



**STRATEGY
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**CULTURAL CHANGE: PARTICIPATION OF TRADITIONAL
RESERVISTS IN THE NUCLEAR WEAPON PERSONNEL
RELIABILITY PROGRAM (PRP)**

BY

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**Cultural Change: Participation of Traditional Reservists in the Nuclear Weapon
Personnel Reliability Program (PRP)**

by

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ABSTRACT

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Within the Air Force Reserve, Traditional Reservists, specifically Individual Mobilization Augmentees (IMAs), have been restricted/excluded by Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) policy and guidance issued in DoDD 5210.42, Nuclear Weapon Personnel Reliability Program (PRP), from participating in nuclear-related mission activities. PRP program inclusion for Traditional Reservists is number 16 on the top 20 high interest items of the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS). The CJCS has tasked the Assistant to the Joint Chief for Reserve Affairs (ACJCS/RM) to investigate and present workable solutions to resolve what appears to be a barrier to Total Force participation in nuclear missions. Through review of the current literature, historical precedence, and personal interviews, the research will show that PRP must be enlarged to include IMAs.

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CULTURAL CHANGE: PARTICIPATION OF TRADITIONAL RESERVISTS IN THE NUCLEAR WEAPON PERSONNEL RELIABILITY PROGRAM (PRP)

“Organizational Culture (Strategic Culture) is a pattern of shared basic assumptions, values, beliefs, and norms that the organization has learned over time and that unite the members of an organization.” E. Schein¹

The Air Force is a part of society and, as such, is affected by the influences that mold societal culture and values. Strategic leaders must appreciate that the Air Force, as an organization, cannot survive if it isolates and removes itself from the society it serves. It can and should mirror the highest ideals of society and set standards of conduct that require the total dedication and commitment of those who serve.

Within the Air Force Reserve, Traditional Reservists have been restricted/excluded by Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) policy and guidance issued in DoD Directive 5210.42, Nuclear Weapon Personnel Reliability Program (PRP), from participating in nuclear-related mission activities. The PRP is a two-step process that includes an initial screening and post approval monitoring. Military investigators look for a variety of traits, including “good social adjustment,” “emotional stability,” and a “positive attitude toward nuclear weapons duty.” Reserve component participation in PRP began in the 1960s and continued until the early 1980s when their air defense mission support role was no longer needed and regulations and directives were changed to exclude them. Over time, the cultural aspect of exclusion has become so embedded within the organization that much of it is second nature and often taken for granted.

An organization that has a well-established history also has a mature, well-developed organizational culture, often referred to as Strategic Culture. In large complex organizations like the Air Force, there will be many different subordinate organizations that have developed their own organizational subcultures. For example, the cultures of the Air Force’s fighter, bomber, and transport communities, special operations forces, civilians, and Reserve components all differ somewhat, but they embody the same basic values and beliefs of the total Air Force’s culture. Subcultures developed within these formal or informal groups, like those in the various components, branches, and functional areas, must express and share the core Air Force organizational culture. A major challenge of strategic leadership, therefore, is to ensure that all these subcultures are compatible with the desired core culture.²

On 4 September 1997, the Secretary of Defense, William Cohen, published a directive on the “Integration of the Reserve and Active Components”. He wrote, “Today I ask each of you (in DoD) to create an environment that eliminates all residual barriers – structural and cultural for effective integration with our Total Force. Our goal, as we move into the 21st century, must be a seamless Total Force that provides the National Command Authorities the flexibility and interoperability necessary for the full range of military options. We must continue to work towards the principles of Total Force and achieve the full

integration of the Reserve and Active Components.” This paper will discuss the concepts of changing culture and climate with related definitions while continuing to promote the integration of both the Active and Reserve components into a complete Total Force.

A DISCUSSION OF ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE AND VALUES

Organizational culture is the set of institutional, stated, and operating values, beliefs, and assumptions that people have about their organization that are validated by experiences over time. It evolves in consonance with the values, beliefs, and assumptions of the society in which the organization exists.

Values are statements of what is important to an organization. Organizational culture is built on values that are derived from and deemed essential by the strategic leadership of the organization. Our American culture is derived from a unique set of values expressed in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. These values influence every facet of society, its laws, domestic programs, and foreign relations. The Air Force’s core cultural values (which include the Air Force Reserve) are expressed in Air Force Doctrine Document 1.³

Throughout the Air Force’s history, successive strategic leaders have identified and defined institutional values. These values are presented, described, and promulgated in doctrinal literature. The core and institutional values serve as the foundation on which strategic leaders develop values. In turn, these stated values form the basis for the development of policies, programs, and procedures within the organization. These policies, programs, and procedures reflect the operating values of the institution. Operating values are communicated in a variety of ways, both verbally and in writing, and many eventually evolve into revised institutional values.

Strategic leaders should be sensitive to the fact that statements of values alone have little impact on organizational culture unless the members internalize them through a process that includes experience-based validation. Only then will stated values result in the desired effect on members’ attitudes and behavior.⁴

Individual perceptions of what is important form members’ operating values that in turn effect the shaping of the Air Force’s organizational culture. These individual perceptions are effected by the members’ interpretation on the cause-and-effect relationship between the institutional and stated values and what is actually happening within the organization. This is the experience-based validation process.⁵ A problem occurs when the institutional value of individual responsibility, the stated value of empowering leaders at all levels to execute their responsibilities, and the operating values are in conflict. The anticipated result might be the suppression of individual initiative, innovation, adaptation, and resourcefulness, and the development of easily frightened military leadership.⁶

Institutional values, stated values, and operating values should reflect the same underlying beliefs and assumptions. The greater the difference, the greater the degree of distrust and loss of confidence

between the leadership and the led. This, in turn, results in a decrease of organizational effectiveness. Carried to extreme, the differences could negatively affect the public's trust in the organization. Therefore, building and sustaining a culture based on trust and confidence, vertically and horizontally, is a key responsibility of strategic leadership. Strategic leaders must ensure institutional and stated values are consistent with the values of both the larger society and the needs of the organization. They must also ensure through policy, doctrine, regulations, and implementing procedures that they produce the desired results.⁷

Over time, the culture becomes so embedded within the organization that much of it is second nature and often taken for granted. Culture establishes a basic sense of what the organization stands for and how it functions. It enables members of the organization to understand and cope with the internal and external environment while accomplishing organizational goals. It also influences how members perceive, think, and act in relation to each other as well as internal and external challenges and opportunities.⁸

Cultural values define the boundaries of acceptable thought and behavior from such simple acts as the wearing of the uniform to more complex actions such as conducting combat operations and participating in nuclear-related mission activities. Culture influences how individuals talk to each other, approach problems, anticipate and judge situations, develop expectations, determine right from wrong, establish priorities, and react to many other aspects of organizational and interpersonal behavior.⁹

Climate should not be confused with culture. Climate is a short-term phenomenon created by the current leadership. Consequently, dramatically different climates may exist simultaneously among the various elements of the organization. The most important determinant of climate is the behavior of leaders. Their behavior directly reflects their perception of people; leadership and management style; skills, knowledge, and attitude; and priorities. Every member of the organization knows that leaders, by their action and inaction, signal what they will or will not tolerate. The leader's behavior creates a climate that influences everyone in the organization and that climate may simply change with new leadership.

On the other hand, culture is a long-term, complex phenomenon. Individual leaders cannot easily create or change culture. It is part of the organization. It influences the characteristics of the climate by its effect on the behavior and the thought processes of the leader.¹⁰

While strategic leaders focus their attention on organizational culture, they are also responsible for the climate of the organization over which they exert the most direct influence. The leader contributes to creating a positive climate when his or her behavior reflects competence and the underlying values, beliefs, and assumptions of the organization. Unit members, committed to the organization's culture, will not accept a climate imposed upon them by a leader if it contradicts cultural values, beliefs, and assumptions. Erratic swings in the organization's climate or a persistently negative climate erodes the trust and confidence of the members and adversely affects the organization's readiness and effectiveness.¹¹

CULTURAL CHANGE AND VISION

Excellence in leadership is reflected in the effective leadership and management of change with an institution, not in the routine execution of daily responsibility. The engine for cultural change is the vision of the strategic leader which, in this case, begins with the Secretary of Defense. The ability of strategic leaders to shape organizational culture and values to support the vision while retaining the trust and confidence of all concerned is a major challenge for strategic leaders. There is an interactive dynamic between the development of a vision and cultural change. The process of formulating a vision is greatly influenced by culture and values; conversely, the pursuit and achievement of vision influences culture and values. External influences also initiate cultural change. Laws passed by Congress, executive decisions by the Secretary of Defense, changes to national military strategy, and technology advancements are some of the more significant ways to influence cultural change. Culture cannot be managed in the traditional sense. It is deeply embedded within the psyche of the people and the structure and functions of the organization. However, the actions and behaviors of strategic leaders can influence, direct, and sustain the culture.¹²

Culture is influenced by what is paid attention to, measured, and controlled. The established priorities along with the policies and systems to deal with them send clear signals about what is important and what the leader expects of the members of the organization. For example, strategic leaders can convey to the organization that leader development is an important part of the Air Force's culture by establishing a system and process to control and measure how effectively it is being accomplished. By contrast, when leader development is mere rhetoric and receives no support, then subordinates will most likely put less energy into developmental activities and concentrate on those activities perceived to be more important.

The allocation of resources can change or influence culture. Resourcing patterns clearly determine what the organization deems as important. The full spectrum of activities associated with the routine of running the Air Force is continually evaluated for its relative importance, as indicated by how well they are resourced. People are more attentive to those programs or policies that they perceive to be higher in priority by virtue of those programs or policies receiving a greater share of resources.¹³

The structure of the organization also changes or sustains the culture. How the organization is structured has a significant effect on its culture and its capability to express the vision. For example, multi-layered organizations tend toward more bureaucracy, less flexibility and innovation, and more cumbersome communications than those with fewer layers. Decision-making authority tends to be retained at higher levels, and empowerment downward becomes more difficult. If more empowerment and greater freedom of action are necessary in achieving the organization's vision, then the strategic leader should design structures and processes to reflect this. The strategies designed to achieve the vision need complementing, supportive organizational structure, and processes to support them.¹⁴

Criteria for rewards and sanctions emphasize culturally desirable behavior. Members learn about their organization's culture through its personnel selection, promotion, development, and separation

systems. Rewards and sanctions associated with different skills, knowledge, attitude, and behavior from entry level onward clearly demonstrate the cultural values and priorities of both the chain of command and the organization.

Leaders are always role models. Members of the organization, and society in general, closely scrutinize the behavior of strategic leaders. How strategic leaders conduct themselves during routine periods and in times of crisis demonstrates their personal values, beliefs, and assumptions. Therefore, their behavior affects certain aspects of the organization's culture as subordinates react to strategic leaders' behavior.¹⁵

Changing organizational culture is difficult but not impossible. In fact, cultural change is imperative if an organization is to grow, develop, and adapt to the changing environment within which it exists. However, it takes time to change an organization's culture, usually between five and ten years, so the strategic leadership of an organization must have patience to see change through.

The cultural changes connected with developments evolved over long periods, several years in most cases. External forces triggered some of them, while other changes occurred because of a perceived need for change within the Air Force. Whatever the reason behind them, far-reaching actions by a succession of strategic leaders helped bring about the desired cultural change.¹⁶

The Air Force's culture is defined by institutional, stated, and operating values, and the beliefs and assumptions of its members. Culture influences norms of thought and behavior and establishes a basic understanding of what the Air Force stands for and how it functions. Strategic leaders cannot easily manipulate culture. However, the essence of strategic leadership is the ability to shape an organization's culture and values to support a vision while retaining the trust and confidence of subordinates and members of the greater society.

The Air Force reflects the vision of our forefathers and their culture, which was validated through experience and articulated in the Constitution and its Amendments. Changing organizational culture is difficult but not impossible, however, it does take time.

SHAPING CULTURE

According to Dr. Magee, the strategic leader must take steps to shape the organization's culture in a manner that supports and helps to communicate the vision. Tasks within this area include:

1. Ensuring that organizational culture is built on values deemed essential by the strategic leadership.
2. Ensuring that stated values, as related to the strategic vision, are communicated throughout the organization and are internalized by its members.
3. Building consensus with the organization to gain support for goals and objectives that support and implement the vision.

4. Initiating structural changes and programs with distant completion dates that must be institutional to be achieved.
5. Ensuring an organizational commitment to train other leaders by picking the right people for the right jobs.
6. Ensuring the reward structure reinforces the values and behaviors you desire.¹⁷

THE LEADER AS A CHANGE AGENT

Unfortunately, as the rate of change in the technological, economic, political, and socio-cultural environment increases, the very strengths that were institutionalized can become liabilities. Leaders now have to begin to think like change agents, because the problem is not only how to acquire new concepts and skills, but also how to unlearn things that are no longer serving the organization well. With the continuing reduction of active duty forces, Reservists must now assume some of their missions.¹⁸

Leaders who find themselves in a mature organization that has developed dysfunctional processes, and who therefore must think of themselves, as agents of change, need two particular characteristics. First, they have to have the emotional strength to be supportive of the organization while it deals with the anxieties attendant upon unlearning processes that were previously successful, that is, the ability to create for the organization a sense of "psychological safety." And second, they need a true understanding of cultural dynamics and the properties of their own organizational culture.¹⁹

The critical aspect to understand about cultural dynamics is that leaders cannot arbitrarily change culture in the sense of eliminating dysfunctional elements, but they can evolve culture by building on its strengths while letting its weaknesses atrophy over time. The process of cultural change in the Personnel Reliability Program began with a 23 September 1996 letter to HQ USAF/XO from AMC/CV, then Lieutenant General John B. Sams, Jr. He wrote "The PNAF (Prime Nuclear Airlift Force) mission is well suited for the ARC (Air Reserve Component) because it provides a firm and predictable airlift schedule (a strength). Also, with the continuing downsizing of active duty forces, airlift missions are being assumed by the Guard and Reserve, which were previously thought "inappropriate" for them."²⁰ In his 18 October 1999 letter to the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Command, Control, Communications and Intelligence, the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs, Mr. Charles L. Cragin, wrote referencing Secretary of Defense Cohen's policy of Total Force by stating "Total Force integration includes RC participation in special missions and access to some of our most sophisticated and highly guarded systems. These same systems and missions are often managed under PRP. We cannot afford formal policy statements that defeat reserve integration at the most fundamental level. As stewards of the Total Force and prudent managers, we need to ensure that commanders have access to both active and RC personnel in meeting manpower requirements."²¹ It is important to understand the criticality and seriousness of PRP by studying its history, strengths, and weaknesses.

THE HISTORY OF THE NUCLEAR WEAPON PERSONNEL RELIABILITY PROGRAM (PRP)

The need for a personnel reliability program became apparent in 1959 when an American active duty sergeant stationed at the Royal Air Force Base in Sculthorpe, England, held the base hostage by placing a .45-caliber pistol to the warhead of a nuclear bomb. After six hours, the sergeant surrendered. It was soon learned that he was being treated for serious depression and that his psychiatrist had not known that the man worked directly with nuclear weapons. Eli Flyer, then a personnel researcher recalls that in the aftermath of the incident there was some dispute within the Pentagon about what would have happened if the sergeant had in fact fired his weapon. At a minimum, it was concluded, the impact of the bullet would likely have detonated the high explosives contained in the bomb and thus scattered nuclear debris into the atmosphere. But even disclosure of the incident—which was hushed up by the military and not reported until 1962—would have been a public relations disaster. At that very time, Air Force officials had been assuring the public that U.S. military personnel were rigorously screened to ensure that none would intentionally provoke a nuclear disaster. “Disclosure of the event would certainly have knocked us out of England,” said Flyer, and England was the keystone to the U.S. nuclear strategy in Europe.²²

Responding to the near disaster at Sculthorpe, in 1962, the Air Force developed a system to screen candidates for nuclear-sensitive jobs that was quickly enacted by the Commander-in-Chief, Strategic Air Command, General Curtis E. Lemay. By 1965, a version of this system had been adopted service-wide and called the Personnel Reliability Program (PRP). It is supposed to guarantee that only “competent, stable, and dependable individuals” have access to America’s nuclear arsenal. Since PRP was implemented, no nuclear accidents can be directly traced to mentally unreliable personnel, however, there are numerous cases of decidedly unreliable active duty service members receiving PRP clearances. In the last 11 years, three different men who were approved to work with nuclear weapons were convicted of committing murders that occurred while they were on active duty. Of course, any program responsible for screening tens of thousands of applicants is likely to make mistakes in at least a handful of cases. In one case, the Navy granted PRP clearance to a man whom it knew to have been a suspect in an unsolved murder, and who was caught in a multitude of lies during his screening. Three years later, in 1989, the man, a fire control technician on the USS Alaska nuclear submarine, brutally murdered an elderly couple. At the time of his arrest, he claims he had the knowledge to override the controls on the Alaska and launch a nuclear attack. Weapons designers have gone to great lengths since the Sculthorpe affair to ensure that no individual is able to single-handedly set off a nuclear weapon. However, there is a possibility that such a disaster remains.²³

PRP is a two-step process that includes an initial screening and post approval monitoring. Military investigators look for a variety of traits, including “good social adjustment,” “emotional stability,” and a “positive attitude toward nuclear weapons duty.” If problems emerge on the job, individuals can be temporarily or permanently barred from duties that require PRP clearance. About 7,000 people were decertified between 1990 and 1996. The Pentagon’s annual status report on PRP for 1996 shows that

758 personnel were kicked out of the program that year. Of those, 169 were expelled due to "conviction by a military or a civilian court of a serious offense" or "a pattern of behavior indicative of a contemptuous attitude toward the law or other duly constituted authority". The number of armed forces personnel with PRP certification has dropped from an average of about 100,000 during the 1980s, when the Cold War was still raging, to just 19,042 by 1996. During the initial screening, PRP candidates undergo a medical evaluation and are interviewed by certifying officials. The candidate's personnel file is reviewed, and military investigators conduct a background check to examine professional, educational, and personal histories. As part of this process, investigators may interview family, friends and neighbors, and former employers and colleagues. Critics of the screening say it includes no routine psychological testing and that a candidate's entire medical evaluation may be limited to an examination of old medical records.²⁴

A review of dozens of files of active duty people who were decertified from PRP during the early 1990s, obtained under the Freedom of Information Act, also calls into question the "stable and dependable" nature of PRP personnel. One person was kicked out after being "overcome by a severe emotional disturbance which caused him to lose his ability to communicate.... He was subsequently diagnosed with having a personality disorder which is a deeply ingrained, maladaptive pattern of behavior." Another was decertified after "an alcohol-related incident at a local bar where he allegedly assaulted a civilian, who was hospitalized with severe head injuries." A third case involved a soldier who tried to suffocate his 12-day-old daughter when she wouldn't stop crying. Other PRP-approved personnel tried to commit suicide or were found guilty of crimes ranging from rape to burglary; one man was found drunk while on duty with a bottle of Jack Daniels concealed in his waistband. The system is not foolproof; the overall decertification rate for PRP-approved personnel is 3 to 4 percent. According to Colonel Dale Landis, a former staff officer in the office of the assistant secretary of defense who helped monitor PRP, "Like society, we're going to have people of all types in the services" he said. "We live in a violent environment." Herbert L. Abrams, a PRP expert at Stanford University's Center for International Security and Cooperation, recommends that the Pentagon strengthen PRP by requiring a physician to examine all candidates, using standardized psychological testing, and improving its post approval monitoring procedures. The risk crosses international boundaries; in mid-September 1998 in the port city of Murmansk, Russia, a Russian sailor wielding a machine gun single-handedly commandeered a nuclear submarine, and then fatally shot eight of his fellow crew members before turning the gun on himself. And while it might be only a coincidence, it's worth noting that the Pentagon has been helping Russian military enhance its own personnel reliability system!²⁵ The Reserve component has had a long history of success with involvement in the Personnel Reliability Program.

A SNAPSHOT: SUCCESS OF THE RESERVE COMPONENT PARTICIPATION IN PRP

The 120th Fighter Wing, Montana Air National Guard, was one of nine Guard units that received the F-89J in the spring of 1960 and began the process of becoming operational for the mission of delivering

tactical nuclear weapons. The unit then converted to the F-102 in the fall of 1966 and was temporarily out of the nuclear business. The next conversion, to the F-106A, occurred in the spring of 1972 bringing the AIR-2A/B "Genie" nuclear-tipped missile back to Gore Field, Great Falls, MT. and the 120th remained in the PRP program until 1974 when all nuclear weapons were removed from ANG fighter units nationwide. There were approximately 500 traditional Guardsmen enrolled in the then Human Reliability Program (HRP) who were tested at the same interval as the full time counterparts. Participation included both full time and traditional Guardsmen in specialties such as security, weapons loaders, munitions, pilots, and command post personnel. Security, munitions, and weapons loaders frequently practiced the transport of the inert "Genie" missiles from Malmstrom AFB through the streets of Great Falls to Gore Field. All personnel actually sat in a nuclear alert status (along with other air defense units) for approximately 24 hours during the Arab-Israeli conflict in the summer of 1973.²⁶

Illnesses were immediately reported upon arriving for duty either for drill or active duty tours. If the person had already recovered from the illness, they were briefly checked and documentation was entered for historical purpose but no action was taken. If individuals were still affected, a flight surgeon or doctor from the clinic completed the HRP paperwork and removed them as required. Individuals were required (and trusted) to report conditions affecting the medical side of the program, and the medical people processed them just as the active duty personnel do today. A special color-coded medical file was used to flag HRP certified personnel.²⁷

The munitions load team competed in William Tell competitions and weapons "Loadeos" every 2 years from 1974 through 1986 and won numerous times. This competition included loading and handling the "Genie" with two-man procedures and HRP/PRP testing all under the watchful eye of the Air Defense Command/NORAD inspectors following the same criteria that applied to the active duty competitors. The pilots, who competed in William Tell 1974, also had to accomplish written tests on two-man procedures and employ a disarmed version of the "Genie" for score. That year, they won the F-106 category beating several active duty teams.²⁸

Some strengths about participation in the PRP, as noted by the 120th Support Group/CC, Colonel Livingston, included that the 120th knew a lot about their member's medical challenges and weaknesses were the same concern – they knew a lot about their member's medical challenges. Problems were handled just like their active duty counterparts, which included temporary to permanent decertification. The 120th was not staffed for the program; all personnel came from existing pools: CBPO, medical, squadron orderly rooms, etc. Medical reporting was a constant challenge. They had to rely on the member (trust) by self-identifying the medical condition - this not only applied to traditional Guardsmen from Bozeman, but also full-time technicians living in Great Falls. Here is a great success story with the same situations encountered as those on active duty.²⁹ The following is a synopsis of the cultural changes that have occurred which will begin to open the PRP to Traditional Reservists.

A CHRONOLOGY OF DOD PERSONNEL RELIABILITY PROGRAM CHANGE RECOMMENDATIONS

A study of this process begins with the publishing of a directive on the "Integration of the Reserve and Active Components" on 4 September 1997 by the Secretary of Defense, William Cohen. In his message, he wrote, "Today I ask each of you (in DoD) to create an environment that eliminates all residual barriers – structural and cultural for effective integration with our Total Force. Our goal, as we move into the 21st century, must be a seamless Total Force that provides the National Command Authorities the flexibility and interoperability necessary for the full range of military options. We must continue to work towards the principles of Total Force and achieve the full integration of the Reserve and Active Components."

To better understand the process of change, the DoD Personnel Reliability Program Working Group met on 18 November 1999 to address a proposed ASD Reserve Affairs revision of the language in the current draft DoDD 5210.42 that would remove the current draft language concerning restricted reserve opportunity to assume nuclear weapons duties and replace it with language providing no restrictions to the Traditional Reservist.

Prior to Secretary Cohen's directive, several significant statements were made regarding the participation of Reserve personnel in PRP. The first letter, dated 1 August 1996, highlights the recent success by USSTRATCOM of including a small number of select reserve flag and general officers as Airborne Emergency Action Officers (AEAO). "These officers are fully trained, certified, and required to be in the personnel reliability program (PRP). USSTRATCOM has expressed their requirement for these officers in writing and stated they significantly contribute to USSTRATCOM's mission during periods of increased operational tempo. We have reviewed the procedures used by USSTRATCOM to certify and monitor these officers and conclude the highest possible standards of reliability are maintained. The reserve officers are thoroughly screened into critical positions the same as any military, civilian, or contractor individual. Each completes a rigorous training and qualification program approved by the DCINC and are personally screened into the PRP by the DCINC. They are subjected to continuing evaluation and medically evaluated by the flight surgeon immediately prior to each duty assignment. After a February 1996 Staff Assistance Visit to review the USSTRATCOM PRP, Field Command, Defense Nuclear Agency (DNA), concluded: "USSTRATCOM has local procedures to ensure the reliability and continual evaluation of these officers. In a time of force reductions, the Reserve components are playing an increasingly important role in supporting combatant commanders. We believe the time has come to review the role of reserve units and individuals in the Total Force concept."³⁰

The September 1996 letter, written by AMC/CV, then Lieutenant General Sams, to HQ USAF/XO, further emphasizes the importance of Air Force Reserve personnel in supporting the Prime Nuclear Airlift Force (PNAF) mission.³¹ This was followed in July 1997 by a letter from the then Air Force Chief of Staff, General Ronald Fogleman, to the Commander-in-Chief, USSTRATCOM. General Fogleman wrote, "It is time to assign nuclear mission responsibilities to Air Force Reserve personnel. This initiative makes sense from the total force perspective, plus it represents a positive step toward solving a shortfall of

active duty aircrews. We are actively involved in the issue from this end. AF/XO, with solid AFR and ANG support, is working the all-important first step, i.e. fine tuning the rules of (PRP) to allow full-time reservists to participate. It's important to address the broader issue of making part-time guard and reserve members eligible for PRP, with a goal of expanding ARC participation into other nuclear mission areas – PNAF, SIOF missions, security, and maintenance."³²

In an April 1997 letter to AF/XO, which was co-authored by the Director, Air National Guard, Major General Sheppard, and Chief of the Air Force Reserve, Major General McIntosh, highlighted the Fall 96 CORONA where Air Force senior leadership developed long-range planning strategies into the next century including ARC participation in nuclear mission areas. Their letter emphasized participation in the AF/XOFM Tiger Team that addressed questions concerning ARC participation in support of the transport of nuclear components under the PNAF program. They found no operational obstacles to the success in supporting this mission. A great deal of emphasis was placed on the ability of the ARC to comply with the reliability standards in AFI 36-2104, Nuclear Weapons Personnel Reliability Program (PRP). Ultimately, the Tiger Team concluded that PRP guidelines and directives were open to interpretation regarding ARC inclusion in this program, provided senior leadership supported this effort. They assured the PNAF Tiger Team of their intent and ability to meet every reliability standard and requirement outlined in PRP directives".³³

Next comes the publishing on 4 September 1997 of the directive, "Integration of the Reserve and Active Components" by the Secretary of Defense, William Cohen. A letter, dated 23 August 1999, from AF/REO, Colonel William A. McLoughlin, to ACJCS/RM, Major General McIntosh, emphasizes "The Air Force Reserve is prepared to implement a PRP program for participating Air Force reservists that will meet or exceed the high standards set out by current and future DoD Directives. Although on the surface it appears that RC personnel will now be able to work in nuclear missions, there is no way of anticipating the difficulty and obstacles of implementing a PRP program that includes RC traditional reservists until an active duty mission requirement is tested, evaluated, and implemented."³⁴

"In February 1999, the Deputy Director of Air Force Space Command Security Forces proposed a pilot program test be conducted at Malmstrom AFB, MT using Air Force Reserve security forces personnel. "We have contacted the Director of Security Forces at Air Force Space Command to express our willingness to support this effort. The Director of Security Forces, Air Force Space Command, has expressed his concern with taking the "lead" in this pilot proposal, and has instructed us that he will make contact with the Air Force Reserve concerning what the next step should be at a future, as of yet, unspecified time."³⁵ The unit designated to conduct this pilot program test is the 341st Security Forces Squadron at Malmstrom. As of this writing, no progress has been accomplished with this test yet the commander has assigned IMAs who are tasked to back fill his and other key positions any time that they are absent. The 341 SFS/CC IMA is unable to be fully integrated into the commander's role in the mission of the squadron because he is not PRP certified. The squadron PRP monitor said they did not receive definitive guidance from Air Force Space Command and, therefore, were not able to conduct the

test. Additionally, in 1997, an Air Force News Service release told the story of the 118th Security Forces Squadron, Tennessee Air National Guard, while deployed to Malmstrom for their 2-week annual active duty tour. The article highlighted the outstanding performance of the guardsmen and yet emphasized the lack of complete and seamless integration of the Total Force because they could not provide security for nuclear devices because they were not PRP certified. The active duty personnel were augmented in every aspect but the nuclear area; this means that that active duty airman still continued to perform guard duty on the stifling hot flightline while her/his augmentee performed law enforcement duties in an air-conditioned patrol vehicle!

Since 1997, AFRC has been working on the integration of ARC into the B-52 SIOP mission. The 917th Bomb Wing, Barksdale AFB, LA, has continued efforts to certify AFRC B-52 crews. Progress has been slow and none of the crews has been cleared for PRP.

THE TIMELINE OF CULTURAL CHANGE

Now the Department of Defense and the Air Force are faced with the situation at hand. In his 18 October 1999 letter, Mr. Cragin requests modification to DoDD 5210.42, "Nuclear Weapon Personnel Reliability Program", that would allow traditional Reservists and Guardsmen to be PRP certified. An OSD/C3I –sponsored working group met that day; that working group unanimously agreed to recommend that DoDD 5210.42 be changed to allow full participation of traditional Reservists and Guardsmen in the Personnel Reliability Program. All working group members agreed that it was crucial that all participants in PRP be required to maintain the same standard. After extensive discussion, it was agreed upon that the implementation instructions for participation of traditional Reservists and Guardsmen in PRP should be done at the service level and not through the directive. The AF/DP-sponsored PRP working group met on 19 October 1999. The purpose of this meeting was to begin the process of creating an AFI that would implement the new OSD guidance. The working group agreed that all barriers be removed. They unanimously agreed to prohibit restrictive language in the AFI that could be seen as discriminative towards ARC personnel. Previous Air Force concerns over drug testing, potentially disqualifying information (PDI), security clearances, and safety standards were discussed. It was agreed that current Air Force standards for all of the previously mentioned areas can be and are being met by traditional Reservists and Guardsmen. The AF/DP-sponsored working group is anticipated to continue to meet and work on AFI 36-2104 with language that will include implementation into PRP.

DASD/RA (RT&M), Major General Andrews, requested review of the proposed draft document, DoDD 5210.42, Nuclear Weapon Personnel Reliability Program, and each service Reserve component's history of involvement in PRP. In his response, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs, Charles L. Cragin, wrote, "Total Force integration includes RC participation in special missions and access to some of our most sophisticated and highly systems. These same systems and missions are often managed under PRP. We cannot afford formal policy statements that defeat reserve integration at the most fundamental level. As stewards of the Total Force and prudent managers, we need to ensure

that commanders have access to both active and RC personnel in meeting manpower requirements."³⁶ ACJCS (NG/RM), Major General Davidson and Major General McIntosh, recommended deletion of applicable sentences by saying this "statement is counterproductive and unnecessarily restrictive in nature to traditional Reservists participating in PRP. Removing this sentence will maintain the spirit and intent of the program while allowing the respective service components to develop applicable guidance in conducting PRP certification."³⁷ SAF/MIR, Mr. Bryan E. Sharratt, responded with the same words. Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Navy (Reserve Affairs), Mr. Mark H. Davidson, also recommended deletion of the sentence that excluded PRP certification for Reserve and Guard personnel. Further, he added that "Naval Reserve instructions and other policy documents concerning PRP are no longer in effect and no historical copies are available."³⁸

THE FINAL PUSH TO A SOLUTION

Coordination for the revision to DoD Directive 5210.42 has been ongoing for almost two years! This is a directive that involves all the Services; the Navy's specific position has been that the directive needs to have specific guidance for the Reserves in order to ensure consistency among the Services. The Air Force position has been that accountability for the Reservists will be in the AFIs and that the long-overdue directive needs to be published as soon as possible. After a long recess over the holidays, the DoD PRP working group met on 23 February 2000. The deliverable by this working group was to make changes to the Directive that incorporates Reserves and provides sufficient guidance without lowering the current standards while maintaining the overarching goal of ensuring the nuclear devices are safe and secure. The real crux of the wording problem was the frequency of contact for "continuing evaluation" and "peer reporting". The group sought to establish a minimum number of days between observations and frequency of contact rather than establishing a minimum number of days for reserve duty. Continuing evaluation is defined in the present DoDD 5210.42 as "observed for compliance with reliability standards... duty performance and on and off-duty behavior and reliability on a consistent and frequent basis".³⁹ Under the current 5210.42, no time period is applied to the concept of continuing evaluation. The Group felt that, in order to keep an equivalent standard, there was a need to define "continuing evaluation" in terms of both active and reserve participation in PRP while keeping in mind that DoD policy should not exclude/prohibit but to support the CINCs and individual commanders.

The PRP working group met the following day to continue the discussion which centered around the concept of continuing evaluation and the commander who always has the ability to certify or not – there has to be a comfort level on their part. From a peer reporting perspective, a commander has to accept a certain amount of risk given a solid review of past performance reviews; the onus is on the commander to know people. It was decided that 4 service days per month with a maximum interval of 12 days between contact periods met the theme of the concept of continuing evaluation. The 12-day concept is more stringent than that required for active duty (30 days), however, peers see the active duty

person the other 11 months. It was decided that commanders need the opportunity for information access through contacts with employers and civil law enforcement, credit checks, random polygraphs, and drug testing every duty period. The group based all this discussion on access to information upon which to base the decision – behavioral, medical, and criminal.

On 29 February 2000, the PRP working group discussed the issue of accessibility of both military and civilian information such as medical, police, mental health, employment personnel records, credit reports, employer contact, etc. It was decided that PRP individuals must agree to allow the certifying official to retain copies of civilian information as needed to demonstrate individual compliance with the Directive. Additionally, the review/approval process for certification of personnel who do not meet the 12-day/month minimum – no more than 14 days between observations was refined to read, “review/approval by the Commander of the Unified Command concerned or the respective Chief of Military Service... The commander or Service Chief may delegate this authority in writing to an officer of at least O-7 grade.”⁴⁰ The 1 March 2000 meeting acknowledged some problems with the proposed draft of DoDD 5210.42: there is no way that a reservist is available for continual observation like their active duty counterpart (risk factor) and knowing that this effort is politically driven from ASD/RA rather than driven by immediate mission need. The group approved the draft Directive which was sent to ASD/RA, Mr. Cragin, and ASD/C3I, Mr. Arthur Money, for signature.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Building and sustaining a culture based on trust and confidence, vertically and horizontally, is a key responsibility of strategic leadership. This is emphasized in the efforts of our strategic leaders, Secretary of Defense Cohen and Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs, Mr. Cragin, as they seek Total Force integration, however, the culture surrounding the Personnel Reliability Program has become so embedded within the organization through directives and regulations that much of it is second nature and often taken for granted. In a time of force reductions, the Reserve components are playing an increasingly important role in supporting CINCs and combatant commanders in areas such as the PRP. This is stated while emphasizing that this is a program for select individuals and not a blanket approval for every Traditional Reservist to be certified under the PRP. NOW is the time to test these program changes. As Colonel McLoughlin stated in his 23 August 1999 memorandum to ACJCS/RM, Major General McIntosh, “there is no way of anticipating the difficulty and obstacles of implementing a PRP program that includes Traditional Reservists until an active duty mission requirement is tested, evaluated, and implemented.”⁴¹ Coordination for the revision to DoD Directive 5210.42 has been ongoing for almost two years! NOW it is time to enjoy the benefits of this CULTURAL CHANGE.

Word count: 7,099

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⁴ Ibid., 30.

⁵ Ibid., 30.

⁶ Ibid., 31.

⁷ Ibid., 31.

⁸ Ibid., 31.

⁹ Ibid., 32.

¹⁰ Ibid., 33.

¹¹ Ibid., 33.

¹² Ibid., 34.

¹³ Ibid., 34.

¹⁴ Ibid., 34.

¹⁵ Ibid., 35.

¹⁶ Ibid., 35.

¹⁷ Ibid., 46.

¹⁸ Edgar H. Schein, "Leadership and Organizational Culture," Course 1, Strategic Leadership, Volume 1, (Carlisle Barracks, PA: United States Army War College, 1999), 93.

¹⁹ Ibid., 94.

²⁰ Lieutenant General John B. Sams, USAF, "Prime Nuclear Airlift Force (PNAF)," memorandum for HQ/USAF/XO, Scott AFB, IL, 23 September 1996.

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- ²² Ken Silverstein, "Security meltdown." Mother Jones, Nov/Dec 98, p. 72.
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- ²⁴ *Ibid.*, 72.
- ²⁵ *Ibid.*, 72.
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