less effective implementation is when the Air Force does not have enough personnel to fill billets, Commands are forced "to place unqualified officers into essential overseas billets heavily degrading the implementation of Unites States policy in support … of Building Partner Capacity (BPC) missions."[94] The Air Force admitted in the Annual FAO reports to finding "best fit officers" to fill in gaps where qualified officers were not available.[95] This issue can also be attributed to dual- tracking, because if the Air Force single-tracked they would have more personnel qualified RAS personnel to fill empty billets.

The biggest issue is Security Cooperation and BPC programs suffer when unqualified personnel are implementing those programs. As stated earlier in this paper, they are to be implemented with a "high degree of attention and efficiency."[96] A recent RAND study on improving implementation of BPC stated that the key areas of successful BPC programs were ones that provided solutions that were well matched to United States and Partner Nation objectives, programs that focused on relationship building and lastly programs that allowed enough time for success.[97] As stated earlier, RAS/FAO personnel require the knowledge and skills necessary to guide foreign militaries in improving their capabilities, competency and effectiveness; they must assist the United States in strengthening international relationships and assist in developing military cooperation and interoperability.[98] In order to provide this kind of capability, qualified professionals who are experts in Security Cooperation and BPC and who

have regional expertise and cultural awareness are required to best understand the international customer's needs. This type of expertise can only be obtained through program continuity, professional education and repetitive regional and cultural interactions.

Oversight Issues

Another significant issue with the RAS program is oversight, since the career field is still tied to their primary AFSC who also retains ownership over their career progression. Examples of those issues include RAS personnel being re-tasked to their primary AFSC when there are shortages and RAS personnel being tasked to other positions even when they are intended to fill a RAS position.

The first issue with primary AFSC oversight is when there are shortages in the core AFSC, RAS officers can be tasked back to their primary AFSC. In 2013, due to shortages all rated officers were returned to their primary AFSC by the Chief of Staff of the Air Force, that resulted in a reduction of 65 RAS.[99] Since oversight is still with the primary AFSC it is easy for the Air Force to move RAS professionals back into those positions, which affects the stability and effectiveness of the RAS program and reduces return on investment.

Another issue with oversight is even when RAS personnel are serving in their RAS billet, often organizations are not aware of how to use the RAS or they task them to billets that are not RAS. An example of this was identified in the Institute for Defense Analysis (IDA) study. A Lieutenant Colonel who served in the Office of Military Cooperation, Cairo, Egypt and was supposed to be utilized in a RAS billet, but was tasked instead as an executive officer to support the unit commander. This ended up counting as a RAS assignment since the billet was coded as RAS, and for promotion it looked as though the officer had performed both assignments even though only the executive officer assignment was performed.[100] Actual FAO-coded billets are

left unfilled when FAOs are assigned to billets that are branch immaterial (any officer can be assigned to fill such a requirement).[101] These types of issues result in a mis-application of FAO skills and also contribute to the issue of return on investment.

RECOMMENDATIONS

There are three possible recommendations that might improve RAS programs so they better meet the objectives of DoD Directive 1315.17 and DoD Instruction 1315.20 and one recommendation that might clarify the RAS role in the international community. Those recommendations include creating a single-track career path, creating a RAS Reserve Component, creating a RAS Enlisted program and adopting a common career name as other services.

Create a single-track career path

The first recommendation is for the Air Force RAS program to create a single-track career path that will provide professionals who are fully vested in one career field, will provide a greater return on investment, develop higher levels of regional expertise, cultural awareness and competency and provide better oversight over the program. These professionals should be designated as International Affairs or Security Cooperation professionals and not under another AFSC.

One reason for this recommendation is DSCA and COCOMs, the primary users of RAS/FAO personnel, have expressed their desire for the Air Force to single-track. In the FY09 Annual FAO report DSCA recommended standardization of FAO programs across the services for consistency, to ensure FAOs are fully qualified and to ensure they are competing for promotion against FAO peers and not against their primary AFSC.[102] In the FY10 Annual FAO report "COCOMs praised the Army as the model FAO program and encouraged the other Services to

continue to improve their respective programs to the level of training, education and career/promotion opportunities provided by the Army, as well as to strengthen FAO career management, monitoring, and mentorship."[103]

The second reason to single-track is dual-tracking creates professionals that are not fully vested in one career field and have a lack of continuous experience in the region to develop high levels of competency. This lack of experience results in less regional expertise and cultural agility. General Hooper, a former FAO, emphasized in an interview that understanding the culture is critical for FAOs, because it helps them to understand how the international customer is motivated and how to "change strategic behavior."[104]

A final reason for the recommendation to single-track is that with dual-tracking RAS professionals are not retained specifically for international affairs assignments, which is not in accordance with DoD Directive 1315.17. Additionally, the Air Force expends a significant amount of time and money to only obtain two assignments from the RAS, gaining very little return on investment.

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Develop a FAO Reserve Corps

If the Air Force chooses to remain single-tracked then developing a RAS Reserve Component (RC), who could fill personnel gaps and provide continuity in the RAS community would be an alternative. The Air Force is the only service that does not have an international affair focused RC.[105] DoD Instruction 1315.20 directs secretaries of military department to "establish a RC FAO program requiring educational and leadership qualifications that are the same or equal, in terms of personal and professional experience, as those of the Active Component (AC) and whose basic qualifications are to be met prior to FAO accession."[106] The current method for previously certified Air Force RAS reservists to obtain billets is to actively search themselves for

RAS assignments, training and mentoring.[107] Providing an Air Force RAS RC would mean that financial resources would have to be dedicated to this effort, but would offer advantages to include continuity, the ability to fill personnel gaps with qualified professionals, instead of "best fit", and a single-track RC, because they would not need to dual-track to remain competitive for promotion.[108] This would allow the Air Force more opportunities and improved ability in regards to interacting with foreign governments with qualified personnel.

Enlisted Support

Another alternative to improve the RAS program is currently being implemented by the Army, which is to recruit enlisted members to provide additional support in international affairs programs. The Army program is called the Foreign Area Noncommissioned Officer program. This program is for Senior NCOs and allows them to work alongside the FAO focusing on Security Cooperation Management and are key tools for "filling the gaps when there are Army FAO shortages."[109] In addition to filling the shortage gap, the FANCO program provides the ability for the Army to interact with foreign militaries, not only at the officer level, but from the NCO perspective as well.[110] Even if the Air Force does not choose to single-track, this would be an effective way to fill in gaps with qualified NCOs where there may not be qualified officers available to work Security Cooperation and BPC programs.

Common Career Name

The least significant recommendation is for the Air Force to have a common name as the Army and other services, therefore elevating confusion and ensuring awareness of their role in the international community. This simple recommendation was published by the IDA study which stated that all the services should use the designation of FAO because using other terms caused confusion within the Services, the Defense and the Joint communities.[111] It went on to

say that using a common name would ensure these organizations understood the role of the RAS/FAO and would clearly designate the qualifications they carry to perform international affairs functions.[112]

CONCLUSION

RAS and FAO personnel are integral in furthering the objectives of the United States NSS. Ensuring their programs are effective and successful is essential given their role in implementing Security Cooperation and BPC. This paper employed an evaluation research framework to determine if the Army FAO or the Air Force RAS program better fulfills the objectives set by DoD Directive 1315.17 and DoD Instruction 1315.20 for international affairs programs. This paper evaluated how well RAS/FAO personnel were trained in language, regional expertise and cultural awareness, their ability to interact with foreign militaries, if officers were retained for international affairs assignments and if officers were provided opportunities for competitive career advancement. An analysis of the results showed that both programs require improvements in meeting DoD Directive 1315.17 and DoD Instruction 1315.20, but the Army FAO program exceeded the Air Force RAS program in many areas.

The RAS program has made improvements over the years, but continued improvement is required to meet DoD Directive 1315.17. Improving the RAS program would provide better qualified professionals who would be more culturally agile, have greater regional expertise, would be better able to interact with foreign militaries and would be fully vested in their career fields. Recommendations for improvement included creating a full time, single-track RAS program, creating a RAS Reserve Component, creating a NCO RAS career field and providing a common name as other services. Implementing these recommendations to the RAS program would result in professionals who are better qualified to implement Security Cooperation and

BPC programs. Some may say a full time billet would reduce operational capability and decrease promotion rates; however, the Army FAO program provides an example of how single-tracking can more successfully met DoD objectives and still keep professionals competitive. The Air Force would have fewer tradeoffs and more successes by allowing professionals to focus full time on their region, Security Cooperation and international relations. Full time RAS professionals would have the cultural awareness and specific knowledge to provide solutions that more effectively benefit the international partner and in the end meet the needs of the United States government.

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