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STUDY PROJECT

AIR FORCE PILOT RETENTION A LOOK AT 1996

BY

COLONEL DANIEL F. CRUM

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experienced pilots. The apparent cause of the low CCR in 1979 and again in the years following 1983 has been a steady demand for new commercial airline pilots. All services are experiencing low pilot retention problem, but this paper focuses only on how the Air Force is attempting to reverse the trend. Though no one incentive seems to be effective, their combined and synergistic effect may produce positive results. If not, then the alternatives recommended in this paper may be useful.

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AIR FORCE PILOT RETENTION
A LOOK AT 1996

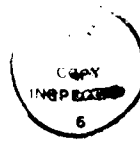
AN INDIVIDUAL STUDY PROJECT
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ABSTRACT

AUTHOR: Daniel F. Crum

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The United States Air Force retention of pilots who are between 6 and 11 years of service is approaching an historic low rate. The FY 89 cumulative continuation rate (CCR) for pilots entering 6 years of service and staying through 11 years fell to 36%. The decline started in 1984 when the CCR dropped from 78% to 72%. The decline has continued steadily since then to 36% with no apparent indications of a reversal. The lowest CCR was experienced in 1979 when the rate bottomed out at 26%. Losing pilots at this rate jeopardizes the ability to fill mid-level staff positions with experienced pilots. The apparent cause of the low CCR in 1979 and again in the years following 1983 has been a steady demand for new commercial airline pilots. All services are experiencing low pilot retention problem, but this paper focuses only on how the Air Force is attempting to reverse the trend. Though no one incentive seems to be effective, their combined and synergistic effect may produce positive results. If not, then the alternatives recommended in this paper may be useful. (S) 7

AIR FORCE PILOT RETENTION--A LOOK AT 1996

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

"The first of virtues is devotion to one's country."

Napoleon's War Maxims, L.E. Henry

The migration of military pilots from their respective services to the commercial aviation industry has become an increasing problem for all services since 1983. This paper will focus on the issue of pilot retention in the United States Air Force.

After examining all efforts to curtail the loss of pilots, or at least to slow the losses, it is apparent that the Air Force will not curtail the migration of pilots in the 6-to-11 year group to the commercial airlines. They are leaving the Air Force primarily for higher paying jobs, and they will continue to leave until the airlines have filled all their vacancies during the next six to eight years. This paper will support that thesis by reviewing the results of Air Force efforts to control the pilot exodus. This

paper will then speculate on the pilot situation of 1996 and offer some suggestions to help control the loss of Air Force pilots.

BACKGROUND

In FY 1979 the Air Force experienced its worst year in recent history of pilot retention for those pilots between their sixth and eleventh years of service. The cumulative continuation rate (CCR) for the 6-11 year group of pilots was an alarming 26%. This means that 74% of the pilots entering their sixth year of service separated from the Air Force before completing their eleventh year of service. The primary reason for this exodus was a large demand for new airline pilots in the rapidly expanding commercial airline industry--expansion due in part to the Congressional Deregulation Act passed in Oct 1978.

The Deregulation Act was designed to encourage formation of new airlines, thereby stimulating competition to lower airfares; however, there were other effects too. The interstate airline industry jumped from 36 companies to 246, which created a new need for more commercial pilots¹. Accordingly, many Air Force pilots took advantage of the huge market and left the service to join the airlines. In subsequent years many of these new airlines began to fold, merge, or lose their certification, which curbed the need for

new pilots. Consequently, the Air Force CCR steadily climbed from 26% in 1979 to 78% in 1983². From that point, the trend has again reversed: and the Air Force witnessed a less dramatic but steady decline to a CCR of 36% in FY 1989. The explanation for this recent decline in CCR centers on another increase in airline pilot hiring to fill vacancies brought on by a large number of airline captains reaching retirement age. This trend will continue well into the 1990s; it will as well continue to cause concern over pilot losses among the personnel managers who are planning force development.

ENDNOTES

1. Teresa Greer, "Effects of Deregulation Still Rumble Through the Industry," Piloting Careers, February 1989, p. 16.
2. USAF Officer Retention Branch, "Quarterly Officer Retention Report," Headquarters Air Force Military Personnel Center, September 30, 1989, pp 38-48.

CHAPTER II

PILOT RETENTION TRENDS

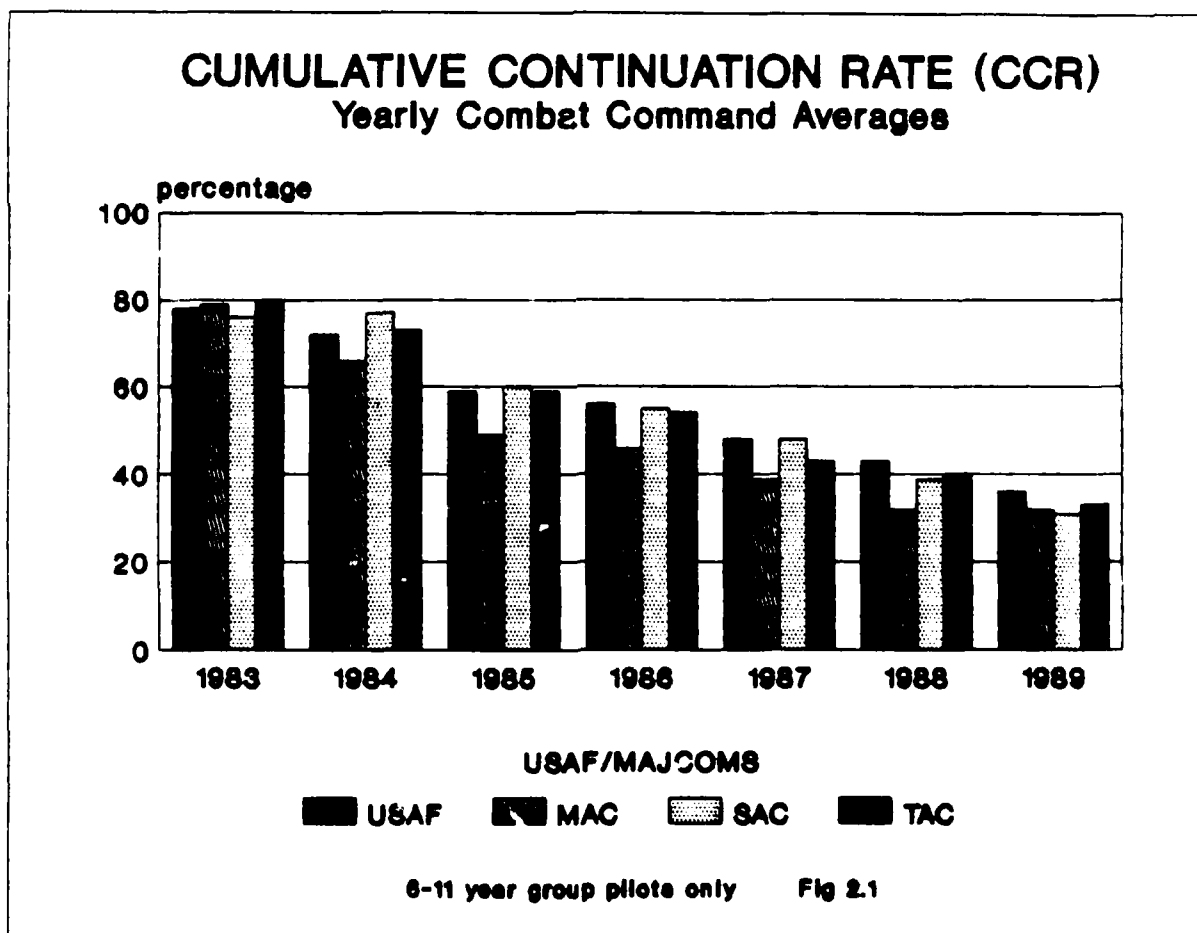
*"The greatness of a Hun is measured by the sacrifices
he is willing to make for the good of the nation."*

Leadership Secrets of Attila the Hun

Wes Roberts

The declining CCR trend has affected all major air commands steadily for the last six years. Although no single command has suffered significantly more than others, it appears that the Military Airlift Command (MAC) has consistently lost proportionally more pilots than the other commands and is below the Air Force average, except in 1983 and 1989. It is not unexpected to see the MAC pilots show a high interest in commercial aviation, because they fly multi-engine cargo and passenger type aircraft in a mission similar to that of the airlines. From a practical standpoint, they are well skilled to apply for a civilian job that pays significantly more than what they earn as a junior or mid-grade Air Force officer. What is odd about this trend is that the MAC pilots also have one of the most rewarding duties in the Air Force: they have an operational job that they perform day after day, unlike the SAC and TAC pilots who fly almost exclusively

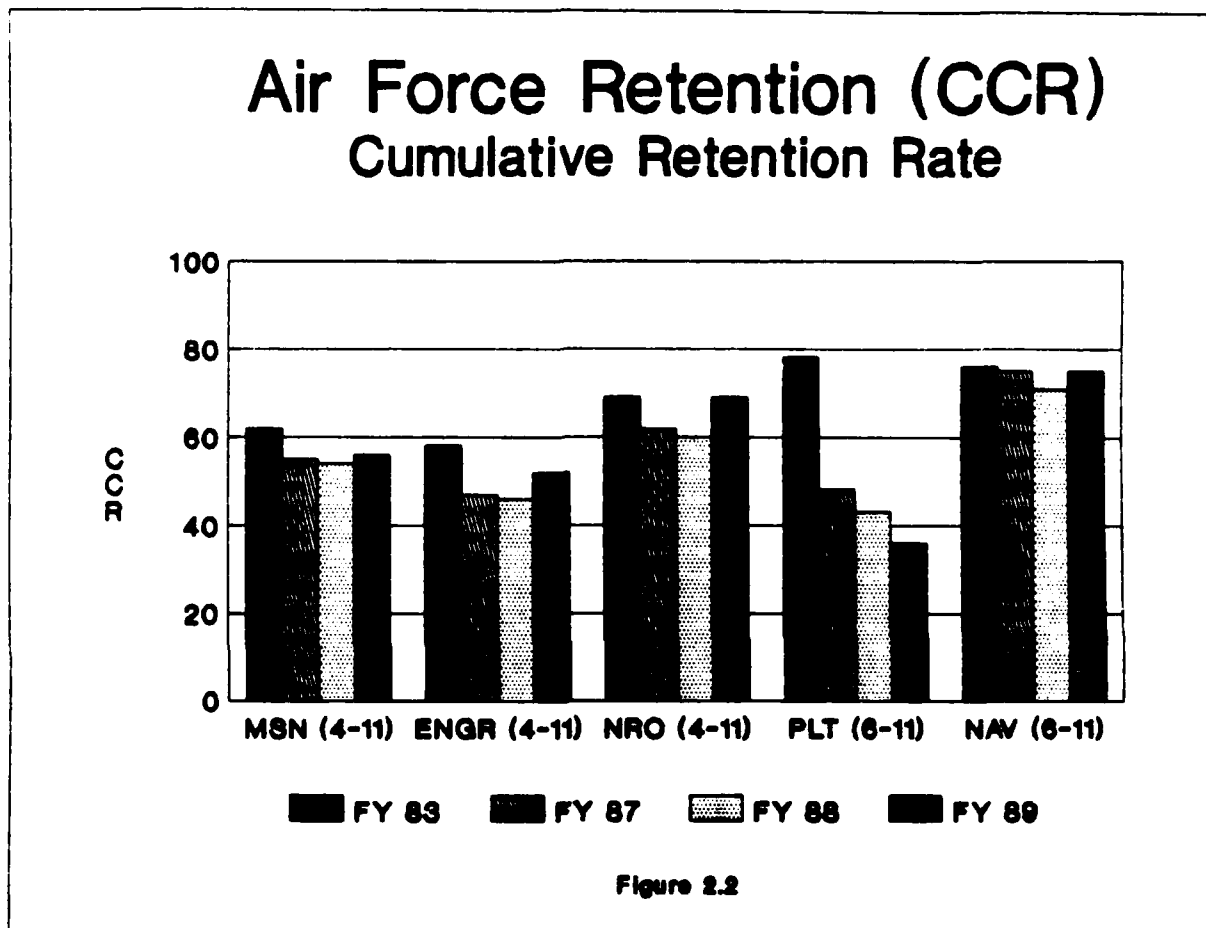
training missions. MAC jobs are not rewarding all the time. Some of their difficulties are a result of competition with the Reserve pilots who have civilian commitments that Air Force schedulers honor. Consequently, the active duty pilots may have less desirable TDYs and may even have to wait for aircraft repairs when off station while the Reservists fly home commercially to get back to their civilian jobs. Figure 2.1 shows the command trends¹.



One of the alarming facts about the pilot exodus is that the CCR has decreased 33% over the last six years while the eligible population grew only 3%. The decline in pilot retention rates has put the Air Force below the 63% CCR. Air Force personnel managers feel 63% is a manageable rate². The steady CCR decline will eventually level off, but it's hard to predict when because the variables keep changing. Those variables will be reviewed in Chapter 4. But the Air Force is improving its pilot retention program each year. The results may soon be evident. For the near future, the Air Force will be able to man all its cockpits; however, future manning of the traditionally pilot-filled staff positions is in grave doubt.

Comparing the pilot CCR to the non-rated, mission support, and engineer CCR, we see that the non-pilot CCR is well above the pilots' rate. Note in figure 2.2 that the comparative year groups are slightly different (4-11 years)³. The reason for this difference is based on the service commitments of each sample. Pilots in these samples are obligated to a minimum service commitment of six years (it is now eight years and soon will be ten). This increased and increasing obligation is a result of time and money invested in the officer during pilot training. Non-rated officers could conceivably leave the service after only four years, thus the statistics on their group cover that option. In any case, the comparisons are meaningful, because we are measuring

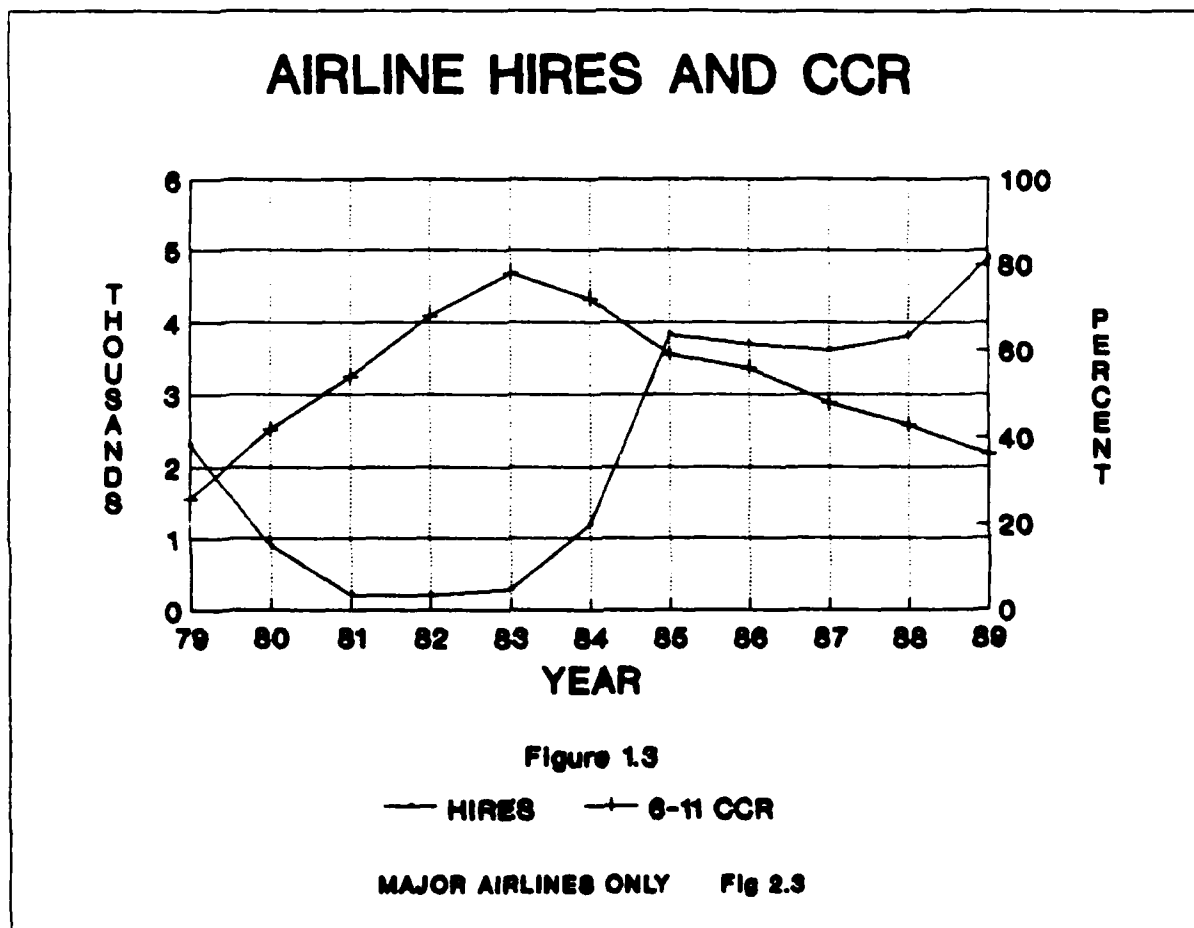
opportunities for officers to remain or separate from the service at the completion of their commitments.



Translating the CCR to actual numbers, we note that the Air Force Officer Retention Branch at HQ MPC reported a loss of 2666 pilots in FY 1989 with 1038 coming from the 6-11 year group, an increase of 23.9% over the preceding year for the same year group⁴. Another statistic that the Air Force watches closely is the total active rated service (TARS) figure, which indicates the overall experience level that is actively flying. The TARS has continued to fall with the CCR since 1983. Lower experience levels in the

cockpit can theoretically increase the accident risks; however, this paper will not address that premise. Nonetheless, the TARS is an important management tool and indicator that is showing the results of the seasoned pilots' exodus.

Where are the pilots going after they leave the service? We assume that they are joining the airlines, but is that accurate? For the most part it is. Once an officer separates from the



service, he's not required to report his next place of employment, so we can only speculate that they are the ones filling the vacant airline positions. Airline hiring data substantiates this. Figure 2.3 shows the airline hiring rates in comparison to the CCR⁵. Note the reversal of curves in 1983 and the pattern that follows up to 1989. Although this graph does not show regional carrier hiring data, it is representative of the trends.

In 1985 there was an interesting turn of events that should have some effect on the CCR: airlines started hiring older pilots. Younger pilots leaving the service are now competing with pilots who are retiring from the service and seeking employment with the airlines. Hiring military retirees should impact the fill rate with the airlines. Although not a panacea for Air Force personnel managers, it may provide some relief in the next three years as many airline jobs will go to the retirees. Eventually, the hiring rates will slow, and the Air Force can restore a healthier CCR.

Why are pilots leaving the Air Force to join the airlines? The Air Force does not document exit interviews as do civilian employers; consequently, there is a lack information to support any conclusions. There may be dissatisfaction with leadership, unhappiness about the lack of career control, dislike for old base housing, or fear of diminishing services. Unquestionably, better pay in the civilian airlines is a factor. Possibly, something is missing.

Today's Air Force pilot does not have the same events motivating him to stay in the service that he would have had twenty years ago during the Southeast Asia conflict. The fighting may have created a patriotic spirit motivating pilots to stay in the Air Force. Today's rapid changes from Marxist style rule to non-communist governments in Eastern Europe have lowered military threats to the U.S. Accordingly, there may be less motivation for our pilots to make the Air Force a career.

It's difficult to generate a fighting, patriotic spirit during a peaceful period when pilots are attracted to civilian lifestyles. In spite of the attraction to civilian flying, the Air Force has attempted several approaches to increasing the CCR. The next chapter will highlight efforts to control this rate.

ENDNOTES

1. USAF Officer Retention Branch, Quarterly Officer Retention Report, Headquarters Air Force Military Personnel Center, September 30, 1989, p. 5.
2. Pat Dalton, "Airline Hiring of Over-40 Pilots Won't Enlarge Exodus AF Says," Air Force Times, January 11, 1988, p. 12.
3. USAF Officer Retention Branch, p. 3.
4. Ibid, p. 22.
5. USAF Officer Retention Branch, Requested document, December, 1989.

Chapter III

AIR FORCE PILOT CCR CONTROL INITIATIVES

"It is by money that we must secure the lovers of money."

Napoleon's War Maxims, L.E. Henry

In 1979, the Air Force Military Personnel Center (AFMPC) at Randolph AFB established an officer retention branch to monitor the trends of pilot and non-rated officer separations. When it later became apparent that pilots were leaving the service in large numbers well before retirement age, the Air Staff also established an office in the Pentagon to monitor Congressional efforts and coordinate Air Staff efforts to slow the pilot losses. The Air Force then began a coordinated program to eliminate career irritants and improve the quality of life for everyone, especially the pilot corps.

One of the most notable initiatives to influence pilots who were undecided about their decision to separate was the use of Aviation Continuation Pay (ACP), otherwise known as the pilots' bonus. The ACP was initially awarded in 1988 to those pilots with six years of service who agreed to stay in the Air Force for a

specified period up to fourteen years. The bonus amount is based on completed federal commissioned service and breaks out this way.

6 & 7 years of commissioned service---\$ 12,000 per year

8 & 9 years of commissioned service---\$ 11,000 per year

10 years of commissioned service-----\$ 9,500 per year

11 years of commissioned service-----\$ 8,000 per year

12 years of commissioned service-----\$ 6,500 per year

Note: Payments are subject to 20% deduction for federal income tax withholding and state tax as appropriate¹.

While this incentive can in no way compete with the high airline salaries, it does make an immediate and noticeable change in an annual salary. It also sends an important message to those who are tentative about their decision to separate from the service. The Air Force is aware of the value of pilots' skills and it's willing to put money into a program to keep these people. ACP has not been adopted for an indefinite period, but it has been funded through FY 91².

The popularity of the program can be seen in figure 3.1. Between January and September 1989, 2158 of 2551 eligible pilots with 10 or more years of service signed contracts to stay on longer. That is 85% of the eligible. More importantly, in the 7-9 year group, only 50% (1472 of 2959) of the pilots accepted the bonus, and in the eight year group only 47% accepted it³.

ACP ACCEPTANCE RATE (JAN-SEP 89)								
	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	TOTAL
ELIG	481	1722	758	876	588	622	667	5512
DECL	106	414	136	90	38	31	15	830
SEP	121	373	116	76	63	34	37	820
ACPT	167	805	500	505	484	555	614	3630
ACPT(%)	35	47	66	75	82	89	92	66
NEW ELIGIBLES*								
ELIG	453	642	16	26	27	31	5	1200
ACPT	153	266	10	14	14	25	3	485
ACPT(%)	34	41	63	54	52	81	60	40

* EXCLUDES 1 JAN 89 ELIGIBLES

Figure 3.1

Additionally, an earlier program that some feel was a waste of money was aimed at improving pilots' morale and image. Leather flying jackets were issued to everyone on flying status. Those who received the jackets were pleased, but critics were unusually harsh toward the notion that such an issue would sway anyone to stay in the service. The controversy spread throughout all ranks and eventually led to the cancellation of the program.

An interesting side note to the leather jacket story is the expense. The jackets were made from African goat skins because there were not enough goats in the United States to meet the manufacturing needs. Each jacket required 3 1/2 goats, and there was a need for 53,000 jackets at \$98.11 each. This cost the Air Force \$5.2 million⁴. Despite the controversy over the jacket, they demonstrated how the Air Force was committed to appealing to

perceived pilot desires. It could be likened to the Hawthorne case study where minor light adjustments in an industrial area improved worker satisfaction and productivity. Like the workers who felt good about being the subjects of a study, the pilots felt good about the effort to appeal to their needs. Unfortunately, negative press from outside the pilot career field condemned the leather flying jacket program before anyone could measure its merits. If nothing else can be said for the program, it should be noted that the jackets raised new interest among the Air Force community about the loss of so many young pilots to commercial aviation.

Another program that provided a financial inducement for retention was an increase in the aviation career incentive pay (ACIP). ACIP is the additional monthly pay that all people in flying positions receive. This is one of the big distinctions among Air Force officers in terms of pay and allowances, because the additional money can be as much as \$650 per month for some fliers⁵.

ACIP had not been adjusted since 1981, but Congressional action recently increased "flight pay" by nearly 62%. The increase became effective at the beginning of FY 90, so it is too early to measure its success. Discounting the apparent lag in basic pay increases, the increase in ACIP should have a positive influence on many pilots who are thinking about leaving the service. There should be a positive influence, because the raise could increase the harmony and morale of the whole aviation community.

Beyond the retention programs that have contributed directly to the financial well being of pilots, there have been other initiatives in personnel programs and officer development aimed at eliminating the irritants cited by some of the pilots leaving the Air Force. Among these improvements are the involvement of squadron commanders in the assignment process, changes in the officer rating system, better top-down communication, longer tour lengths, and better facilities. These improvements apply to all officers, but they will be discussed here as they apply only to pilots.

Squadron commanders have become involved in the initial assignment allocation because they are in tune with their pilots' capabilities, desires, and motivations. The commanders receive advance notification from assignment officers at the Military Personnel Center prior to permanent changes of station, allowing them a chance to influence some of the details of the assignments. This gives pilots a voice beyond what they may have expressed in their Officer Career Objective Statements. The squadron commander may not necessarily turn off an unwanted relocation, but he represents an opportunity to soften the blow of an undesirable assignment-- and maybe change the perspective of the young pilot being moved.

Immediate supervisors now perform a new role in the officer evaluation process, which requires them to provide face-to-face as well as written feedback to the pilot. This eliminates the

uncertainty of how an individual is performing and increases the frequency of feedback during the initial years of service. There is also a different flow in the endorsement process, which reduces the amount of time people spend on preparing the report and focuses more on the quality of the ratee's performance. In the end, those pilots who are honing their skills and improving their abilities will receive their recognition and feel better about what they're paid to do--fly and prepare for combat.

Improved top-down communication is obvious throughout the Air Force, but no example better makes this point than the Chief of Staff of the Air Force (CSAF) FLASH MESSAGES. The CSAF is keenly aware of the issues in the field and at headquarter levels affecting officer, and in particular, pilot retention. He has instituted the FLASH MESSAGE to speak directly to everyone on urgent personnel topics. The messages are unfiltered and brief enough to keep everyone's reading attention. He dispels myth and rumor quickly, thus avoiding confusion on policy and procedure. Personnel management has become so volatile during the current budget exercises that precise information is vitally important to force stability. The FLASH MESSAGES are filling information voids and dispelling fears of radical change.

Tour lengths have been cited as an irritant driving some pilots from the service before retirement. As a result of this finding, and in conjunction with efforts to reduce Air Force moving

expenses, time on station for each tour has increased by approximately 2-6 months⁶. In most cases, this extension should be well received.

In addition to the turmoil caused by moving, there is the burden of extra expenses. Congress has authorized the services to double the amount paid for dislocation allowance if the family moving lives off base--a welcome relief to the pocket book.

A noticeable difference at many bases is the improvement of the physical plant. Base appearance standards are much higher now. Modern office equipment in most work areas has led to new furnishings throughout every unit. As the interiors are renovated, so are the exteriors. People are more productive in their offices and happier to do business around a base that looks fresh and modern. Commanders are budgeting their funds to get an equal proportion of new facilities and better equipment spread around their unit each year. Pilots have little to grumble about, because their squadrons and support facilities always receive top priority.

Another aviation improvement that wasn't generated specifically to help retain pilots, but that should have a positive effect on their perspective about the Air Force, is better training environments. In the past eight years there has been a dramatic improvement in the breadth and reality of the training scenarios. SAC units that used to fly an occasional exercise out and back to

their home units are now participating in joint operations around the world. They routinely play in RED FLAG exercises at Nellis AFB where they are critiqued by the TAC pilots who support them or fly as adversaries against them. Likewise, MAC crews play in similar exercises and provide support or rescue forces. Low level routes have become more diversified and their bombing ranges have been improved with better threat emitters that challenge the crew tactics. And finally, modern scoring systems accurately replay entire missions for the crews as they evaluate their responses in near-combat conditions.

In summary, we see many significant improvements throughout the Air Force personnel, facility, and training programs that should appeal to younger pilots who are examining their option to remain in the service. Unfortunately, many of these improvements are costly. As General Larry D. Welch, CSAF, said, "We have reached the point, in my view, where we are doing about everything that we can do (for pilot retention) and still maintain a military force."⁷.

ENDNOTES

1. "Pilot Bonus Payment Authorization Continues for Eligible Aviators," USAF OFFICERS' NEWSLETTER, Air Force Military Personnel Center, Vol.XXII, No.4, Winter 1989-1990, pp 5-6.
2. John Ginovsky, "Higher Flight Pay, Pilot Bonus OK'd," Air Force Times, November 27,1989, p. 6.
3. Quarterly Officer Retention Report, USAF Officer Retention Branch, HQ AFMPC Randolph AFB, TX, 30 Sep 89, p.51.
4. Benjamin F. Schemmer, "Not Enough Goats for USAF Flying Jackets; Navy's are Fake," Armed Forces Journal International , April 88, p. 18.
5. Ginovsky, November 27, p. 6.
6. John Ginovsky, "Air Force Trying to Change Conditions That Push Pilots Out," Air Force Times, January 16,1989, p. 11.
7. Ginovsky and Ewing, p. 3.

CHAPTER IV

THE IMPACT OF OUR PROJECTED LOSSES

"...the theory of strategy must also consider its chief means of execution, the fighting force."

Clausewitz

By 1988 the Air Force was approximately 1250 pilots short. By 1993 the shortage will total nearly 2500¹. This sounds threatening, but the personnel force planners insist that the Air Force can man all of its cockpits. The major concern is how this shortage will impact on staff requirements at the mid and senior level positions.

To compensate for these projected shortages, the Chief of Staff of the Air Force has directed a review of all rated staff requirements. The FY 90 defense authorization measure requires that the number of rated officers serving in non-rated positions must be reduced 2% by FY 91 and further reduced 5% by FY 92². This staff adjustment also includes navigators in the culling process but should ease the pilot shortage by some factor. There are jobs that have already been re-designated as non-rated positions, such as those in unit command posts. Historically, some crew members transitioned from the crew force to other jobs while filling a

command post slot. Now, the command post controller position has been identified as a new career field for non-rated officers. In the short term this means that some jobs will no longer require pilots to leave their flying positions to fill jobs requiring aviation experience. The good side to that change is that it alleviates the current pilot shortage, but the downside is the loss of another opportunity for an officer to understand a different part of the Air Force. In the long run we may end up with more specialists who don't see the big picture and consequently have less to offer as we look for system improvements. Nonetheless, the thinning process will be good for the service. There tends to be too many requirements for rated experience in ground jobs where such experience may not be necessary.

Current events may cause unforeseen effects on pilot shortages. For example, how will a conventional force cut in Europe (CFE) and the unprecedented defense budget cuts in the next two years help solve our pilot shortages? Intuitively, we can say that any force cut is a blessing for solving the pilot shortage problem. But the tougher question is, "To what degree do these cuts help the nation's defense?"

The president has directed that our portion of the CFE be identified by June 1990. After the Warsaw Pact forces and NATO come to an agreement on the nomenclature of hardware, we will proceed with a further agreement on what amounts will actually be

withdrawn. We know that the summit meeting in Brussels on 29-30 May 1989 stipulated that a maximum of 275,000 air and ground troops could be stationed outside the US in Europe³. Currently, there are approximately 331,500 air and ground troops, which means 56,500 troops will come home if the accords are ratified⁴. That is approximately a 17% strength cut. Understandably, most of these troops will be ground forces, but it's likely that the Air Force could send home as many as four fighter squadrons. That is speculative, but presumably we could lose as many as 150 pilot requirements just from the CFE cuts. According to the preliminary agreements, the manpower authorizations lost to CFE cuts must be demobilized upon return to their home country. Add to that the reductions that will be brought on by budget and subsequent personnel reductions, and our pilot shortage may not be so critical. Or will it be?

Our long term problem continues to be the low retention of pilots past their eleventh year of service. It will be increasingly difficult to fill mid-level staff positions requiring pilot experience. One of the primary requirements is that we man the cockpits first. If the annual CCR holds at 36% for the next six years and the Air Force continues to need 63% CCR to meet its needs, then there will be approximately 27% fewer officers to fill the mid-level staff roles.

Offsetting the low CCR is a manpower authorization cut of

24,000 during FY 90⁵, which would equate to approximately 4.1% of the total AF strength. We should see approximately the same percentage of pilot authorizations lost in this cut, but that probably wouldn't be the case. Manpower cuts are rarely proportional across all specialties (aviators, medics, engineers etc.). However, for this example let's assume that there will be a proportional cut. A reduction of 4.1% of the pilots unfortunately doesn't negate 4.1% of the staff requirements, because the staff supports programs, not numbers of pilots. Therefore, the Air Force will still be nearly 27% below their rated experience staff needs. After factoring in the potential CFE cuts in pilot strength, it's conceivable that the Air Force pilot staff requirements could be reduced by as many as 110 slots, mostly from the wing level. That's the equivalent of about 1% of staff requirements, thus leaving the Air Force 2300 pilots short. In the end, there is only little relief from the force cuts. The Air Force will continue to need mid-level staff pilots that planned force cuts can only partially alleviate.

A very difficult concept to factor in to any prediction is how planned force cuts may affect young pilot's attitudes toward a career in Air Force flying. Force cuts may be the added incentive for some to choose civilian life over the military. A death spiral may not occur as a result of force cuts, but they may generate more uncertainty for those not positive about their future.

At a glance, it is tempting to say that manpower cuts will have a corresponding, but helpful, effect on the low pilot CCR problem. As previously noted, the cuts may help to some degree, but it is premature for much optimism. Despite the uncertainty, the Air Force has taken smart and ambitious action to name their cuts early in the year to avoid more stringent Congressional guidance later.

ENDNOTES

1. Pat Dalton, "LTG Thomas J. Hickey: Bonus a Must to Stem the Pilot Losses, " Air Force Times, March 14, 1988, p.1.
2. John Ginovsky and Lee Ewing, "AF Pilot Retention Just 36%," Air Force Times, January 1, 1990, p. 61.
3. Negotiations on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe, Vienna, Position Paper, 6 March 1989.
4. Strength of Armed Forces, NATO's Sixteen Nations, Special Edition, Vol 34, 1989, p. 92.
5. John Ginovsky, "Hickey: Planned Cut Will Avert Deeper Ones," Air Force Times, January 15, 1990, p. 3.

CHAPTER V

ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS IN THE FACE OF LOW PILOT CCR

"The times change and we change with them."

Epigrammata, Owen

The Air Force is not enamored with the Aviator Continuation Pay or bonus program, but it's been funded through FY 91 and is the only significant program aimed specifically at retaining the 6-to-11 year group pilots (as seen in Chapter 3 the ACP pays for continued service through the fourteenth year). There have been discussions about adding a \$100,000 accidental death benefit life insurance policy to pilots' entitlements and meeting with aviation industry representatives to examine the pilot shortage as a national concern. But beyond these proposals there are no further plans to curb the exodus of the 6-11 year group pilots. As General Welch said in Oct 89 at the Air Force symposium, "We'll certainly entertain any new approaches that anyone could suggest.¹" Beyond the Air Force efforts examined in Chapter 3, there are others that should be considered.

The Air Force will not compete with the airlines at the pay

window, but it could compete with other concessions such as increasing assignment stability. The Air Force could keep their pilots at one location for nearly a full career, just as a guard or reserve unit does. A number of the traditional concepts will have to change to allow for manning headquarters jobs, attending schools, and filling overseas duties. But these are all manageable problems because there will always be people who want to move. The trick is not to *cause* attrition by a PCS but to create and fill vacancies *only* when the manpower allows. Stability in location can overcome many of the problems of lower pay.

Remaining in one location allows the spouse to find a job that has potential for promotion and growth. The spouse can move through his or her company just as their military sponsor does in the Air Force. By not moving from job to job, spouses would attain seniority and reach full employment potential with the accompanying pay and benefits. A second income has become a necessity for nearly all military families, and the dependability of not losing it to a PCS would go a long way toward enhancing Air Force life.

Stability in one location relieves many concerns over pre-college schooling. Not moving two or three times during high school would give college preparation more continuity and make the education process less traumatic. Peace of mind over this issue alone would be welcomed by the majority of our service families and

contribute greatly to the retention rates.

Home investments would be less risky to the family that doesn't have to move every four years. In the long run, more families may tend to buy their homes if they could depend on staying in one area indefinitely where they could build their home equity. Eventually, this would reduce the need for much of the government housing and subsequently lower maintenance expenses for the Air Force. Pride of ownership elevates self-esteem and contributes to a happier family environment.

The expense of moving would be eliminated through maintenance of a stable corps of DOD personnel, particularly pilots. The overall savings to the government could be phenomenal. The total government bill of lading for PCS moves in FY 88 for the Air Force alone was \$ 295 million². That figure does not include expenses for dislocation allowance, damage claims, travel pay, lodging, or lost time of productivity to the Air Force. These savings could be passed on to the service in many ways, but most importantly in higher pay raises, more operating and maintenance funds, or increased military construction programs.

Elimination of PCS moves for pilots could be applied throughout the Air Force, but obviously it poses many problems about rotating forces from overseas. That problem should become easier to solve within the next two to four years as the US

presence overseas, particularly in Europe, will be reduced. Units will operate a great deal more like guard and reserve organizations--which will give them new character, spirit, and flexibility. Curtailed PCS movement would likely cause problems for the promotion system as we know it today. That problem can also be managed generally the same way that it is in the guard and reserve units through the vacancy process. No doubt there are other arguments one could make against a force that doesn't move as it does today, but the savings and improved chances to make the service more appealing to the rated force can't be denied.

Another option to cope with the pilot drain would be to turn more of the mission over to guard and reserve units. This idea has been explored by the Air Staff and causes concern over readiness because guard and reserve airline pilots may be called back during crises to support the airlines' commitment to the Civil Reserve Air Fleet (CRAF). Research, however, shows that manning should not pose a problem for the CRAF missions during high mobility periods, because there are enough non-guard and reserve pilots to meet the CRAF commitments during mobilization. As of Jan 1990, there were 991 of 4218 Air National Guard pilots flying with the commercial airlines³. But there is a ratio of 10:1 pilots per CRAF requirement; well above the minimum 4:1 ratio. Historically, less than one or two percent of the airlines' CRAF requirement is filled by guard or reserve pilots. Accordingly, there would be no threat to the CRAF mission.

Other choices may include a return to the basics: accept the fact that military life will always be different from civilian life in terms of discipline and standards of living. Make life more demanding for our pilots by returning their additional duties and encouraging them to live on base. Build the camaraderie by restoring the old officers' club image and system where pilots mingle after flying. Unfortunately, this practice would necessitate turning our backs on the de-glamorization of alcohol and all we've done to eliminate the downside of military life. This option has no merit.

And finally, the Air Force needs to take a closer look at the way its leadership is reacting to the ideas and feedback of its young captains. Decentralized management has improved the bottom-to-top communication, but there is no apparent formal method of tracking new ideas. The Model Installation Program was effective until the units lost interest. Commanders' conferences continue to bring ideas from the field, but the ideas may often be filtered as they are passed up the chain of command. As a result of these processes either losing momentum or allowing ideas to become filtered, junior officers may feel that their commanders and the Air Force are only partially responsive to aviators' concerns. A thorough review of how the Air Force leadership responds to their junior officers may pay dividends.

ENDNOTES

1. John Ginovsky and Lee Ewing, "AF Pilot Retention Just 36%," Air Force Times, January 1, 1990, p. 61.
2. Traffic Management Progress Report, 1st Quarter FY 89, HQ, Military Traffic Management Command, p. 48.
3. Atlas Stat Summary Inquiry 11403, ANG Pilots That Fly With Commercial Carriers, prepared January 23, 1990, ANG Bureau.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS

"By taking into account the favorable factors, he makes his plan feasible; by taking into account the unfavorable, he may resolve the difficulties."

The Art of War, Sun Tzu

The Air Force is facing a tough challenge to fill vacancies created in the rated staff positions as a result of the younger pilots leaving to fly with the airlines. The situation is bad, but not dire. The CSAF has taken all conceivable steps to reduce the exodus and ease the impact of lower CCRs. Some staff positions will go unmanned at the cost of 100% manning in the operations world, but the Air Force will endure these shortcomings. Eventually, the airline hiring rates will decline and the Air Force will catch up to a more manageable system; however, the results may only be temporary. Eventually, the Air Force will face similar problems once again. It may be time to re-evaluate the traditional practices of manning, PCS requirements, and the promotion system if we're to make the Air Force more attractive as a career during periods of prolonged peace.

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11. "Pilot Bonus Payment Authorization Continues for Eligible Aviators," USAF Officers' Newsletter, Air Force Military Personnel Center, Vol XXII, No.4, pp 5-6.

12. Requested Document, "Atlas Stat Summary Inquiry 11403, ANG Pilots That Fly With Commercial Carriers." ANG Bureau, 21 Dec 89.

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13. Negotiations on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe, Vienna, Switzerland, Position Paper, 13 Jul 89, p. 3.

14. Traffic Management Progress Report, 1st Quarter FY 89, HQ, Military Traffic Management Command, p. 48.