

DEVELOPING JUNIOR NONCOMMISSIONED OFFICER SUPERVISORS IN THE
UNITED STATES AIR FORCE

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MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE
General Studies

by

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ABSTRACT

DEVELOPING JUNIOR NONCOMMISSIONED OFFICER SUPERVISORS IN THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE, by Maj Keith P. Williams, 89 pages.

This thesis examines a possible leadership tool the U.S. Air Force could create to develop junior noncommissioned officers (NCOs) into more effective supervisors. The end-state of this analysis is to identify the reasons there is a demand for this type of product, and the potential components of a tool that shows junior NCOs how to conduct their supervisory roles and responsibilities.

In order to assess the requirement for supervisory tool, the researcher sought to analyze the current challenges facing junior NCOs in today's 21st Century Air Force. These challenges divided into two areas for ease of study and examination including, "The Air Force Culture," and "Air Expeditionary Force Spectrum of Operations." To answer the secondary question of what a supervisory tool would look like, this research sought to analyze the gap that exists between the training junior NCOs receive on their supervisory responsibilities and the guidance of how to accomplish those responsibilities. Supervisory responsibilities that would benefit from the development of guidance on how to accomplish them and including this guidance into a comprehensive supervisory tool would answer the question of what it would look like.

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ACRONYMS

AEF	Air and Space Expeditionary Force
AFDD	Air Force Doctrine Document
ALS	Airman Leadership School
BMT	Basic Military Training
CDC	Career Development Course
CFETP	Career Field Education and Training Plan
CMSAF	Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force
CMSGT	Chief Master Sergeant
DODD	Department of Defense Directive
EDP	Enlisted Development Plan
ILO	In Lieu Of
LOAC	Law of Armed Conflict
NCO	Noncommissioned Officer
OJT	On the Job Training
OPLAN	Operation Plans
PME	Professional Military Education
PT	Physical Training
PTSD	Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
RRT	Roles, Responsibilities, and Tasks
SSgt	Staff Sergeant
U.S.	United States
UDM	Unit Deployment Manager
UFPM	Unit Fitness Program Monitor

UTC	Unit Type Code
WAPS	Weighted Airman Promotion System

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Commanders and supervisors at all levels must lead by personal example, ensure compliance by all, and reinforce the highest standards of the United States Air Force.

——— General T. Michael Moseley, *CSAF's Vector*

Introduction and Significance of Study

The Air Force instills in all Airmen its core values of, “integrity first, service before self, and excellence in all we do.”¹ The Air Force uses these values as the foundation for training Airmen to become noncommissioned officers (NCOs) and leaders. This training provides the basic skills an NCO requires for supervising Airmen; however, other tools may compliment these skills and produce better prepared supervisors.

This thesis examines the development of a possible leadership tool the United States (U.S.) Air Force could create to develop junior NCOs into more effective supervisors. The end-state of this analysis is to identify the factors that justify the demand for a tool of this nature, and capture the components of a tool that will show junior NCOs how to conduct their supervisory responsibilities. Additionally, part of this analysis justifies why it is important to focus these tools toward junior NCOs rather than other leadership levels of the organization. Current Air Force training curricula and other informal and formal mentoring mechanisms assist supervisors by identifying the expected standards. This thesis identified potential components to incorporate in a tool that shows

supervisors how to enforce standards and provides them with a comprehensive means that allow them to fulfill their supervisory responsibilities effectively.

Junior Noncommissioned Officers Supervisory Development

This thesis analyzed the need for providing the junior NCOs of the U.S. Air Force a supervisory leadership tool. This tool will provide them essential guidance on how to effectively execute the responsibilities of a supervisor. The Air Force correctly makes a clear distinction between the responsibilities and expectations of junior enlisted personnel and the junior NCO corps, specifically the rank of Staff Sergeant (SSgt). To foster, teach, and instill these expectations, the Air Force requires all SSgts to attend Professional Military Education (PME) before attaining promotion to that rank. This five week program teaches very basic supervisory and leadership skills. Training alone is insufficient to produce effective supervisors and leaders the Air Force demands. Providing an additional supervisory leadership tool will allow SSgts to practically apply what they have learned and develop more effective leaders. The current absence of this type of tool occurs at a crucial time for both the newly appointed supervisor and the Airman they supervise. The supervisor is trying to establish themselves as an enforcer of standards, and the Airman is eager for mentorship. The creation of a simple leadership tool would help them fill the gap between the training junior NCOs receive and the practical implementation of those skills designed to fulfill supervisory responsibilities.

Research Questions

The primary research question this work will attempt to answer is: Is there a need for the Air Force to create a tool that will develop junior NCOs into more effective

supervisors and leaders? Once the primary research question establishes the need for a supervisory leadership tool, this research seeks to answer a secondary question. The secondary question of this analysis is: What guidance should a leadership tool include that would help junior NCO supervisors bridge the gap between the formal and informal training they receive and the practical implementation of those skills? Essentially, what would a supervisory tool look like?

Do junior NCOs need a leadership tool that helps them practically apply the skills they learned in training? To answer this question one must conduct an evaluation of the Air Force's supervisor development process. The U.S. Air Force teaches its Airmen to be effective supervisors by sending them to an in-residence PME course called, Airman Leadership School (ALS). Airman also learns supervisory skills through the informal and formal processes of mentoring. Informal mentoring occurs when Airman observe their supervisors conducting their duties. By watching others supervise, the Airman that will soon be a supervisor observes techniques and procedures they too one day can utilize. Formal mentoring occurs in mandated programs including performance feedback sessions. Here the Airman observes first hand how their supervisor conducts mentoring sessions, procedures and techniques they can utilize when they become a supervisor. Examining the training at ALS and the informal and formal mentorship methods for developing supervisors has identified a gap between training and implementation. This existing gap between the duties supervisors must fulfill and the guidance for how to accomplish those duties justifies the need for supervisory development tool that will help bridge the gap.

Determining the characteristics of this gap required an analysis of the duties demanded of a junior NCO supervisor. Also relevant in determining the nature of the gap between training and practical application of skills is the analysis of some of the challenges supervisors encounter in the context of today's 20th Century Air Force. The examination of the duties of a supervisor along with current challenges identified the nature of this gap and potential solutions to resolve the gap.

Also relevant to determining whether leadership tools are required and how to effectively bridge the gap from training to practical application is an evaluation of group dynamics. Becoming a supervisor for the first time is a crucial point of both the supervisor and Airman. The group dynamics that exist complicating the transformation from peer to mentor for the supervisor create very challenging situations. This type of group dynamics has shown the need for a practical tool to help supervisors with these challenging situations, and helped identify potential characteristics to include in the supervisory tools.

With the requirement for a supervisory tool established, the secondary question this thesis evaluated is: What supervisory skills and responsibilities should be supported by a practical "how-to" supervise tool? Answering this question identifies what a supervisory tool should look like. A literature and ALS curriculum review provided a foundation of responsibilities and skills requiring supervisory leadership tools. This listing includes everything from the requirements of upgrade skill training (technical job proficiency) to the personal and professional commitments expected of Airmen. Knowledge of the ALS curriculum foundation and comprehensive list of professional development expectations identified the necessary characteristics of supervisory

leadership how-to tools. The research has shown that a comprehensive guide of supervisory responsibilities and a timeline associated with those responsibilities will be beneficial in showing supervisors how to accomplish their responsibilities. There are many task oriented tools that assist supervisors with accomplishing a specific task, but not a single all-inclusive list of items they are responsible to conduct with an associated list of tasks showing how to fulfill these responsibilities.

The benefits of a supervisor's guide of this nature goes beyond the individual junior NCO. Opportunities exist in programs like ALS to utilize this guide as a tool for showing them how to utilize the skills taught during the program. Additionally, these how-to tools can provide mid- and senior-level managers the opportunity for oversight of the more junior supervisors (SSgts). Mid-level supervisors can hold SSgts accountable of their supervisory duties by analyzing how they are utilizing their supervisory tool. This cascading effect shows how these tools developed primarily for use at the junior NCO supervisory level will also benefit individuals at all levels of the organizational structure and build upon current training curriculum.

Assumptions

An assumption of this thesis is that the current training program conducted at ALS effectively teaches Airmen the required skills needed for supervising other Airmen. This analysis only evaluated the facets of ALS training so that these characteristics can be included in developing a tool. The tool intends to complement training by providing a means for practically applying the leadership lessons taught at ALS. The intent is not to analyze and dispute the content of the ALS curriculum, which is beyond the scope of this

thesis, it is in fact to compliment and build upon it enabling the practical application of these lessons.

Summary

Providing a supervisory how-to tool that compliments PME training and the informal and formal supervisory development process is crucial to developing our junior NCOs into effective leaders. This supervisor leadership development tool will produce a more effective NCO corps better prepared to overcome the challenges facing supervisors and to lead Airmen.

¹U.S. Department of the Air Force, Office of the Secretary of the Air Force, Air Force Pamphlet 36-2241, *Professional Development Guide* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2007), 235-236.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

If we deliberately chart a course to develop the tremendous talented NCOs within our ranks, we will create strong leaders, managers, and supervisors.

——— Gerald R. Murray, *Air and Space Power Journal*

Introduction

This thesis seeks to identify a leadership tool junior NCOs in the Air Force could utilize to assist them in fulfilling their supervisory duties. The final product of this analysis is a supervisory tool that facilitates the accomplishment of the roles, responsibilities, and tasks of a supervisor. This chapter explains the literature utilized for research and analysis. This literature is divided into three specific categories to ensure a comprehensive review of the issues facing this research.

The majority of the publications for this research study are of course Air Force “centric.” With the recent emphasis of the Air Force to train, organize, and equip into a more expeditionary force, a majority of the Air Force’s publications are current, reflecting the expectations of all Airmen to include supervisors. The challenge this research endured is the lack of specific documentation that shows Airmen how to be supervisors. Publications are plentiful when stipulating the responsibilities of supervisors, but minimal when trying to find key works or contributions of study discussing how to fulfill those supervisory duties. Additionally, a great deal of the literature surrounding the development of leadership and supervisory skills focuses on mid-level management of

the NCO corps and officer corps, not on the junior NCO level. This gap in literature is one of the motivating aspects for this research.

Literature Categories

The existing literature related to supervisory development and responsibilities falls into three broad categories; directives, educational, and informational. Directives outline the current Air Force policies concerning mandated supervisory responsibilities. Educational material comprises all matter related to supervisory development including the lesson plans, curricula, and syllabi of formal training institutions. Informational literature includes all previously related research efforts, and publicized articles and commentary by military professionals and Air Force leaders.

Directives

The overarching strategic level document in the Air Force concerning supervisory development is Air Force Doctrine Document 1-1 (AFDD 1-1), *Leadership and Force Development*, dated 18 February 2006. This directive provides the doctrinal framework for developing leadership principles and force development to ensure the Air Force produces effective and combat ready Airmen. Specifically AFDD 1-1 notes that “Developing Airmen best happens through a deliberate process, one that aims to produce the right capabilities to meet the Air Force’s operational needs.”¹ AFDD 1-1 divides an Airman’s development into three elements; renew, develop, and sustain as shown in figure 1. A supervisory tool that incorporates the aspects of these elements will ensure a doctrinally compliant product that at the strategic level is a balanced and comprehensive guide for supervising and developing Airmen.

Other directives include all Air Force instructions, pamphlets, and manuals. The most prominent and widely used of this research is Air Force Pamphlet 36-2241, *Professional Development Guide*, (PDG) dated 1 July 2007. This guide is comprised of the doctrinal issues important to enlisted Airmen development. The *Professional Development Guide* is a comprehensive document incorporating information from other Air Force publications into one product. This product's primary purpose is to serve as a reference guide for Airmen to utilize as they prepare themselves for promotion testing.² Analyzing this directive assisted in the development of this research's desire to develop a complete listing of supervisory Roles, Responsibilities, and Tasks (RRTs).

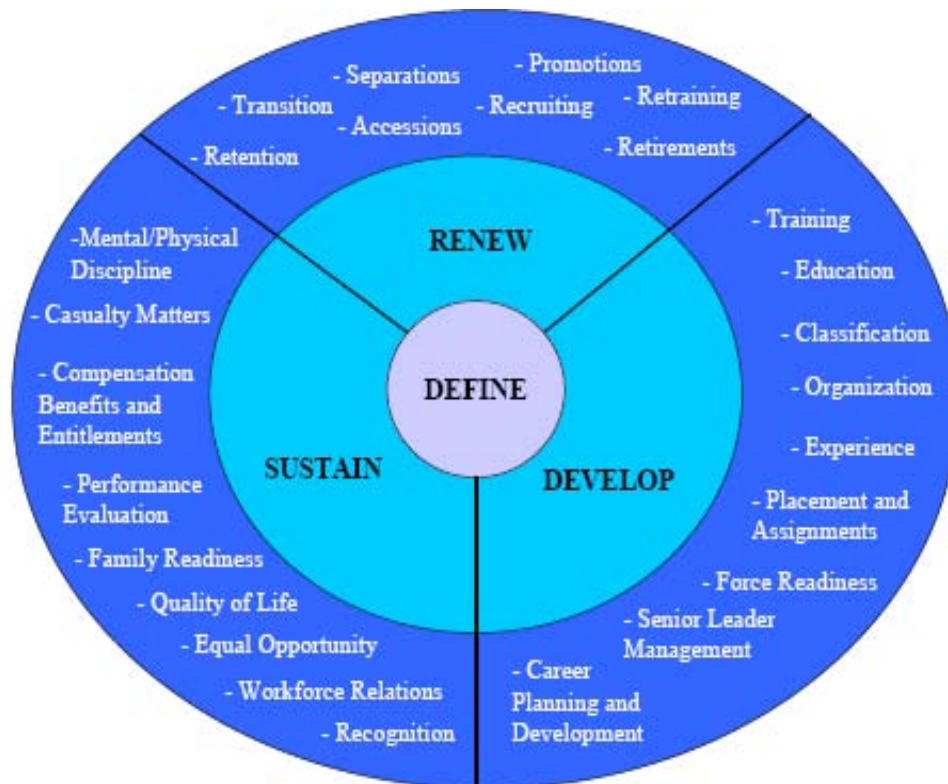


Figure 1. Force Development Process

Source: U.S. Department of the Air Force, Office of the Secretary of the Air Force, Air Force Pamphlet 36-2241, *Professional Development Guide* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2007), 19.

Educational

Supervisors in the Air Force must attend an in-residence PME course as a prerequisite to being promoted to the rank of SSgt and assuming the responsibilities and duties of a supervising Airmen. This PME program is consistent Air Force wide with policies and procedures mandated from Air University, which falls under the direction of the Air, Education and Training Command. This supervisory prerequisite course is ALS, and its mission is to, “Prepare senior airman to be professional, warfighting Airmen who can supervise and lead Air Force work teams to support the employment of air and space power”³. A review of the ALS curriculum identifies the areas of study the Air Force leadership has selected for training and educating future supervisors (see table 1). The lessons are divided into four categories; Profession of Arms, Leadership and Management, Leadership in Human Resources, and Communication Skills as shown in table 1.⁴ The subsequent hours of instruction designated for each of the lessons provides insight to the level of importance to the development effective junior NCO supervisors. Building a supervisory tool that shows supervisors how to accomplish their RRTs needs to take into consideration this educational process. Analyzing the curriculum provides insight into what areas a tool should develop how-to guidance on accomplishing RRTs.

Table 1. Airman Leadership School Curriculum Lessons

Lessons	Hrs	Lessons	Hrs
PROFESSION OF ARMS	44	LEADERSHIP - MANAGEMENT	45
1-01 Today's Combat Leader-Fit-to-Fight	2	2L01 The Enlisted Force Structure	3
1-02 Air Force Culture	14	2L02 Time Management	2
1-03 National Security Strategy	2	2L03 Group Dynamics	4
1-04 Military Planning Process	1	2L04 Conflict Resolution	2
1-05 Terrorism	3	2L05 Team Development	5
1-06 Joint Planning and Execution Community	1	2L06 Problem Solving	3
1-07 Joint Force Components	2	2L07 Maintaining Standards through Discipline	4
1-08 Projection of Airpower	4	2L08 Evaluation Concepts	2
1-09 Projection of Airpower Exercise	4	2L09 Enlisted Evaluation System	10
1-10 Expeditionary Airman	3	2L10 L & M Case Study	2
1-11 Standards of Conduct	4	Formative Exercise	4
1-12 Transformation – Air Force 2012	2	Summative Evaluation	4
Formative Exercise	1		
Summative Evaluation	1		
Lessons	Hrs	Lessons	Hrs
COMMUNICATION SKILLS	41	LEADERSHIP - HUMAN RESOURCES	39
3A-Assessing Skills	21	2H01 Stress Management	2
3A01 Communication Skills Assignments	2	2H02 Leadership/Followership	3
3A03 Formative Exercises	10	2H03 Contemporary Military Leadership	6
3A04 Summative Evaluations	9	2H04 Democratic Process	2
3F-Foundational Skills	4	2H05 MEO Issues	2
3F01 Introduction to Air Force Comm	3	2H06 Diversity	2
3F02 Applying Communication Skills to the Workplace	1	2H07 Professional & Unprofessional Relationships	2
3I-Interpersonal Skills	3	2H08 Substance Abuse	3
3I01 Interpersonal Communication	3	2H09 Counseling	6
3S-Speaking Skills	4	2H10 Mentoring	1
3S01 Public Speaking	1	2H11 HR Case Study	2
3S02 Air Force Speaking Applications	3	Formative Exercise	4
3W-Writing Skills	10	Summative Evaluation	4
3W01 Grammar	1		
3W02 Narrative Writing	3		
3W03 Bullet Statements	3		
3W04 Editing Air Force Correspondence	3		

Source: U.S. Department of the Air Force, *Airman Leadership School (ALS) Curriculum Synopsis* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1 April 2005), 4-5.

Informational

In the Informational literature analysis a review of articles and other research projects was conducted to form a basis of previous works on the subject and relevant

leadership experience with supervisory development. Former Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force Gerald R. Murray authored an article “Building a World-Class Noncommissioned Officer Corps.” His article stresses the importance of developing the NCO corps throughout their entire career. Chief Murray notes, “Because Airmen play a vital role in the overall success of our force, we must assure that they have the means and support to develop their full potential in accordance with our Developing Airmen core competency.”⁵ He also stresses the importance of outlining and developing an individual career plan for every Airman. The front-line supervisors, the SSgts, play the most crucial role in developing this career plan. Other senior Air Force leaders agree that SSgts have the most direct influence on the development of Airmen they supervise; it is essential the Air Force provides them the right training, experiences, and education.⁶ The influence a supervisor has on an Airman has a rippling effect both up and down the chain of command. This provides further justification for doing everything possible to help supervisors carry out their responsibilities. A how-to tool would do exactly that.

Summary

Air Force policy directives, educational resources, and informational pieces of work provide the necessary documentation for developing a supervisory how-to tool. Policy Directives have provided the necessary strategic and doctrinal basis for determining the necessity and contents of a supervisory tool. Educational resources such as the ALS curriculum have provided insight to the skills the Air Force demands its supervisors possess. Finally, the informational pieces reviewed have shown the experience and opinions of others who have experienced similar leadership challenges.

¹U.S. Department of the Air Force, Air Force Doctrine Document 1-1, *Leadership and Force Development* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2006), 13.

²U.S. Department of the Air Force, Air Force Pamphlet 36-2241, 1.

³U.S. Department of the Air Force, *Airman Leadership School (ALS) Curriculum Synopsis* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2005), 3.

⁴*Ibid.*, 4.

⁵Chief Master Sergeant Gerald R. Murray, USAF, “Building a World-Class Noncommissioned Officer Corps,” *Air and Space Power Journal* 19, no. 4 (Winter 2005); and Chief Master Sergeant Gerald R. Murray, *Senior Leader Perspective, Building a World-Class Noncommissioned Officer Corps*, <http://www.airpower.maxwell.af.mil/airchronicles/apj/apj05/win05/murray.html> (accessed 21 August 2007).

⁶Chief Master Sergeant Rodney J. McKinley, USAF, “The Enlisted Perspective,” (September 2007), <http://www.af.mil/library/viewpoints/cmsaf.asp?id=342> (accessed 20 September 2007).

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

We must ensure that all who ascend our ranks have access to every tool and opportunity to become strong, effect leaders. This vital task of cultivating tomorrow's leaders remains a top priority.

——— Gerald R. Murray, *Air and Space Power Journal*

This thesis seeks to identify a leadership tool the Air Force could utilize to develop junior NCOs into more effective supervisors. The final product of this analysis is a supervisory tool that facilitates the accomplishment of the roles, responsibilities, and tasks of a supervisor. This chapter first examines the methods used for determining the potential need for a supervisory development tool. The chapter will conclude by describing the analysis performed for answering the question of what this tool should look like.

The Need for a Supervisory Tool

Before the development of a supervisor tool is accomplished, it is first relevant to establish there is a need for such a product. In order to assess the requirement, the researcher sought to analyze the current challenges facing junior NCOs in today's 21st Century Air Force. Categorizing these challenges into two main areas assisted in the study and examination of each. These two areas are; "The Air Force Culture," and "Air Expeditionary Force Spectrum of Operations." The analysis conducted primarily from a doctrinal literature review and the identification of the supervisory challenges faced by junior NCOs within each area. The subsequent list of challenges derived from each of the areas answers the primary research question by justifying the need for a supervisory tool.

The Air Force culture research sought to identify challenges faced by supervisors that were created by the individually (versus a team or group) focused culture of the Air Force, and the subsequent impacts to fulfilling supervisory responsibilities. The researcher identified examples of Air Force processes that promote individual and self motivating attitudes. This individual centric environment is relevant to justify the need for a supervisory tool because it establishes a predominate culture that is without guidance on how supervisors and those being supervised should interact. This lack of interaction guidance impacts the effective development of Airmen. The research did not seek to dispute the guidance on what a supervisor's roles and responsibilities are, just that an individualistic culture contributes to a lack of guidance on how to accomplish those responsibilities.

The global environment and the Air Force's force structure create the necessity for Airmen to be expeditionary in order to meet the worldwide demands of the Air Force. This "Air Expeditionary Force" (AEF) force structure creates unique challenges for supervisors, especially junior NCOs. Research sought to review how this AEF spectrum of operations effects how supervisors accomplish their responsibilities. This review involved the examination of doctrine involving the AEF processes and analyzing its impacts on supervisory responsibilities. Any responsibility that would benefit from guidance on how to accomplish it within the challenges of the AEF spectrum of operations justifies the need for a supervisory tool.

The Global War on Terrorism has created an environment in which the Air Force is contributing personnel and resources to combatant commanders in unique ways. One of the ways the Air Force is contributing to the joint fight is through "In-Lieu-Of" (ILO)

taskings. These taskings are positions located in Iraq and Afghanistan normally filled by U.S. Army Soldiers. Through the ILO program, Air Force personnel assist the Army by relieving them of some of the personnel demands by filling these positions with Airmen. Research analyzed the potential supervisory challenges this ILO concept creates, especially for junior NCOs. Creating these challenges are scenarios where Airman work for Army supervisors, and Airmen performing duties outside of their normal job specialty. Also creating challenges for junior supervisors is the emphasis by the Air Force and Department of Defense to working with other services of the armed services. Research sought to identify any supervisory task affected by the ILO concept and operating in a joint environment. Any task more effectively accomplished through how-to guidance would justify the need and relevance of a supervisory planner tool.

Developing a Supervisory Tool

Analysis of the primary research question sought to determine if a gap exists in what the Air Force expects of its supervisors and a lack of existing guidance on how supervisors fulfill those responsibilities in today's 21st Century Air Force. The secondary question of this study is; what a supervisory tool would look like? The goal was to produce a tool that shows supervisors how to practically apply the supervisory training they have received along with guidance and practical methods for assisting in accomplishing all of their responsibilities. To answer the secondary question, this research sought to analyze the gap that exists between the training junior NCOs receive on their responsibilities and the existing guidance of how to accomplish those responsibilities.

Analyzing the gap between training and practical application began by developing a comprehensive list of supervisory RRTs and comparing those against how supervisors currently fulfill those RRTs. This comparison took into consideration the context of the challenges faced by Airman in the two categories of The Air Force culture and Air Expeditionary Force Spectrum of Operations, identified in the primary research question. Dividing the list into the three areas (RRTs) organizes the vast array of duties of a supervisor. The researcher used this RRT method throughout this entire research product. Two primary techniques enabled the development of the list of RRTs. The first step was a comprehensive review of the three literature categories (directives, educational, and informational) described in chapter 2. This provided the foundational list of RRTs including those; mandated by the Air Force (directives), formally taught and trained by the Air Force (educational), and those informally developed through professional literature (informational). Additionally, the Air Force determines RRTs through informal processes such as mentorship and personal experience. From the experience of the author as a junior NCO, a supervisor, and now an officer that leads NCOs, the list of RRTs was further developed.

Once the list of RRTs were developed and finalized, each RRT was analyzed for how supervisors currently fulfill those responsibilities. Any RRT that does not have a corresponding method or existing guidance for practically accomplishing them identifies a gap in responsibilities versus application. An analysis of the RRTs that created the gap would establish the framework for what a supervisory planner would look like and more importantly eliminate the gap. The analysis of RRTs was a three step process. The first step was to review the RRTs that already had existing guidance on how to implement and

see if it was possible to improve upon that guidance. Secondly, the researcher developed practical application guidance for all RRTs that did not already have pre-existing guidance. The third step was to organize all of the guidance into a useable format. For simplicity and ease of use, the RRTs organized into one of three categories; “Advancement and Career Development,” “Professional Proficiency and Standards,” and “Expeditionary Vigilance.” Within each of these categories, the analysis placed the RRTs into the appropriate categories and determined characteristics such as a sequence, timelines, and others.

Through the three step process of developing guidance or improving upon existing guidance, along with the organization of RRTs into a useable format, the secondary question of what it would look like was answered. More importantly, a supervisory planner was created that would eliminate the gap between supervisory training and the practical application and completion of supervisory RRTs.

This chapter has summarized the methods used in answering the questions of establishing a requirement for a supervisory development tool, and what this tool would look like. Through analysis of challenges facing supervisors in today’s 21st Century Air Force, the research was able to identify the need and context for such a tool. The following chapter provides the analysis for this conclusion.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS

Our Airmen are incredible, and they need and deserve solid leadership from day one. Develop and care for your Airmen, we need them to succeed.

CMSAF Rodney J. McKinley, “The Enlisted Perspective”

This chapter reviews the challenges faced by junior NCOs serving as supervisors in today’s Air Force culture, and their role in the air and space expeditionary force concept. The analysis results determined the necessity for a supervisory tool to help overcome these challenges. This research further identified what components would comprise the supervisory tool and guidance on how to effectively accomplish them. The chapter then identifies the RRTs that a supervisor must accomplish and the subsequent existing guidance for how to accomplish those tasks. To start then, is there a demand for a supervisory tool that will assist junior NCOs in the Air Force in fulfilling their supervisory responsibilities?

The researcher’s experience suggests some Air Force leaders at the operational and tactical levels may say there currently exists a profound amount of documentation in addition to mentorship programs that already assist junior NCOs accomplishing their supervisory RRTs. The results of this research project suggest there is still more to achieve in assisting them in these undertakings. It is important to reiterate that this thesis does not seek to dispute any of the existing guidance, training, or directives on supervisory responsibilities. The intent is to compliment these areas with a tool that consolidates them into a comprehensive “how-to effectively supervisor tool.” This tool

will give supervisors direction on how to accomplish their duties outlined in existing guidance, training, and directives. Before the development of a how-tool is accomplished, first the researcher sought to establish there is a need for such a tool. The first area contributing to this need is the Air Force culture.

Air Force Culture

Air Force Culture comprises many factors that contribute to the need for a supervisory development tool for junior NCOs. The analyzing of this culture is from three perspectives. These are; the weapon systems centric culture of the Air Force, the dynamics of peer to supervisor transformation, and lastly examination of the critical role that junior NCOs play as supervisors of junior Airmen.

The unique technological capabilities of weapon systems provide the Air Force a distinct advantage over adversaries in accomplishing its mission, but also create leadership challenges for junior NCOs that supervise Airmen. To fulfill its mission, the Air Force organizes, trains, and equips around weapon systems. This weapon systems centric culture creates and promotes an environment focused on individual effort required for mission accomplishment. This is in opposition to a team or group approach used in some of other armed services to maximize warfighting capabilities. Said another way, the individuals of the Air Force are trained, organized, and equipped to employ weapon systems, in contrast to being trained, organized, and equipped around organizations of individuals that employ weapon systems. Before analyzing the unique Air Force individualistic organizational culture, a review of what the phrase “organizational culture” means is appropriate.

James Wilson explains what organizational culture is in his book, *Bureaucracy: What Government Agencies Do and Why They Do It*:

Every organization has a culture, that is, a persistent, patterned way of thinking about the central tasks of and human relationships within an organization. Culture is to an organization what personality is to an individual. Like human culture generally, it is passed on from one generation to the next. It changes slowly if at all.¹

This “persistent and patterned way of thinking” and the subsequent link to “human relationships within an organization” show how the Air Force weapon systems centric culture creates an organizational “personality” that promotes individual versus group effort. In his explanation of culture, Wilson discusses it being “passed on from one generation to the next.” This provokes the question of where organizational culture originates. Dr. James Smith explains in his article “Service Cultures, Joint Cultures, and the U.S. Military,” that “organizational culture captures the central assumptions and beliefs of the group, often originating in the first generation of leadership and developing as the organization adapts to its core operations within its task environment over time.”² This explanation is especially relevant when looking at the Air Force’s culture focused on technology (weapon systems) and their impact on the organizational culture.

The Air Force could be said to worship at the altar of technology. The airplane was the instrument that gave birth to independent air forces; and the airplane has from its inception, been an expression of the miracles of technology.³

To this point analysis has defined organizational culture and its links to human relationships, and shown that the Air Force’s culture is based on its history of technology development--originating with the airplane. Dr. Smith goes on to explain the Air Force

technologically focused culture by explaining how it impacts the environment for Air Force leaders.

The Air Force Lieutenant is characterized as being the most future-oriented and most attached to technology of the service representatives. The Air Forces revolves around technology, and for junior officers it is the focus of their days.⁴

This subsequent focus of organizational leadership on technology highlights the Air Force's individualistic nature. It is an individual that pilots an airplane or launches an intercontinental ballistic missile. This is not to say it is a sole individual that employs technology to create capabilities for the warfighter. In the Air Force, it is a combination of individual efforts each performing a unique task to enable this technology. It is through these individual efforts the Air Force was since World War II and remains the world's most prominent air force. This relationship of individual effort and technology created a trained, organized, and equipped individualistic culture. Policies work well for exploiting the Air Force's technological capabilities, but they subsequently have an impact on junior NCOs as they fulfill their supervisory responsibilities by leading a team or group of Airmen. Contrasting the Air Force culture with another armed service that possesses an organizational culture centered on individuals, rather than technology, will highlight this cultural uniqueness of the Air Force.

The U.S. Army provides an opportunity to highlight this distinction in the weapon systems versus individual focused cultures. Comparing how the Army trains, organizes, and equips its force to deliver capabilities highlights this difference. Previously, Dr. Smith used a Lieutenant as an example for showing the technological centric culture of the Air Force, and contrasted this with an Army leader who centered on individuals as part of a team organizational culture.

The Army lieutenant can be seen as working as a subordinate member of a larger team--commanding a platoon and making key decisions on its operations, but always within the larger context and within the direction of the company, battalion, etc.⁵

A review of the Army's doctrine and strategic guidance provides further examples of the difference in the Air Force's focus on individuals supporting weapon systems culture, and the Army's culture of weapon systems supporting the individual soldier and team.

The Army Plan is a capstone document approved by the Army's senior leadership including the Secretary, Chief of Staff, and Sergeant Major of the Army. The plan's purpose is to "guide our work to transform, to support the combatant commanders, and to sustain our volunteer Soldiers and their families in this time of war."⁶ In order to accomplish this transformation, the Army developed two subsidiary plans, the *Army Campaign Plan* and *The Army Game Plan*. Both of these documents highlight the individual Soldier as the key component to which the Army will transform to the challenges and threats facing the nation. The Army vision is "to remain the preeminent land-power on Earth."⁷ *The Game Plan* highlights four areas that will accomplish that vision; leaders, modular forces, the institution, and the centerpiece of the plan, Soldiers (see figure 2).⁸

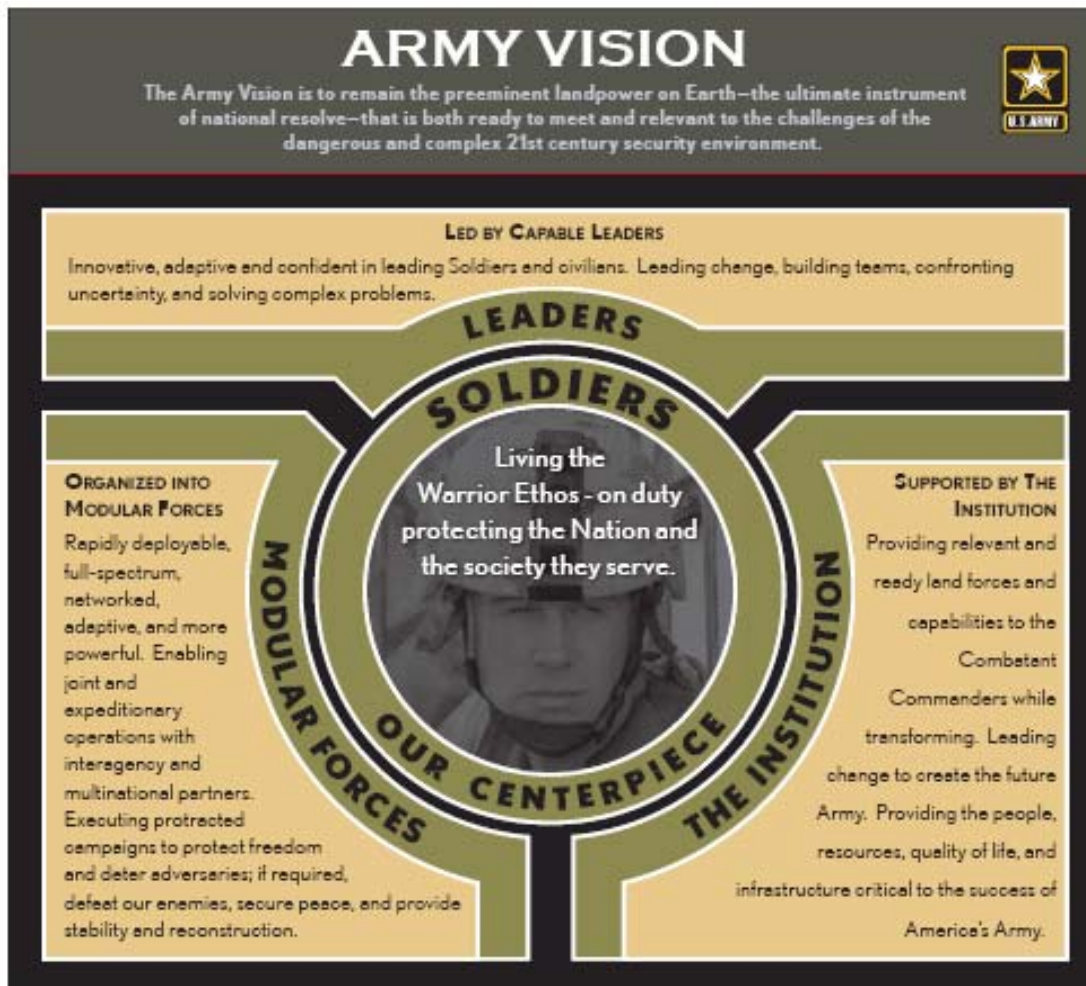


Figure 2. The Army Vision

Source: US Department of the Army, *The Army Game Plan* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2006), 7.

Further, *The Army Campaign Plan* states “the Soldier is the centerpiece of all our units,” and explains that “everything we do is designed to support them.”⁹ The Army does not just develop Soldiers; it develops organizations of Soldiers capable of delivering warfighting capabilities. *The Army Game Plan* outlines the strategic direction of the Army including the objective of; “Increase both capability and capacity by creating modular, multipurpose, brigade-based combat and support forces better able to operate as

elements of joint, expeditionary force packages.”¹⁰ These force packages are the teams made up of the Army’s organizational centerpiece, its soldiers, not its weapons systems.

These examples suggest that the Army’s focus is on soldiers and organizing, training, equipping them into teams or groups. The focus is on the soldier, not the weapon systems used by the Soldier. Dr. Smith agrees noting that, “The Army has traditionally placed much more emphasis on its individual soldier and his combat skills than on the equipment he uses to actually engage the enemy.”¹¹ These teams and groups of soldiers accomplish Army missions and bring combat capabilities to the warfighter. The result of this focus on the soldier is an organizational culture trained, organized, and equipped around these teams. This Soldier and team focused organizational culture demands a great deal of emphasis on supervisory development within this culture, not the individual, in contrast to the self-motivating organizational culture of the Air Force.

Through an analysis of organizational culture and a comparison of the technologically (weapon systems) centric Air Force to the Soldier focused Army one begins to see the impact on junior NCOs charged with leading and supervising Airmen. The Air Force’s culture creates and promotes an environment focused on individual effort. The development of Airmen in this culture is based on their own self development as the primary means of professional growth, with the supervisory playing a secondary role. One specific example is in regards to how the Air Force has developed procedures for Airmen to plan their own professional career plans and goals.

While leadership development directives and doctrine in the Army focus on Soldier’s development with supervisors playing an integral part, the Air Force looks to the individual to initiate their own efforts. The supervisor plays a secondary role only

providing support to the self-initiated efforts of the Airman. The Air Force's Enlisted Development Plan (EDP) provides an example of this self-initiating focused organizational culture. The EDP is a web-based career planning guide available to all enlisted members within all Air Force components: Active Duty, Reserve, and Guard. EDP's purpose is to provide a professional development guide. The Airman self-initiates this process by setting their personal and professional goals. The EDP is organized into three modules: Education and Training, Job Experience, and Leadership. Within these modules are different types of strategies or ideas to reach their goals. The entire EDP process relies on the individually centric organizational culture. Only if the Airman is aware of the web-based program can he or she take advantage of it. A supervisor becomes involved in this process of establishing personal and professional goals only if they receive permission from the Airman developing the plan. A supervisor of an Airman cannot access or view their Airman's EDP unless the Airman gives them permission to do so through the web-based program.

This one example of the EDP and the reliance on the individual effort on the part of the Airman, not the supervisor, provides an example of the challenges faced by Air Force junior NCO supervisors. This is not to say an individual effort based organizational culture is the incorrect approach for the Air Force, although for junior NCO supervisors, this culture does create additional challenges. A supervisory tool that assists junior NCO overcome this challenge would help them fulfill their duties. Another example of a challenge faced by junior NCOs as a result of Air Force culture is the transition from being a peer, to a supervisor of their previous peers.

Junior NCO supervisors might find themselves in a position where they are one day a member of a group peers, and the following day a supervisor of the Airmen from the same group of peers. This dynamic transformation of responsibilities creates obvious challenges for the new supervisor. A supervisory tool that helped overcome these challenges would assist a junior NCO supervisor in accomplishing their RRTs, and establishing themselves as a leader of previous peers. To explain these challenges and the context within the Air Force's organizational culture, a review of the Air Force's Enlisted Force Structure is relevant.

Air Force Instruction 36-2618, *The Enlisted Force Structure* states, "The enlisted force is comprised of three distinct and separate tiers, each correlating to increased levels of training, education, technical competence, experience, leadership, and managerial responsibilities."¹² These three tiers are broken down into the categories of Airman, NCO, and Senior NCO. Advancing from one tier to the next, in this case Airman to NCO, requires "distinct" levels of transformation of responsibilities. A supervisor that must accomplish this new distinct level of responsibility to Airmen who were peers would gain from a tool that assisted in showing them how-to fulfill those responsibilities. The distinct differences between the two tiers will point out the challenges faced by a supervisor.

The Airman Tier: This tier consists of Airman Basic, Airman, Airman First Class, and Senior Airman. Airmen are initially focused on adapting to the requirements of the military profession, achieving technical proficiency, and learning how to be highly productive members of the Air Force. Once they are promoted to Senior Airman, they begin to exercise limited supervision and leadership as they prepare for increased responsibilities, while continuing to broaden their technical skills.¹³

The NCO Tier: This tier consists of Staff Sergeants and Technical Sergeants who, in addition to continuing their technical growth and becoming expert hands-on technicians, also serve as first line supervisors. NCOs ensure their team members work together to accomplish the mission. NCOs are responsible for training and developing the Airmen they supervise into the NCOs of the future. They also

continue to develop their own leadership skills in preparation for increased responsibilities.¹⁴

Within this Air Force doctrinal description of the difference between these two tiers one sees the challenges of the NCO tier as they become leaders of teams, and the responsibilities of training and developing its members. Transforming from the Airman tier to the NCO tier requires the NCO to lead teams comprised of members that were once their peers. The Airman tier description states that Senior Airman begin to exercise limited supervisor responsibilities, but this transformation from peer to a supervisor is more profound and distinct. The profound distinction helps the supervisor establish himself/herself as a leader of peers through title and rank, but also creates challenges. Creating these challenges is the organizational culture that establishes requirements that has a supervisor fulfilling responsibilities in the Airman tier one day and the next day within the NCO tier. This distinct transformation from peer to supervisor occurs only after satisfying the requirement of completing the Air Force's professional military education course, ALS.

The mission of ALS is to "Prepare senior airman to be professional warfighting Airmen who can supervise and lead Air Force work teams to support the employment of air and space power."¹⁵ Airmen holding the rank of Senior Airman attend ALS to meet the prerequisites for promotion to the next rank, SSgt, and to becoming a supervisor of Airmen. Air Force Pamphlet 36-2241, *Professional Development Guide*, outlines the requirement stating, "SrA can be utilized in supervisory positions upon completion of Airman Leadership School."¹⁶ The ALS graduation day for many Airmen becomes the point in time where they make the distinct transformation. A supervisory how-to tool would help them by clearly identifying their RRTs, and giving them confidence in

establishing themselves in their new position, a leader of a team and supervisor of Airmen. This new title of leader of individuals within the Airman tier also puts the junior NCO supervisor into the greatest position for impacting the lives and careers of Airman.

The final aspect within the category of Air Force culture this study will analyze is that Air Force leadership has noted the importance of junior NCO supervisor's impact on those within the Airman Tier, those under their supervision. Former Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force (CMSAF) Gerald R. Murray highlights this point in a Senior Leader Perspective article titled, "Developing Airman."

We often hear that NCOs are the backbone of our service. Because they serve as front-line supervisors, have extensive knowledge of Air Force people and their mission, and exert much influence on their teams, exposing them to the right training, education, and experience is crucial.¹⁷

Given this recognized need, and in view of Air Force culture and mission, a comprehensive how-to tool regarding the development of supervisory skills within the junior NCO force would benefit the "backbone" of the Air Force. A simple review of the enlisted force numbers, those that have the most to gain from a supervisory development tool, underscores this claim.

The number of personnel alone show the significance of a tool developed for the Airman and NCO Tiers. The Air Force Personnel Center reported in fiscal year 2006 that the enlisted force is comprised of 273,990 individuals.¹⁸ The Airman Tier has 121,135 or 44 percent of the entire enlisted force, while the NCO Tier has 116,173 or 42 percent of the entire enlisted force.¹⁹ Combined, the Airmen and NCO Tiers total 86 percent of the enlisted force of the Air Force. Therefore, 86 percent of the enlisted force would benefit directly from a supervisory how-tool. The remaining 14 percent of the enlisted force is the Senior NCO Tier. Senior NCOs will also gain from a supervisory tool developed for

the NCO Tier. A tool that is a comprehensive guide of all the supervisor's RRTs is a good mechanism for Senior NCOs to confirm that junior NCO supervisors are accomplishing their duties effectively. This research of Air Force doctrine has not found an all inclusive checklist, guide, planner, or instruction that outlines the RRTs of a supervisor, one that a Senior NCO could use as a tool for teaching supervisors how to be supervisors. However, developing this how-to planner would eliminate this gap and provide a resource for Senior NCOs to mentor NCOs on how to be an effective supervisor.

The development of a tool would also have a cascading effect on the enlisted force and Air Force as a whole. Eventually the members that fill the 44 percent (Airmen) of enlisted force become the 42 percent (NCOs) of the force after education, training, and advancement. CMSgt Murray explained how developing better Airmen today will produce a better NCO corps in the future;

We firmly believe that having the right leaders in the right place at the right time, combined with giving them proper education and training, produces a great force multiplier. These concentrated intangibles start a ripple effect throughout our organizations that is invaluable.²⁰

Providing the NCO tier a supervisory tool that helps them fill the gap between the training and education on the RRTs of a supervisor and the practical application and completion of those RRTs is not the only benefit. The enlisted force numbers and CMSgt Murray's view draw attention to the importance of developing the supervisors of tomorrow. By the NCO tier of today better fulfilling their supervisory RRTs, the Airmen tier will receive the indirect benefit of witnessing effective supervisory behavior, a behavior they can emulate upon reaching the NCO tier and becoming a supervisor.

These numbers bring to light the large portion of enlisted force comprising the Airman tier. This tier includes those Airmen that are the most recent members to join the Air Force, fresh from Basic Military Training (BMT) and their technical skill training. Previously shown in the explanation of publications is that the Airman tier is: “focused on adapting to the requirements of the military professions” and at the beginning stages of “learning how to be highly productive members of the Air Force.”²¹ This implies that 44 percent of the enlisted force is in an impressionable state; one that this researcher contends is eager for and demands effective supervision. The current CMSAF Rodney J. McKinley agrees with this issue:

During basic military raining, military training instructors do an outstanding job instilling Warrior Ethos, Air Force Core Values, standards and discipline into new recruits. Airmen leave BMT with a fire in their bellies and are motivated, physically fit and recite the Airman’s Creed with ease.²²

Not only does CMSAF McKinley highlight the Airman tier emerging from BMT as motivated and impressionable state, he also highlights current problems and the importance of supervisors fulfilling their responsibilities during this time-frame.

Unfortunately, there are some Airmen who arrive at their first duty station who have little or no contact with their supervisor for weeks. I have seen some Airmen discharged because of disciplinary problems that occur not long after signing into their first base. An enormous amount of time, money and training goes into our Airmen, so we certainly don’t want these Airmen to fail. Developing Airmen isn’t a catch phrase and it’s not something that stops with BMT or technical training - it’s a continual process throughout an Airman’s career.²³

A tool that assists supervisors in accumulating new Airman to the organization and getting them of on the right foot would solve this issue that this research and CMSAF McKinley discuss. The researcher believes that it will, and believes CMSAF McKinley will agree. From the same article, “The Enlisted Perspective,” he goes on to say:

For Airmen to be successful, supervisors must be involved from the start. I strongly believe supervisors should be the sponsors for our Airmen. During their initial contacts, supervisors must emphasize the Air Force Core Values, standards, and deliver key guidance to put Airman on the path to a rewarding and productive career. No one should be more concerned with Airman's success than the supervisor. If supervisors are more engaged from the beginning, Airmen will have greater prospects for success.²⁴

A supervisory tool that shows supervisors how to effectively “emphasize the Air Force Core Values, standards, and deliver key guidance” would “put Airman on the path to a rewarding and productive career.” The most important time for the tool's implementation is during the impressionable state when they are eager for and the mission of the Air Force demands proactive and effective supervision.

To summarize, the research has justified the need for a supervisory development tool by looking at the unique characteristics of the Air Force culture. One characteristic is the weapon systems centric focus that promotes self-motivating attitudes. Another is the dynamics of the culture designed around a tiered structure that allows a transformation from being a member of a group of peers one day and the following day being a leader and supervisor of the group of former peers the next. Finally, this analysis looked at the supervisor at the NCO tier level (the supervisor) being in the greatest position for impacting those they supervise.

To continue analyzing the primary research question of determining if the Air Force needs a supervisory tool that helps accomplish their RRTs, this thesis will examine the impacts of the Air and Space Expeditionary Force (AEF) concept on supervisors and those they supervise.

Air and Space Expeditionary Force Concept

The Air Force trains, organizes, and equips its forces in a construct called the Air and Space Expeditionary Force (AEF). Through this method of organizing the force, the Air Force is able to provide tailored forces (equipment and personnel) to the warfighter in systematic, predictable, and efficient manner. This AEF construct creates unique challenges for a junior NCO supervisor. These challenges generate because of the many scenarios within the AEF process that cause a geographical separation between supervisors and those they supervise. This research will review these geographical separation scenarios and their impacts. A supervisory tool would help mitigate the impacts of these geographical gaps caused by the AEF.

To understand how the AEF impacts supervisors, one must first understand the AEF construct itself. Air Force doctrine explains its significance, “The AEF is the Air Force’s methodology for organizing, training, equipping, and sustaining rapidly responsive air and space forces to meet defense strategy requirements.”²⁵ To do this the Air Force organizes into ten separate AEFs which are similar to the Navy presentation of capabilities in Carrier Strike Groups or the Marine Corps’ expeditionary units. “These ten AEFs are grouped into five pairs that each contains a relatively equivalent capability from which the USAF can provide forces.”²⁶ Everyone in the Total Integrated Force (active duty, guard, and reserve forces) is aligned to one of these ten AEFs. Figure 3 shows how these AEF pairs (AEF 1 & 2 is one pair) fall into the twenty month AEF cycle. More specifically, the Air Force assigns Airmen to a team comprised of specific capabilities called a Unit Type Code (UTC.) This assignment to a specific UTC considers

the Airman's rank, technical skills, and other capabilities and qualifications. Through the assignment of UTCs to one of the ten AEFs, every Airman aligns to an AEF.

In addition to the AEF process providing the right mix of capabilities to the warfighter to support contingencies and operation plans (OPLANs), it also creates a battle-rhythm for Airmen to plan their personal and professional lives. "The AEF's primary purpose is warfighter support; its secondary purpose is to provide predictability and stability to Airmen."²⁷ Key to this predictability is a twenty month rotational schedule for the ten AEFs. "The twenty month AEF life cycle includes periods of normal training, preparation and on-call or deployment eligibility."²⁸ The "Normal Training and Exercise" period occurs when Airmen perform their home-station mission, technical proficiency training, and may include "Joint, Air Force, or MAJCOM exercise participation (of less than thirty days.) The two month "Preparation Period" is when Airmen conduct the necessary pre-deployment training. The final four month section is the "Deployment/On-Call Period" when forces actually deploy or are on an on-call basis ready and vulnerable for deployment taskings. Figure 3 shows this twenty month battle rhythm for a normal four month deployment rotation schedule. An analysis of the different scenarios during this twenty month cycle that cause separation of supervisors and those they supervise will reveal challenges faced by junior NCO supervisors as a result of the AEF concept.

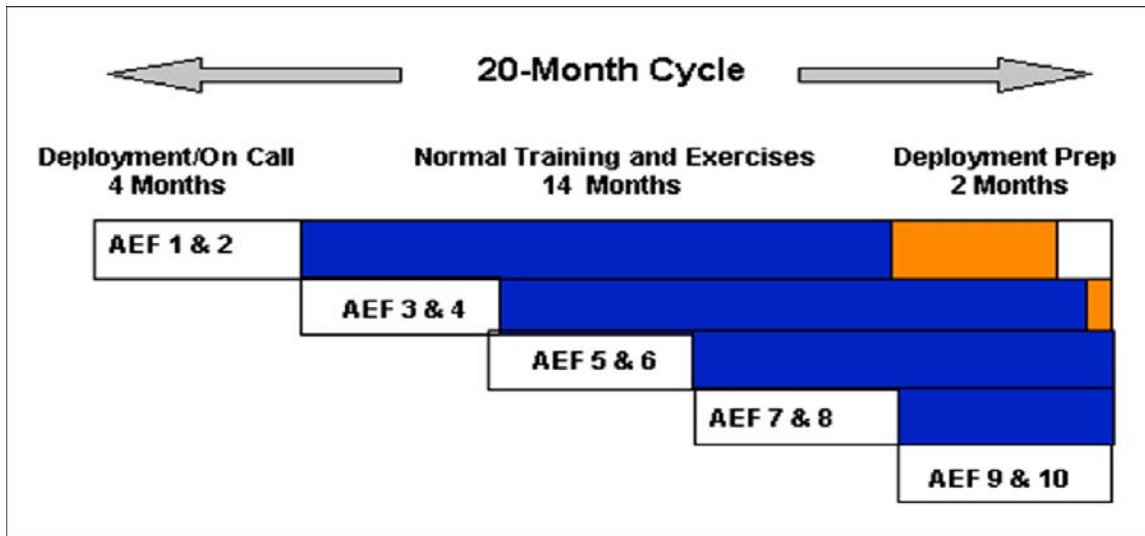


Figure 3. 20-Month Air and Space Expeditionary Force Cycle/Battle Rhythm.
Source: U.S. Department of the Air Force, Office of the Secretary of the Air Force, Air Force Instruction (AFI) 10-401, *The Air Force Operations Planning and Execution* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2006), 23.

One scenario resulting from this AEF construct is a junior NCO supervisor who is not assigned to the same AEF rotation as those they supervise. Home-station mission requirements demand that everyone within an organization not deploy at the same time. To prevent this, leadership assigns personnel within the same organization to different AEFs. An example is assigning one-half of the organization to AEF 1, while assigning the other half to AEF 8. This allows for an overlap of capabilities and the accomplishment of the home-station and deployment missions. This battle-rhythm presents the supervisor with a scenario where they are in a different AEF than those they supervise, and thus incur a separation of up to four months. Four months separation is the best case situation. Other separation could result during any pre-deployment training away from home-station in the two month preparation period. “Often training TDY [Temporary Duty] days will precede the AEF deployment, thus lengthening the overall

time away from home station.”²⁹ Many scenarios could also occur during the overlap period of when both the supervisor and supervisee are co-located while not deployed. Some of these include leave time, formal schools required for upgrade skill level training, and professional military education. In this common scenario of misalignment, supervisors would greatly benefit from a supervisory tool. This tool would help prepare a supervisor for this separation by highlighting all of the RRTs affected by this separation. This would also provide a tool for the individual acting as the temporary supervisor (NCO accomplishing supervisory duties just during the deployment period). Alignment in different AEFs is not the only battle-rhythm challenge facing a supervisor.

Supervisors not assigned to the same UTC as those they supervise is another common scenario within the AEF construct. In this situation a supervisor co-located to the same AEF (on the same twenty month cycle) is not on the same UTC (team of personnel and equipment). This creates circumstances where the supervisor deploys during the same AEF rotation to one geographical location, while the Airmen they supervise are at another. Although Air Force leadership attempts to avoid this, it is still a condition that occurs. The individualistic versus team culture discussed earlier contributes to this scenario. A UTC might be a one person team (Military Working Dog and Handler), a four person Fire Team, or a large forty-four person team, there are many possible configurations. Each UTC is comprised of individual proficiencies and skills formed to create capabilities for the warfighter. These UTCs are interchangeable and allow for geographical separation dependent upon the warfighter’s needs. Much like the benefits gained by a supervisory tool used during the separation caused by not being aligned in the same AEF, so too can the tool assist with the assignment to different UTCs.

Other factors that contribute to geographical separation of supervisors and those they supervise result from deviations to the standard twenty month AEF cycle. The organization within the Air Force that manages and determines policy for the AEF process is the AEF Center located at Randolph Air Force Base, Texas. One of the AEF Center's key principles is that the AEF "Provides predictability and stability to our Airmen during normal battle rhythm . . . with a planned and orderly transition to surge using an equitable, consistent and methodical approach, transparent to all commanders."³⁰ The AEF Center further acknowledges there are deviations to the twenty month cycle; "stresses in certain career fields will make their battle rhythm less predictable (i.e. extended, tour lengths, more frequent deployment rotations.)"³¹ The Security Forces career field is one example of this. Security Forces Airmen deploy for a six month period versus the normal four month. It is not just Security Forces, as of October 2006 according to the AEF Center, 37 percent of Airmen deploy on non-standard tour lengths.³² The lack of predictability in battle rhythm and the increased deployment periods will impact the supervisor's accomplishment of their RRTs, and possibly create additional and longer separation from those they supervise.

A final aspect of the geographical separation of supervisors and those they supervise is the impact of the Air Force's support to the Global War on Terrorism through ILO taskings. The ILO program began in 2004 when the Navy and Air Force looked to help the Army with providing personnel for positions normally filled by Soldiers. ILO taskings are deployments where Airmen are performing missions such as convoy operations, interrogations, and military policing in Iraq and Afghanistan traditionally performed by Soldiers. This creates a scenario where an Airman is working

outside of their core competency, their job specialty. An example of this is an Airman who is a communications specialist conducting convoy operations. In August 2007, Air Force statistics indicate that of the 25,453 Airmen currently deployed, 6,293 of them are filling ILO positions.³³ This creates additional challenges for the junior NCO supervisor to fulfill their RRTs. One of these challenges is the responsibility of developing and maintaining the skills necessary to remain proficient in the Airman's core competency. Time spent by the communications specialist conducting convoy operations is time lost for professional development and training in their core competency. In a testimony to the House Armed Service Committee Subcommittee on Readiness on 31 July 2007, then Brigadier General Marke Gibson, Director of Operations, Headquarters, United States Air Force stated:

When Airmen perform duties outside of their core competencies, it costs money to train them and impacts their primary mission and the missions of the Air Force. We're proud to be part of the joint fight, but we want to get our Airmen out of those roles and back to working within their Air Force duties.³⁴

The professional development process outlined in figure 4 does not adjust for Airmen deployed as an ILO tasking. Promotion opportunities and upgrading to the five skill level still fall within the same time-line, a time-line that now has a shortened duration of the Airman having an opportunity to conduct on-the-job training (OJT).

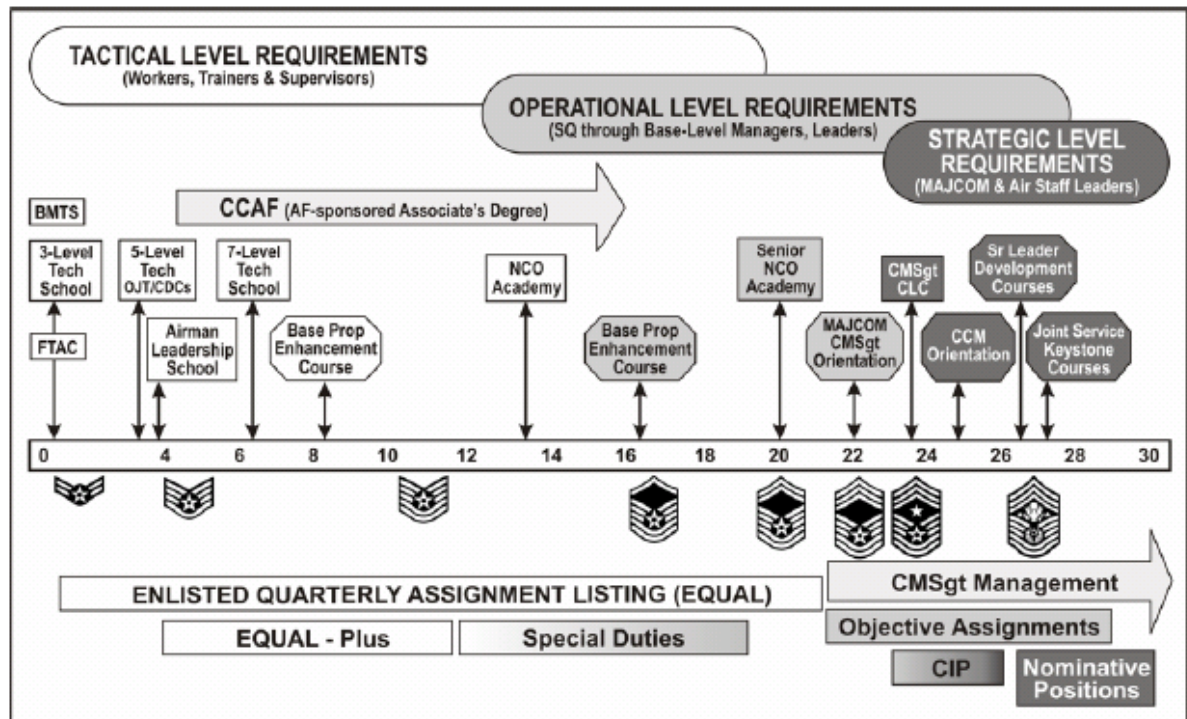


Figure 4. Leadership Development,

Source: U.S. Department of the Air Force, Office of the Secretary of the Air Force, Air Force Pamphlet 36-2241, *Professional Development Guide* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2007), 191.

Previously this research highlighted the training time required for pre-deployment training as part of the AEF twenty month battle rhythm. Airmen deploying on ILO taskings will incur additional training time prior to their deployment, creating yet another geographical separation scenario for supervisor and those they supervise. In Congressional testimony to the U.S. House of Representatives, Armed Services Committee on 24 October 2007, the Secretary, and Chief of Staff of the Air Force agreed:

To accomplish the increasing “in lieu of tasking,” many of our Airmen require a great deal of additional training. These ILO tasks add significant levels of stress on the deployed Airmen as well as the rest of our force. Because ILO-tasked units and Airmen are no longer available for core Air Force or home-station missions, and because core missions must still be accomplished, the workload shifts to other Airmen at home and abroad. But the issue goes beyond the strain on people.

Airmen's skills in their core competencies are perishable, and we must give them time and training to hone those skills.³⁵

ILO taskings create situations where supervisors and those they supervised are not co-located and create challenges for ensuring Airmen maintain and have the opportunity for acquiring and maintaining skills in their core competency. A supervisor tool that addressed these situations would help the supervisor deal with and overcome these challenges.

Through an analysis of the challenges facing junior NCOs supervisors, this research justifies the need for a tool that helps overcome these challenges. The weapon systems focused culture, and the AEF construct of the Air Force create these challenges. These include an individualistic mindset effecting supervisor's responsibilities in Airmen development, and the geographical separation of junior NCO supervisors and those they supervise.

Characteristics of a Supervisory Tool

Analysis has identified a need for a supervisory tool that assists junior NCOs overcome the challenges created by a weapon systems centric culture and the AEF construct that creates geographical separation between supervisor and those they supervise. The secondary question of this research is: What would a supervisory tool look like? Answering this question will create guidance for use in developing a product that overcomes these challenges and fills the gap between training and accomplishment of supervisory RRTs.

To determine what a supervisory tool would look like this research developed a comprehensive list of supervisory RRTs and then reviewed the guidance for how junior

NCO supervisors currently accomplish these RRTs. Air Force doctrinal review comprised the foundation of this development of the list of RRTs and their subsequent guidance for how they're accomplished. Professional experience of the researcher also supported this doctrinal use. This study defines the "role" as the position the supervisor is executing depending upon the responsibility they are fulfilling. Examples of roles of a supervisor are: counselor, mentor, enforcer of standards, coach, and motivator. All supervisors have "responsibilities" they must accomplish within their different roles. Specific "tasks" comprise a responsibility. A task is a particular undertaking a supervisor must complete in order to accomplish a responsibility and fulfill a role. The research analyzes these RRTs by giving an explanation for each, describing the current guidance for how supervisors accomplish them, and finally describing recommendations for a supervisory tool that would help overcome the challenges faced by a junior NCO supervisor. This guidance and recommendations will answer the question of what a supervisor tool would look like.

This study found that each of the RRTs fit into one of three categories; Professional Proficiency and Standards, Expeditionary Preparedness, and Advancement and Development. For ease of study and examination of the RRTs, the discussion is within these categories. Analysis looked at the RRT as a whole, but the task is really the main component of concern. Tasks show and direct junior NCO supervisors on how to fulfill their responsibilities. Current Air Force guidance and training directs supervisors on what to accomplish, but this research thesis suggests there is more the Air Force could do to show how supervisors should accomplish their RRTs.

The category of professional proficiency and standards encompasses the RRTs involving job and technical skills Airmen must maintain and develop, along with Air Force standards a supervisor must enforce. There are many RRTs junior NCO supervisors must accomplish within the professional proficiency and standards category. Analysis focused on two of these RRTs to justify the importance and creation of a supervisory tool and describe its potential characteristics.

The first supervisory RRT to review is an Airman's "skill level proficiency." Airmen maintain their job proficiency and technical expertise through a combination of OJT, formal technical training schools, and completion of a job specialty skill correspondence course. Through this program the Air Force ensures Airman maintain the minimum proficiency necessary to accomplish their specific skill. In this RRT, supervisors play the role of enforcers of standards. They enforce standards through accomplishing their responsibilities of ensuring Airmen obtain their three skill level and subsequently their five skill level as they progress in rank and experience. One way they complete this responsibility is by completing the task of administering OJT.

OJT is a hands-on training program designed around a list of essential tasks that the supervisor teaches to the Airman. Existing guidance for supervisors regarding what to accomplish for this task is in a document titled Career Field Education and Training Plan (CFETP). The CFETP articulates each of the necessary skills an Airman must become proficient in to obtain their applicable skill level. The CFETP assists in overcoming the Air Force individualistic and self-motivating culture, and aids with geographical separation caused by the AEF construct. The CFETP does this by providing one source document for supervisor and Airman to track obtaining skill level proficiency progress.

Additionally a supervisor acting on behalf of the primary supervisor if geographical separation occurs can use the CFETP. Supervisors also have the task of monitoring the progress of a job specialty skill correspondence course called the Career Development Course (CDC). A CDC is a self-study program that Airmen accomplish through individual study. Supervisors monitor progress through evaluating the results of examinations taken by the Airmen throughout the course and the final end of course test. The Air Force individualistic culture force impacts this process. Supervisors must remain proactively engaged in this self-motivating program, and develop plans for ensuring accomplishment if any geographical situation separates the supervisor and Airman. Finally, to ensure supervisors fulfill the RRT of Skill Level Proficiency, they ensure Airmen attend the necessary formal training schools required of maintaining skill level proficiency. Supervisors do this by obtaining formal school slots through the Unit Training Manager. This process must be de-conflicted with other scheduling demands of the Airman, like AEF deployments. A supervisor tool that included a requirement to obtain a school slot and addressed the challenges of doing so would help the supervisor fulfill one of their supervisory RRTs.

Physical preparedness and capability is the next RRT within the category of professional proficiency and standards examined. Supervisors must ensure Airmen meet fitness standards, participate in a fitness program, and ensure they attend the required annual medical evaluations. “Commanders and supervisors must incorporate fitness into the Air Force culture to establish an environment for members to maintain physical fitness and health to meet expeditionary mission requirements and deliver a fit and ready

force.”³⁶ The supervisor plays both the role of motivator and enforcer of standards while accomplishing these responsibilities.

The first responsibility of making certain Airmen meet fitness standards comprises two primary tasks: administering the annual fitness test and developing a plan for improving the Airman’s test score. The Air Force’s *Professional Development Guide* states, “The annual fitness assessment provides commanders with a tool to assist in the determination of overall fitness of their military personnel.”³⁷ In most cases, each organization has a unit fitness program monitor (UFPM) that schedules and administers the annual physical training (PT) test. This does not relieve the supervisor of validating those they supervise have met this annual requirement. A supervisor should proactively work with the UFPM instead of the existing mindset of waiting for the UFPM to schedule the annual test. A supervisor is in the best position to understand the challenges of an Airmen’s deployment schedule and any other scheduling or personal issues that could impact the fulfillment of this annual requirement. Proactively working with the UFPM will also help the supervisor accomplish the second task of developing a plan for improving upon the Airman’s last annual PT test scores. Air Force members should always strive to improve upon their last annual assessment scores. The supervisor acting in the role of a coach and motivator proactively shows interest in the fitness and health of those they supervise by discussing how to improve the scores on the Airman’s last fitness test. In today’s Air Force these two tasks rely upon the individual Airman’s motivation. A supervisory tool that shows supervisors how to work with the UFPM, and provokes interaction with Airmen on establishing a plan to improve scores on the next annual fitness test provides an important element of the needed tool. Developing a plan for

improving annual fitness test scores is not the only supervisory responsibility required to develop a plan within the category of physical preparedness and capability.

Supervisors also have the responsibility of ensuring Airmen participate in the Air Force fitness program. This responsibility incorporates two tasks; developing a plan for Airman to participate in a weekly fitness program, and ensuring they possess and appropriately wear the Air Force Physical Fitness uniform while participating in the program. The task of developing a plan for Airman to participate in a weekly fitness program goes beyond the goal of improving upon their last fitness test. Supervisors must ensure those they supervise have the opportunity to participate in PT up to ninety minutes of duty time three to five times a week. Based on mission requirements, duty schedules, and other factors impacting an Airman's schedule, the supervisor is in the best position to develop a plan that allows for Airmen to participate in the fitness program. Moreover, Airmen participate in the fitness program wearing the Air Force's PT Uniform. All Airmen are required to own a PT uniform. Air Force Instruction 36-2903 mandates the appropriate way to wear this uniform. Ensuring Airmen possess and know how to properly wear the PT uniform is the final task within the responsibility of participating in a fitness program. Currently the individualistic culture of the Air Force places the responsibility of the individual Airmen to comply with this task. A supervisory tool that stimulates a supervisor to enforce these standards will help fulfill these responsibilities.

Finally, within the RRT of physical preparedness and capability is the responsibility of ensuring Airmen receive and attend their annual medical screening. Two tasks comprise this responsibility: ensuring completion of both a primary health assessment physical and a dental annual examination. Many checks and balances exist

within Air Force procedures to ensure Airmen receive their annual examinations. None of these procedures focuses on assisting the supervisor with ensuring compliance with these tasks. An example is the reliance on the organization's Unit Deployment Manager (UDM) to monitor the deployable status within the AEF construct of all unit personnel. In order for personnel to deploy, they must possess the appropriate medical clearances. Successful completion of both physical and dental screening examinations allows Airmen to obtain this clearance. The Airman, not the supervisor, receives the notification (on the Airman's birthday month) to attend these medical screenings. The supervisor does not track the completion of these mandatory appointments; it is the UDM that tracks the accomplishment and reports to the organizational leadership any discrepancies. The supervisor is the one unit leadership will look to if an Airman under their supervision does not meet this requirement in a timely manner. Including these items on the supervisory tool will ensure that the supervisor follows-up on this requirement and completes this task. The AEF construct creates additional challenges to the completion of this task. Currently, geographically separated supervisors cannot confirm those Airmen they supervise have fulfilled this task. A supervisory tool that requires supervisors to interact with Airmen, hospital personnel, and the UDM will assist the supervisor with accomplishing this task prior to the supervisor's or Airman's deployment. A supervisory tool will also assist the secondary supervisor (individual fulfilling supervisory responsibilities of the Airman while primary supervisor is deployed) in monitoring the successful requirements within this RRT.

Analysis of the two supervisory RRTs skill level proficiency and physical preparedness and capability, within the context of the weapons system centric culture and

AEF construct, have identified some of the challenges facing junior NCO supervisors. Reviewing the existing guidance, or lack thereof, for accomplishing these RRTs has developed recommendations on how to overcome these challenges. This new guidance is the key source for the elements that should appear on the tool. Research of another category of RRTs will further develop the guidance of a supervisory tool.

The next category this research will review is Expeditionary Vigilance. The importance of the AEF constructs for the Air Force to accomplish its mission and subsequent impacts to junior NCO supervisors' analysis answered the primary question of is there a need for a supervisory tool. Supervisors have many RRTs within this AEF culture mindset. This section will analyze the "AEF Deployment Preparation" and "Ensuring Completion of Supervisory Duties during Deployment" to provide examples of potential characteristics of a tool.

The first RRT of a supervisor within the expeditionary vigilance category is AEF Deployment Preparation. This RRT encompasses all the responsibilities of supervisors as they prepare themselves and those they supervise for a deployment within the 20 month AEF cycle. The responsibilities analyzed for the purpose of determining what a supervisory tool would look like include; deployment specific training, equipment issuance, impacts to upgrade training, and assignment of supervisory duties while deployed.

An essential responsibility of a supervisor is ensuring the completion of necessary deployment specific training. Airmen require three types of primary training in preparation for deployment. Ensuring those they supervise accomplish this training are the three tasks within this responsibility. Weapons qualifications training is the first task

for review. Weapons qualification training is based on many factors to include the position within the UTC the deploying member is filling, and the type of arming category the Airman is categorized within are a few examples. Arming categories dictate the type and frequency of weapons training. AEF deployments often incur additional qualifications or types of weapons Airman must train on. Chemical and Biological Warfare training is also a task the supervisor needs to ensure an Airman accomplishes. This annually administered training is independent of any AEF rotational commitments. In preparation for AEF deployments supervisors should provide interim training and follow-up with any remedial training requirements that might arise. The final task within the responsibility of ensuring the completion of deployment specific training is within the area of Law of Armed Conflict (LOAC). LOAC training is another of the Air Force's mandatory annual training requirements taught to Airmen whether they are on a deployment or not. AEF specific LOAC training includes rules of engagement and cultural sensitive issues unique to the area of responsibility deploying Airmen will operate within. Supervisors must ensure Airmen attend this training and understand the material.

Supervisors have the responsibility of overseeing and ensuring completion of all three of these primary training tasks. The UDM is the primary office of responsibility for monitoring the deployable status of Airmen to include the completion of training requirements. This does not relieve the supervisor of playing the role of the enforcer of standards in ensuring the completion of deployment specific training. Much like the tasks of medical screening, the UDM monitors and schedules this training. It is the supervisor's responsibility for ensuring subject matter completion and understanding of the training.

Supervisors do this by proactively monitoring Airmen's weapons, chemical warfare, and LOAC training completion status. Supervisors currently rely on the UDM to fulfill this supervisory responsibility. A tool that provides direction to the supervisor on how to proactively work with the Airmen and UDM to ensure these tasks are accomplished will make certain those they supervise are ready for AEF deployments. Training alone is not the only preparation a supervisor must ensure Airmen successfully complete.

Supervisors have the task of ensuring Airmen they supervise have all equipment necessary required of an AEF deployment. While the UDM and the unit's supply process will issue the equipment to Airmen, supervisors have the responsibility of confirming this process happens and Airmen deploy with the equipment the mission demands. The task a supervisor should accomplish by conducting a complete hands-on inventory of the bags of equipment issued to Airman in their complement. The organization of bags depends upon the function of the equipment included within each bag, referred to as mobility bags. The most common of these bags are the A, B, and C bags. The A bag includes all general purpose equipment including sleeping bags, poncho, mess pan, first aid kit, et cetera. The B bag includes mittens, parka, and other required outer-garments issued to those deploying to cold weather climates. The C bag is issued to those deploying into nuclear, biological and chemical medium and high threat environments. Each of these mobility bags are tailored for the type and location of deployment. A supervisory tool that integrates the supervisory task of conducting this bag drag to confirm proper issuance and functionality of the equipment will ensure Airmen arrive at the deployed location with the necessary personal equipment to survive and operate.

The final responsibility for analysis within the RRT of AEF deployment preparation is ensuring the accomplishment of supervisory duties during deployment. There is justification for the need for a supervisory tool by showing how the AEF construct creates geographical separation between the supervisors and Airmen they supervise. This guidance helps overcome that challenge by specifying that supervisors accomplish the tasks of “Assigning a Deployed Supervisor” and “Provide RRTs to the Deploying Supervisor.” These tasks are dependent upon who is deploying, the supervisor or Airmen they supervise.

In the scenario of Airmen deploying, the supervisor has the task of assigning a deployed supervisor that will assist in the accomplishments of supervisor duties at the deployed location. The current process involves using the UTC team leader (senior ranking NCO of the deploying UTC) to fulfill necessary duties. The UTC leader is primarily concerned with deployment actions and responsibilities, not those demanded of the normal professional development of Airmen shown in figure 4. A supervisory tool would serve as a comprehensive guide for all those involved in assisting Airmen through the development process, whether they are deployed or at home-station. Supervisors tasked to assign and work with a deployed supervisor through the supervisory tool will ensure the Airmen development process does not stop during deployments.

The other scenario relates to the situation where the supervisor is the one that deploys, not the Airman. In this case the same task applies, finding a temporary supervisor that will oversee the development of Airman and fulfill supervisory duties while the supervisor deploys. A supervisory tool used as a common listing and reference point of tasks allows for a seamless transition between home-station supervisor and

deployed supervisor. There appears no similar comprehensive product for supervisors that would facilitate this seamless transition between primary and temporary supervisors.

Executing the role of enforcer of standards within the category of expeditionary preparedness also demands actions and responsibilities during post-deployment. Airmen that return from deployment are granted post-deployment compensation time to re-accumulate with their families and take care of personal issues. Before they begin this post-deployment period, there are certain actions they must accomplish. The supervisor's task is to confirm they have completed these requirements.

The first specific task during this redeployment time-frame is ensuring equipment the Airmen were issued is returned through appropriate supply procedures and channels. The supervisor oversees this process by inspecting equipment to ensure the serviceability and accountability. Current processes that indicate of how this is accomplished differ with each organization's standard operating procedures. In most cases the UDM facilitates the turn in of equipment, but ultimately it is the supervisor that must ensure this task is complete. Also during this time frame, the Airman has the responsibility of completing a travel voucher. This travel voucher processing is the means for reimbursement of any official expenditure incurred during the Airman's deployment. Airmen use an official government credit card for official travel expenses. The filing of the travel voucher ensures the payment of debt incurred on the credit card within the time limitations directed by local procedures. This process in most local procedures is an individual Airman responsibility. A supervisory tool that ensures the Airman does this prior to starting their post-deployment compensation time will permit the timely payment and avoid certain late payments charges.

A final task for supervisors in the responsibility of post-deployment actions is confirmation Airman they supervise comply with any medical screenings required of them. Local base procedures mandate this review based on the type (high or low threat) and the deployment location. This review is both a physiological and psychological screening. The importance of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) screening is especially relevant based on the current environments in Iraq and Afghanistan. Supervisors will help in the identification of PTSD indicators by fulfilling the task of ensuring Airmen attend medical screening immediately upon the return to their home-station and prior to any post deployment compensation time.

Analyzing the supervisory responsibilities of AEF preparation and post-deployment actions results in the identification of components of what a supervisory tool should look like. The AEF construct creates scenarios where supervisors and Airmen they supervise are not geographically located. A supervisory tool that includes the task of appointing a temporary supervisor (deployed or home-station depending on the scenario) will facilitate the duties required and ensure a seamless transition between each supervisor. The relevance of this is justified by looking at the potential impact to an Airman professional development timeline if these tasks are not included in a supervisory tool and accomplished. Factors in addition to AEF preparation comprise the professional advancement and development of Airmen. These factors comprise the final category of review in analyzing what components to include in a supervisory tool.

The category titled “Advancement and Development” includes many RRTs associated with an Airman’s professional growth. Some of these include; evaluation and performance feedback, recognition, awards and decorations, involvement in professional

associations, and the military assignment system to highlight a few. This research will analyze two responsibilities associated within this area to help identify what characteristics a supervisory tool should include. These responsibilities are; “Promotion Selection” and “Professional Military Education.”

Inherent to all supervisors is the responsibility of preparing Airmen they supervise to participate and succeed in a professional development program. A component of the professional development is the Air Forces’ enlisted promotion system. According to Air Force Pamphlet 36-2241, *Professional Development Guide*, the intent of the enlisted promotion system is:

The enlisted promotion system supports DoDD 1304.20. Enlisted Personnel Management System, by helping to provide a visible, relatively stable career progression opportunity over the long term; attracting, retaining, and motivating to career service the kinds and numbers of people the military services need; and ensuring the reasonably uniform application of the principle of equal pay for equal work among the military services.³⁸

While playing the role of mentor in the RRT of promotion selection, the supervisor is responsible for tasks that ensure the Airmen understand the process and timeline of the promotion system, and the scoring procedures as established in the Weighted Airman Promotion System (WAPS.) These are the supervisory responsibilities this research analyzed in the category of advancement and development to identify examples of what a supervisory tool would look like.

Ensuring Airmen understand their next promotion opportunity and criteria they are required to meet for being selected for promotion is the first responsibility analyzed. Current Air Force processes do not direct or encourage supervisors to determine the next promotion opportunity for those under their supervision. The individual Airman initiates this task without assistance from their supervisor. This research suggests that a supervisor

should determine the timeline for their Airmen's next promotion opportunity, any criteria or prerequisites required for advancement, and then explain them to the Airmen they supervise. This process will allow the supervisor, with the Airman, to establish a sequential plan for the Airman to follow in preparing for the next promotion.

Before supervisors establish this plan, they must first confirm the eligibility factors and prerequisites for the next promotion. Promotion to the ranks of Airman through Senior Airman (E1 through E4) is based on factors such as: time in service, time in grade, and skill level (job proficiency) obtainment. There also exists an opportunity for those Airmen holding the rank of Airman First Class (E3) to be promoted early to Senior Airman through a below-the-zone process. Supervisors should review this criteria established at local installations and incorporate this into their planning timeline for their Airmen's development plan. Promotion to the rank of SSgt also includes many factors discussed above in addition to the promotion testing through WAPS. The WAPS process is the next supervisor task this researched analyzed.

Ensuring the understanding of the WAPS process and impact to an Airman's professional development plan is the next supervisory responsibility reviewed for helping answer the question of what a supervisory tool would look like. The enlisted promotion system in the Air Force developed around the central idea of promotion preparation being an individual responsibility. This is especially prevalent in preparing for promotion testing in the WAPS where the Air Force mandates this is an individual, self-motivated program. Airmen are not allowed to conduct group study sessions, and supervisors are not allowed to quiz or help prepare Airmen for their written promotion test. This written test is a central focal point of WAPS. Even with these restrictions, there are

responsibilities the supervisor can fulfill that meets the intent of the enlisted promotion system referenced earlier and prepares members for succeeding in their individually focused efforts.

The first task for supervisors is to ensure Airmen understand the WAPS process. Supervisors do this by explaining the process is comprised of many individual responsibilities, including: knowing their promotion eligibility status, using a self-initiated program of individual study and effort, and obtaining all study materials. Essential to understanding WAPS is the cumulative point system used to give numerical value to each of the WAPS components. These six components include: job knowledge, professional military knowledge, time-in-service, time-in-grade, decorations, and enlisted performance reports. Understanding this weighted point system will ensure Airmen understand what is expected of them through the WAPS process and how they must individually achieve their goals of professional development. The Air Force individualistic culture contributes to the current lack of supervisory interaction with those they supervise in the area of promotions. Although the Air Force directs that WAPS is comprised of individual responsibilities, there are still tasks supervisors can accomplish to assist their Airmen in their professional development and advancement. A supervisory tool that organized and documented individual versus supervisory tasks would ensure Airmen had the most opportunity for their professional advancement and development, and supervisors stay within the enlisted promotion system intent.

Another supervisory responsibility in the category of professional advancement and development lacking in supervisory direction is the PME process. There are many levels of PME as Airmen progress through their careers. Since this study's focus is on

junior NCOs and the Airmen they supervise, this task concerns only the PME opportunities at the ALS level. This research previously discussed the importance of ALS as part of the Airman developmental program. ALS attendance is so important to the development of Airman the Air Force mandates successful completion of ALS prior to filling the role of a supervisor. This important milestone in an Airman's career is reason alone for a supervisor to track and manage opportunities for their Airmen to attend. Even with this level of importance, no existing document found by this research shows supervisors how to proactively become involved in the PME process for Airmen they supervise. Evidence suggests the weapon systems and individualistic culture contribute to this attitude.

The first task supervisors should concern themselves with is determining their Airman's next opportunity to attend PME. Normally this effort is the responsibility of a combination of individuals within the organization, including the Commander's Support Staff and First Sergeant. The individual in the best position to advocate and determine an Airman's best opportunity for attending ALS is the supervisor. The supervisor knows upcoming personal and professional commitments of the Airman and can de-conflict these with available ALS slots that become available. Proactively becoming involved in this process will also help supervisors incorporate this into an Airman's professional development timeline. Including ALS into a professional development timeline will help them fulfill other tasks within the PME responsibility. A supervisor has the task to ensure compliance with any prerequisites for attending ALS. These prerequisites include ensuring Airmen meet height and weight standards, and possess all required uniform compliments. A supervisory tool should include direction for supervisors to proactively

seek out a PME opportunity for Airman and ensures they comply with prerequisite standards like height and weight and uniforms. These are not the final responsibilities within the RRT of PME.

A final responsibility that a how-to tool should reflect is monitoring progress of Airmen while attending ALS. Common practice of supervisors is to cease supervisory efforts once Airmen begin attending the five week in-residence program. Supervisors should contact Airmen they supervise in the role of a mentor to encourage the efforts and showing genuine interests in their progression. Supervisors can also visit ALS to do an in-person check of their Airman. Finally, attending the graduation ceremony to show support should be the final task reflected in a supervisory tool. Through the accomplishment of these tasks, supervisors will ensure the Airmen they supervise have the greatest opportunity to attend and succeed in PME.

The analysis has identified the type and importance of tasks to include in a supervisory tool. These tasks help overcome the challenges of the Air Force individualistic culture caused by a focus on weapon systems and technology and geographical separation as a result of the AEF construct. Overcoming these challenges will help supervisors ensure Airmen receive the best opportunity to succeed in the career advancement and development.

Summary

Analysis conducted during this research project sought to determine if there was a need for a tool that would help junior NCOs fulfill their supervisory responsibilities and subsequently what that tool would look like if there was such a need. To determine this, research examined the challenges faced by junior NCOs serving as supervisors in today's

Air Force Culture, followed by the challenges they face in the AEF construct. Research indicated there is much to gain in developing a supervisory tool that shows supervisors how to accomplish the many responsibilities they have in the context of the weapon systems culture that breed individual attitudes and the geographical separation of supervisors and the Airmen they supervise.

This individualistic culture promotes doctrinal procedures in the Air Force that focus on an Airman's self-motivation to ensure successful completion of their responsibilities. This same Air Force doctrine and the PME training supervisors receive direct those within the NCO Tier with responsibilities of enforcing standards and ensuring completion of these tasks. A tool will assist supervisors in overcoming this gap between an individualistic culture and their supervisory responsibilities. Supervisors also face the challenges of the distinct transformation from peer to a supervisor of Airmen. A tool is necessary to identify a comprehensive list of RRTs that will assist in the dynamic conversion to a supervisor of previous peers. Additionally, analysis research identified the significant impact junior NCOs have on those within the Airman tier. Creating a tool that assists supervisors with developing those they supervise will improve Airmen and supervisors of tomorrow.

The research also concluded that the AEF construct creates challenges for supervisors and Airmen they supervise as a result of geographical separation. The Airman's professional development timeline does not adjust to this geographical separation, putting the Airman at risk of sacrificing the advancement of their careers and obtaining proficiency in the necessary skills required of their profession. A supervisory tool that addressed the issues caused by geographical separation would ensure Airmen

develop within the timelines of the Air Force's Leadership Development Model (figure 4).

Developing this supervisory tool should include a list of RRTs categorized into certain areas and comprises a comprehensive list of specific tasks. Organizing the RRTs into the areas of Professional Proficiency and Standards, Expeditionary Vigilance, and Advancement and Development provides the supervisor a structured and comprehensive approach to fulfilling their duties. This tool also should include specific tasks that show supervisors how to accomplish their responsibilities. The list of RRTs at Annex A reflects the results of this research, a comprehensive list of tasks that show supervisors how to accomplish their responsibilities within the challenges they face in today's 21st Century Air Force. The final chapter provides an interpretation of these findings in the context of the Air Force's Core Competency of "Developing Airmen."

¹James Q. Wilson, *Bureaucracy: What Government Agencies Do and Why They Do It* (New York: Basic Books, 1989), 91.

²James M. Smith, Ph.D., *Service Cultures, Joint Cultures, and the U.S. Military* (Reprinted with permission in Leadership and Command, Volume 1, Air Command and Staff College, version 4.0), 121.

³Carl H. Builder, *The Army in the Strategic Planning Process* (Santa Monica, CA: The RAND Corporation, April 1987), 26.

⁴Smith, 125.

⁵*Ibid.*, 123.

⁶U.S. Department of the Army, Office of the Chief of Staff, Executive Office of the Headquarters Staff Group, *The 2006 Army Game Plan* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2006), 2.

⁷*Ibid.*, 4.

⁸*Ibid.*

⁹U.S. Department of the Army, *Army Campaign Plan*, Reprinted in Department of the Army, US Army Command and General Staff College, F100, Changing the Army, Ft. Leavenworth, KS (August 2006), F102AA-19.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, 5.

¹¹Smith, 123.

¹²U.S. Department of the Air Force, Office of the Secretary of the Air Force, Air Force Instruction (AFI) 36-2618, *The Enlisted Force Structure* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2004), 3.

¹³*Ibid.*

¹⁴*Ibid.*

¹⁵U.S. Department of the Air Force, *Airman Leadership School Curriculum Synopsis*, 3.

¹⁶U.S. Department of the Air Force, Air Force Pamphlet 36-2241, 192.

¹⁷McKinley.

¹⁸U.S. Department of the Air Force, Headquarters Air Force Personnel Center, *Enlisted Historical Files*, <http://ask.afpc.randolph.af.mil> (accessed 20 September 2007), 1.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, 1.

²⁰Murray, *Building a World-Class Noncommissioned Officer Corps*.

²¹U.S. Department of the Air Force, AFI 36-2618, 3.

²²McKinley, 1.

²³*Ibid.*

²⁴*Ibid.*

²⁵U.S. Department of the Air Force, Office of the Secretary of the Air Force, Air Force Instruction (AFI) 10-401, *The Air Force Operations Planning and Execution* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2006), 29.

²⁶*Ibid.*

²⁷*Ibid.*, 32.

²⁸*Ibid.*, 30.

²⁹U.S. Department of the Air Force, Headquarters Air Force Personnel Center, “AEF 101,” Briefing, <https://aefcenter.afpc.randolph.af.mil> (accessed 20 September 2007), 2.

³⁰*Ibid.*

³¹*Ibid.*, 3.

³²*Ibid.*

³³Staff Sergeant J. G. Buzanowski, “General Testifies on Air Force In-Lieu-Of Strategies,” *Air Force Print News Today*, 6 August 2007, <http://www.af.mil/news/story> (accessed 21 August 2007).

³⁴*Ibid.*

³⁵U.S. Department of the Air Force, Presentation to the Armed Services Committee, U.S. House of Representatives, *Strategic Initiatives*, 24 October 2007, 4.

³⁶U.S. Department of the Air Force, Air Force Pamphlet 36-2241, 405.

³⁷*Ibid.*

³⁸*Ibid.*, 348.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

This thesis examined a tool the Air Force could create to develop junior NCOs into more effective supervisors. Moreover, it focused on why the Air Force needs a product that helps junior NCOs accomplish their supervisory responsibilities. Part of this analysis justified why it is important to focus this effort toward junior NCOs instead of other levels of leadership within the Air Force. Additionally, analysis reviewed the impacts to supervisors leading Airmen within the Air Force's weapon systems culture, and the AEF force construct. Finally, this analysis identified potential components to incorporate in a tool that shows supervisors how to fulfill their supervisory responsibilities by providing a comprehensive list of RRTs (Appendix A). A review of these findings and their implications provides direction for developing a tool that improves junior NCO supervisors in the Air Force.

Findings and Implications

The Air Force has three core competencies as a foundational framework to focus the efforts of leadership on how to train, organize, and equip the force. Air Force doctrine describes one of these competencies as "Developing Airmen."¹ "The ultimate source of combat capability resides in the men and women in the Air Force . . . the abilities of our people stem from a career-long focus on the development of professional Airmen."² The Air Force leadership at the strategic level has identified the continual development of Airmen as a priority for ensuring mission accomplishment. Analyzing the findings of this

research and their implications will guide leaders at the operational and tactical levels on meeting senior leaders' intent to develop Airmen.

Air Force supervisors must overcome many challenges to effectively lead Airmen. One of these challenges is the individualistic culture promoted by the Air Force's focus on weapon systems. This culture produces procedures emphasizing self motivating accomplishment of individual responsibilities. This is contrary to how the Air Force enforces the standards and conduct of the individual Airman. Supervisors, in addition to Airmen, are held accountable for ensuring adherence to standards. While the individual Airman receives praise or corrective actions based on their accomplishment of tasks, so too does their supervisor. The supervisor is charged with developing an Airman's ability to accomplish the tasks and ensuring completion of those tasks. Placing junior NCO supervisors in a position where they must overcome a culture that encourages individual efforts, while requiring supervisory oversight and responsibility is an unnecessary burden. This burden is easily overcome by placing additional emphasis on the core competency of Developing Airmen at the junior NCO level.

An additional challenge junior NCOs face occurs as a result of the supervisor development process and the distinct transformation from peer to a supervisor of peers. In this instance, Airmen learn how to supervise in several ways. Two of the primary methods are through formal training and informal mentorship. Formal training includes attendance at ALS, while informal mentorship is the direct interaction and observation of how their supervisor fulfills responsibilities. ALS provides the foundational education for the development of Airmen into supervisors with a curriculum divided into categories of Profession of Arms, Leadership and Management, Communication Skills, and

Leadership-Human Resources (table 1).³ Although necessary, this strategic overarching education is inadequate for junior NCOs trying to overcome the challenges of supervising previous peers. Some Airmen are fortunate to have observed supervisors proficient in how-to fulfill supervisory responsibilities. As Airmen transition into supervisory roles, they use their personal experiences as a guide to fill the gap between ALS formal education and the practical how-to guidance they observed at the tactical level. If leaders at the strategic level implement guidance for this transformation during ALS curriculum development, what corresponding training occurs at the operational and tactical levels? This research concludes “not enough.” A tool with organized guidance describing how to accomplish supervisory RRTs would fill this gap between strategic and tactical level guidance. In addition, this research indicated that other factors are important in fostering the transition from Airman to the junior NCO supervisor.

Transforming from peer to supervisor occurs at a leadership level within the organizational structure that has the greatest opportunity for impacting the Airmen they supervise. This research referenced instances where Air Force leaders at the strategic level emphasized the importance of Airmen development beginning immediately upon arrival at their first duty station.⁴ Other strategic leaders acknowledged their belief that immediate supervisors hold the greatest capability for influencing these new members of the Air Force off to a productive start.⁵ Developing supervisory guidance on how-to tactically accomplish the intent of the Air Force’s strategic leadership will produce better supervisors of Airmen at a time when it is most opportune to do so, immediately upon arrival of an Airman’s first duty location.

The AEF force construct creates additional supervisory challenges, specifically when junior NCO supervisors are geographically separated from the Airmen they supervise. Chapter 4 of this research discussed the Leadership Development Model (figure 4), a process outlined at the strategic level, as part of the core competency of Developing Airmen.⁶ While strategically applicable and necessary, at the operational and tactical levels there are unfortunate inhibitors to this model. One such inhibitor is that the development process timeline does not consider or adapt to the impacts of geographical separation between supervisor and Airman as a result of the AEF. Research suggests that supervisors face unique challenges to ensure that Airmen accomplish the tactical level requirements outlined in the model, including: job proficiency (OJT and CDCs) and professional development (PME). This begs the question, when Airmen impacted by the AEF become supervisors will they have had the opportunity to develop according to this Leadership Development Model? Developing operational and tactical level guidance for how-to fulfill supervisory RRTs not only addresses the potential immediate impacts to job knowledge and leadership skills, but also ensures the future junior NCO corps is not at risk of lacking in these capabilities.

Research has identified operational and tactical level supervisory challenges at the junior NCO level. Providing a supervisory how-to tool that complements training and the informal and formal supervisory development process is crucial to developing our junior NCOs into effective leaders. This supervisor leadership development tool will produce a more effective NCO corps better prepared to overcome the challenges facing supervisors and to lead Airmen. Further, developing a better supervisor today will reap benefits for the supervisors of Airmen tomorrow.

Recommendations

Operational and tactical level leaders of the Air Force need to continue writing articles in Air Force Base newspapers and giving speeches on the importance of Airmen development. These actions support strategic leaders and the core competency of Developing Airmen, but this alone is inadequate. Air Force leaders at the operational and tactical level need to increase their efforts and further build upon the clearly defined intent provided from strategic level leadership regarding Airmen development. Creating a buzz-word name for a new program or initiative is not the direction from operational and tactical leadership junior NCO supervisors need. Producing a product that actually allows and guides supervisors on how-to accomplish the responsibilities demanded of them within the challenges outlined in this research is one such step.

The comprehensive list of RRTs (Appendix A) is an initial step towards this endeavor. This list of RRTs needs further development through an additional review of doctrine and the experience of leaders to compliment the inputs of the researcher. Further, incorporating this list of how-to accomplish supervisory responsibilities into the formal and informal supervisory development processes such as ALS and informal and formal mentoring sessions will ensure further improvement and use. Finally, conducting periodic reviews of the list of RRTs will guarantee compliance with updated doctrine and procedures.

Conclusion

There currently is not a comprehensive tool of supervisory RRTs that junior NCOs can utilize to meet the intent of strategic level leaders' to develop Airmen, which is one of the Air Force's core competencies. This research substantiates the absence of

and need for such a product. Air Force leaders at the strategic level have identified the ability to develop leaders of tomorrow's Air Force as a priority. Current Air Force processes and doctrine at the operational and tactical levels do not assist junior NCO supervisors enough in their efforts to overcome the challenges they encounter. This creates a gap between the expected RRTs of supervisors and the existing guidance of how to accomplish them. Focusing efforts not just on other organizational leadership levels, but also towards the development of junior NCOs will help eliminate this gap. Further effort should focus on developing a comprehensive tool that produces a more effective junior NCO supervisor better prepared to accomplish their RRTs. The back-bone of the Air Force is its NCO corps. More proficient junior NCOs within this back-bone of the organization will guarantee that the Air Force remains a superbly trained, organized force, ready to meet the demands of today's warfighter and the unknown challenges of tomorrow.

¹U.S. Department of the Air Force, Air Force Pamphlet 36-2241, 76.

²Ibid.

³U.S. Department of the Air Force, *Airman Leadership School Curriculum Synopsis*, 13.

⁴McKinley.

⁵Ibid.

⁶U.S. Department of the Air Force, Air Force Pamphlet 36-2241, 192.

APPENDIX A

ROLES, RESPONSIBILITIES, AND TASKS

Defined:

- Role: Duties of a supervisor (Examples: Counselor, Mentor, Enforcer of Standards, Motivator, etc.)
- Responsibility (R): A categorical title given to a set of tasks of similar characteristics
- Task (T): A specific undertaking to complete in order to accomplish a responsibility and fulfill a role.

PROFESSIONAL PROFICIENCY & STANDARDS

Skill Level Proficiency (Role: Enforcer of Standards)

- Ensure 3 skill level is obtained (R)
 - Conduct on-the-job training (T)
 - Ensure completion of technical training school and distance learning (T)
- Ensure 5 skill level certification complete (R)
 - On the job training, career field and education training plan (CFETP) documented (T)
 - Career development course:
 - Schedule developed for volume completion and end of course (EOC) examination (T)
 - Volume review exercises and EOC complete (T)
 - Technical training school and distance learning school complete (T)

Physical Preparedness and Capability (Role: Enforcer of Standards, Motivator)

- Meet AF fitness standards (R)
 - Administer annual fitness test (T)
 - Develop plan for improving score (T)
- Participate in AF fitness program (R)
 - Ensure possession and appropriate wear of physical training uniform (T)
 - Develop a weekly plan and document (T)
- Ensure annual medical screenings (R)
 - Physical scheduled and attended (T)
 - Dental scheduled and attended (T)

Personal Preparedness (Role: Mentor, and Counselor)

- Address quality of life issues (R)
 - Living quarters inspection and location confirmation (T)
 - Dining facility familiarization (T)
 - Recreational facilities familiarization (T)
- Ensure financial responsibility (R)

- Counsel on standards of financial responsibility (T)
- Educate on importance of a personal budget (T)
- Review and enforce government travel card guidelines (T)
- Remain vigilant for any behavioral suicidal attitudes (R)
 - Ensure completion of annual suicide awareness training (T)
 - Identify stress management education and referral opportunities (T)

Positive Professional Environment (Role: Mentor, and Counselor)

- Address adverse effects of substance abuse (R)
 - Counsel on adverse effects of substance abuse and enforcement (T)
 - Identify substance abuse referral opportunities (T)
- Monitor for any marital or relationship issues effecting work performance (R)
 - Identify marital/relationship referral opportunities (T)
- Ensure understanding of unprofessional relationship policy (R)
 - Counsel on unprofessional relationship policy and adverse effects (T)
- Ensure workplace is free of discrimination and harassment (sexual, racial, etc...) (R)
 - Completion of sexual/racial discrimination training (T)

Professional Conduct & Appearance (Role: Counselor, and Enforcer of Standards)

- Ensure compliance with dress and appearance standards (R)
 - Conduct inspections of each uniform compliment (T)
 - Monitor personal grooming standards (T)
- Enforce appropriate conduct concerning everyday behavior, ethics and conflict of interests, and political activities (R)
 - Counsel on professional and unprofessional relationships and their consequences (T)
 - Counsel on ethics and conflict of interests (bribery, compensation from other sources, gifts from foreign governments, etc...) (T)
 - Provide clarification on voting rights, protest activities, public statements, etc... (T)

Personnel Programs (Role: Mentor, and Enforcer of Standards)

- Ensure compliance with DoD policy concerning family care plans (FCP) (R)
 - Determine if a FCP is required (T)
 - If a FCP is required:
 - Ensure new duty station counseling with commander or first sergeant is complete (T)
 - Ensure annual counseling with commander or first sergeant is complete (T)
 - Ensure AF IMT 357, family care certification is complete (T)
- Complete requirements of the selective reenlistment program (SRP) (R)
 - Counsel and explain the SRP process (T)
 - Provide to the commander a reenlistment recommendation (T)

- Complete requirements of the career airman reenlistment reservation system (CAREERS) (R)
 - Counsel and explain the CAREERS program (T)
 - Confirm first term Airmen (FTA) seeking to reenlist have a career job reservation (CJR) (T)
 - Ensure FTA reenlist on or before the CJR expiration date (T)
 - Counsel on possible retraining opportunities into shortage AFSCs (T)
- Maintain with commander a personnel information file (PIF) on each Airmen supervised (R)
 - Ensure establishment and unit required documents are maintained (T)
 - Conduct periodic reviews to ensure complete and current (T)

EXPEDITIONARY PREPAREDNESS

Air Expeditionary Force (AEF) Orientation (Role: Mentor)

- Ensure understanding of role within the unit's AEF commitments (R)
 - Assign to an AEF rotation cycle (T)
 - Explain scheduling commitments and effects on personal schedule (T)

AEF Deployment Preparation (Role: Enforcer of Standards)

- Completion of necessary deployment specific training (R)
 - Weapons qualification (T)
 - Chemical warfare training (T)
 - Self-aid and buddy care (T)
- Ensure issuance and possession of equipment (R)
 - Conduct bag drag inspection (T)
- Determine impacts to upgrade training (R)
 - Develop upgrade training schedule for deployment time (T)
- Ensure supervisory duties are accomplished during deployment (R)
 - Assign a supervisor if not deploying with Airman (T)
 - Provide to deploying supervisor: (T)
 - Upgrade training plan, CFETP
 - AF fitness program plan

Considerations During Deployment (Role: Mentor, and Enforcer of Standards)

- Maintain supervisory duties if deploying with Airman (R)
- Monitor supervisee status while deployed (R)
 - Communicate with deployment supervisor (T)
- Monitor morale and welfare of deployed member's family
 - If not deployed, check on family members remaining at home station (T)
 - If deployed with Airman, assign an NCO to check on family members remaining at home station (T)

Post Deployment Actions (Role: Enforcer of Standards)

- Ensure redeployment inprocessing is completed (R)
 - Equipment turn-in and inspection (T)
 - Travel voucher, government travel card is processed (T)
 - Medical review complete (T)

ADVANCEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

Promotion Selection (Role: Mentor, and Counselor)

- Determine next promotion opportunity (R)
 - Confirm with commander's support staff (CSS) eligibility timeline (T)
 - Follow-up with CSS on any required actions (T)
- Ensure understanding of selection criteria to rank of Airman and Airman First Class (R)
 - Explain time-in-grade (TIG) requirements, and noncompetitive basis (T)
- Ensure understanding of selection criteria to rank of Senior Airman (R)
 - Explain TIG, skill level, and unit commander's recommendation requirements (T)
 - Determine, explain Senior Airman below-the-zone eligibility, TIG, and local procedures (T)
- Ensure understanding of the weighted Airman promotion system (WAPS) (R)
 - Explain process is solely an individual responsibility to: (T)
 - Know their promotion eligibility status
 - Maintain specialty and military qualifications
 - Use a self-initiated program of individual study
 - Obtain and study all current study references
 - Explain WAPS scores are confidential to individual (T)
 - Retrieved at AFPC web site
 - Used for advisory counseling only at the individual request
- Explain points system and factors (T)

Professional Military Education (PME) (Role: Mentor, Counselor, and Enforcer of Standards)

- Determine next PME opportunity (R)
 - Confirm with CSS eligibility and prerequisites (T)
- Ensure compliance with prerequisites (R)
 - Height and weight standards compliance (T)
 - Posses appropriate uniform compliments (T)
- Monitor progress during PME (R)
 - Visit PME location to do in-person status check (T)
- Support PME accomplishment (R)
 - Attend graduation ceremony (T)

Academic Education (Role: Mentor, and Motivator)

- Ensure understanding of educational opportunities (R)
 - Explain the Community College of the Air Force (T)
 - Visit with Airman the base education office to gain an understanding of degree programs, and other benefits (T)
 - Ensure understanding of the tuition assistance program, GI Bill, and other financial assistance programs (T)
- Determine eligibility timeline for off-duty education based on professional requirements to include upgrade training (T)

Individual Development Plan (Role: Mentor, Coach, and Counselor)

- Develop a professional development and career goals plan (R)
 - Utilize the enlisted development plan (T)
 - Develop a timeline for all goals (T)
- Develop and ensure fulfillment of personal goals plan (R)
 - Develop a timeline for all goals (T)
- Ensure progress and completion of goals (R)
 - Conduct counseling sessions to check progress and update (T)

Performance Feedback and Report (Role: Counselor, Mentor, and Enforcer of Standards)

- Administer the performance feedback (PF) process (R)
 - Complete AF IMT 931, Performance Feedback Worksheet (T)
 - Schedule and conduct the feedback sessions (initial, midterm, follow-up, as applicable) (T)
- Accomplish the performance report as required (annual, CRO, etc..) (R)
 - Determine timeline for when the next report is due and properly suspense (T)
 - Review PIF for any pertinent information (T)
 - Obtain as much information as possible about the Airman, especially if there wasn't direct observation wasn't possible, to include the Airman (T)
 - Record the Airman's performance and make a recommendation for promotion (T)
 - Differentiate between Airmen with similar performance records (T)

Recognition, Awards, and Decorations (Role: Counselor, Mentor, and Motivator)

- Properly administer the awards and decorations program (R)
 - Recommend the award of an achievement medal for any specific acts of achievement (T)
 - Determine eligibility for next service award (T)
 - Establish a timeline and suspense for any potentially warranted service award by working with the unit commander's support staff (T)
 - Ensure all awards and decorations are properly updated in personnel records (T)

- Properly administer the recognition program (R)
 - Determine all opportunities for recognizing Airmen (annual and quarterly awards, below-the-zone promotions, etc..) in accordance with local procedures (T)
 - Develop a plan and timeline to meet prerequisites and qualifications for applicable programs (T)
 - Conduct periodic updates to determine progress of this plan (T)

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