

IN-LIEU-OF POLICY AND ITS EFFECTS ON THE U.S. AIR FORCE

BY

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USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

IN-LIEU-OF POLICY AND ITS EFFECTS ON THE U.S. AIR FORCE

by

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ABSTRACT

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Since February 2004 the United States Air Force has made use of an In-Lieu-Of (ILO) policy, which allows it to use its Airmen (basically as soldiers) to fill ground combat capability gaps. The numbers of Airmen deployed to ILO assignments is at best significant and at worst alarming. In fact, in the period from February 2004 to July 2007 the Air Force deployed some 24,000 Airmen to fill ILO taskings. Many in defense circles, to include high-ranking Airmen, are now speculating that the ILO policy is having a negative effect on current and future Air Force capabilities. In actuality, the ILO policy may be affecting not just Air Force capabilities but Air Force resources, training, culture, ethics, and professionalism. This paper provides a brief background on the ILO policy and then provides an analysis that demonstrates a link between the current ILO issues and their potential future impacts on the resources, training, culture, ethics, and professionalism of the Air Force.

IN-LIEU-OF POLICY AND ITS EFFECTS ON THE U.S. AIR FORCE

Speaking at an industry conference on September 25, 2007, Air Force Chief of Staff, General T. Michael Moseley, commented on the U.S. Air Force's In-Lieu-Of (ILO) policy when he told attendees that the Air Force would continue to assign Airmen to perform Army missions for the foreseeable future.¹ Four years ago, Air Force leaders likely instituted the ILO policy with high ethical standards in mind when they rightfully and very non-parochially volunteered to help fill gaps when Army ground capabilities fell short. Therefore, the need for the Air Force Chief of Staff to make this kind of statement in a public forum four years later, when the nation is in the midst of two major wars and numerous additional actions throughout the world, deserves both explanation and exploration.

Since February 2004 the Air Force has made use of the ILO policy which allows it to use its Airmen (basically as soldiers) to fill ground combat capability gaps. The numbers of Airmen deployed to ILO assignments is at best significant and at worst alarming. In fact, in the period from February 2004 to July 2007 the Air Force deployed some 24,000 Airmen to fill ILO taskings.² Many in defense circles, to include high-ranking Airmen, are now speculating that the ILO policy is having a negative effect on current and future Air Force capabilities.

In actuality, the ILO policy may be affecting not just Air Force capabilities but the Air Force's resources, culture, ethics, and professionalism as well. This paper will provide a brief background on the ILO policy followed by an extensive discussion on how ILO taskings affect Air Force resources. It then shifts focus to provide an analysis that demonstrates a link between the current ILO issue and its potential negative future

impacts on the culture, ethics, and professionalism of the Air Force. In the end, this paper proposes that the Secretary of the Air Force convene a study group or blue-ribbon panel to examine the Air Force's ILO policy in order to make informed recommendations on continuing, changing, or even abandoning the policy.

Background

The Air Force has its own unique warrior culture. The roots of that culture stem from the Air Force's humble beginnings within the United States Army. Therefore, when the Army found itself short of capabilities that it needed to prosecute America's War on Terror, professional Air Force leaders were naturally and rightfully eager to lend a helping hand. The Air Force's current ILO policy is what resulted. However, the current policy approach to the ILO issue is now four years old and some military leaders are starting to ask hard questions on what effects the policy is having on the Air Force. Additionally, even civilian leaders are starting to take note and question the policy. For instance, on 31 July 2007, Congressman Solomon P. Ortiz, House Armed Services Committee, noted in a hearing that the additional cost of just training Airmen to perform ILO taskings "as measured in man-years is significant."³

Even well respected Army Generals are beginning to question the wisdom of ILO policy and other manpower and budgetary decisions (largely instituted to help the Army) that are having negative effects on the Air Force. In fact, retired Army General Barry R. McCaffrey, after visiting several Air Force bases and communicating with numerous senior Air Force leaders, recently wrote:

US defense strategy is unbalanced, incoherent, and under-funded—does not focus on next generation deterrence and war-fighting missions—and is distorted by the drain of US defense modernization dollars and manpower resources being funneled into the ground combat meat-grinder of the civil

war in Iraq ... The US Air Force is badly under-funded, its manpower is being drastically cut and diverted to support counterinsurgency operations, its modernization program of paradigm shifting technology is anemic—and its aging strike, lift, and tanker fleets are being ground down by non-stop global operations with an inadequate air fleet and maintenance capabilities.⁴

Not surprisingly, a number of politicians and senior military members outside of the Air Force share these kinds of concerns as well. Air Force leaders have realized that they must temper their eagerness to help the Army with a mindful eye towards the effects that the ILO policy is having on the Air Force's legal obligation to meet its roles, missions, and functions which are governed by law and mandated in the National Security Act of 1947. In brief, this Act specifically mandates that the Air Force "organize, train, and equip aviation forces for prompt and sustained offensive and defensive air operations."⁵ This role has remained virtually unchanged since the inception of the Air Force.⁶

Over the last 60 years, the Air Force has dedicated the majority, if not all, of its resources to meeting its regulatory role. In its most basic form the Air Force's role is, as stated previously, "to conduct sustained offensive and defensive air operations (National Security Act, 1947)."⁷ It is acknowledged that "certain ground combat capabilities are an Airman's responsibility and require unique surface operations that are integral to the application of air and space power."⁸ However, for the specialized circumstances, where expertise in ground combat is needed, the Air Force has trained very limited numbers of highly specialized Battlefield Airmen to carry out these responsibilities.

To meet this responsibility, the Air Force recognized the need to organize, train, and equip a force of Battlefield Airmen capable of delivering distinctive expertise in a ground combat environment with unequaled firepower, accuracy, responsiveness, flexibility and persistence. These Airmen include Pararescue, Combat Control, Tactical Air Control and Battlefield Weather professionals. They provide a skill set not commonly

found across the Air Force and typically operate in combat zones outside the perimeter of Air Force bases.⁹

Although the Air Force does train very small numbers of these ground combat forces, ground combat is not a major focus area for the Air Force. Therefore, providing large numbers of Airmen to perform ground combat duties, as the Air Force has through its ILO policy, strains the Air Force and likely hurts its overall ability to perform its regulatory role.

Today's Air Force, is the result of a dedicated effort to build the capabilities required (to include very limited ground combat capability) to perform offensive and defensive air and space operations. Fortunately, these efforts have paid off, and today's Air Force is the most technologically advanced and lethal Air Force in the world. Unfortunately, many leaders (military and civilian) are beginning to believe that the ever-growing Army demand to provide Airmen to fill traditional Army ground combat roles, though ILO taskings, are having an overall negative effect on not just the Air Force's ability to perform its regulatory role, but its resources, culture, ethics, and professionalism as well.

Resources

The resource cost of the ILO policy in manpower and dollars is extensive. From a manpower perspective alone, the Air Force loses Airmen for periods of up to one year at a time when they deploy to ILO assignments. This is happening at a time when Air Force manpower is already shrinking to help pay for Air Force modernization programs. Numerous Air Force four star generals are now commenting on the problem. General T. Michael Moseley, Air Force Chief of Staff, recently commented on the issue saying that even though the Air Force is aggressively drawing down personnel (basically to ensure

Air Force capabilities for the nation in the future), “requests for Airmen to do jobs in Iraq and Afghanistan that would ordinarily be performed by Soldiers and Marines continue unabated.”¹⁰ Interestingly, “U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates has recently green-lighted a proposal to swell the Army by more than 70,000 soldiers by 2010, two years faster than originally ordered by the White House.”¹¹ At the same time, the Air Force is reducing its force by some 40,000 Airmen. In fact, General Moseley recently commented, “As we get closer to 316,000, there will be zero opportunity to have someone outside their specific task and competency doing something outside the Air Force.”¹² Therefore, it is now an opportune time to reconsider the Air Force’s ILO policy, especially as the Army grows and the Air Force shrinks.

At any rate, Air Force leadership has already begun to push back on some types of ILO requests. The Air Force Chief of Staff said he intends to resist sending Airmen to ILO assignments when “those assignments fall far outside Airmen’s core competencies.”¹³ This represents a shift in ILO policy by leadership at the highest levels of the Air Force. In effect, the Chief of Staff is taking a “hard stand” and seems to be saying that Airmen are not simply “manpower meat” for the Army to use as it pleases and if the Air Force is going to provide Airmen to perform Army assigned missions those assignments must be in areas that the Air Force trains to accomplish. This is a needed shift in policy because numerous deployments are straining the Air Force.

Former U.S. Air Force Personnel Chief, General Roger Brady, also recently commented on the ILO issue in one of his last remarks before assuming command of United States Air Forces in Europe (USAFE). He stated, “The war on terror continues to place stress on the Air Force, as the number of 365-day deployments increases and the

need remains for airmen to fill in-lieu-of positions to support the Army.”¹⁴ He further commented that ILO taskings continue to challenge the Air Force because the Air Force “did not design the force to do missions that are not traditionally airmen's missions. Yet these airmen must be competent and proficient in these ILO task when they deploy.”¹⁵ Brady went on to stress that the Air Force is in the midst of reducing its force by 40,000 positions, which will require the Air Force to rethink how it does business to include not filling some ILO positions in the future.¹⁶

The U.S. media has made the public well aware of the deployment strains within the Army. Unfortunately, deployment strains within the Air Force receive less media attention and are therefore less known publicly even though the Air Force is widely deployed. In fact, “across the Air Force, about 25 percent of the personnel in each wing are deployed, although wings continue normal operations.”¹⁷

Even when Airmen are used to fill Army jobs that fall within their Air Force core competency areas it still hurts the Air Force. As discussed, ILO policy deprives the Air Force of people who are performing jobs for the Army outside of their Air Force core competency areas. It has also deprived and will continue to deprive, for the foreseeable future, the Air Force of large numbers of personnel who are performing jobs for the Army within their Air Force core competency areas. These areas include, but are not limited to, “military police, explosive ordinance disposal experts, and combat engineers.”¹⁸ This too presents a big problem for the Air Force. In fact, General Ronald Keys, Commander Air Combat Command, recently lamented on this issue saying, “The deployment tempo of the war is so demanding that when commanders want access to

the limited number of skilled personnel it does have in those fields [certain core competency fields], it is very hard to get it these days.”¹⁹

When an Airman deploys outside of the Air Force’s Air Expeditionary Force (AEF) cycle there is a mission gap left in the Air Force that other Airmen have to fill. Gaps at home strain the Airmen who are left behind especially because the Air Force has transformed itself into an expeditionary force and Airmen themselves are already frequently deployed. Air Force leaders who had the foresight to transform the Air Force into an expeditionary force now face a dilemma. Their carefully thought out AEF plan is now realized, however, the decision to support ever-increasing Army requests for Airmen to perform Army jobs is now straining AEF operations. The strains on the Air Force are often compounded, especially in an “expeditionary” Air Force, because many of the Airmen who fill gaps when others deploy unexpectedly are the same Airmen who have just returned from normal Air Force AEF deployments or who are getting ready to deploy on upcoming AEF deployments. Often, Airmen who stay behind end up performing extra duties to make up for those deployed until they themselves, in many cases, deploy on their next AEF or ILO deployment. For this reason the operations tempo and stress for many Airmen performing the mission at their home station becomes daunting. In fact, it is not uncommon to hear Airmen at home bases lament that they cannot wait to deploy so they can “get a break” from their home station operations tempo.

ILO taskings have stressed and challenged the Air Force in many other ways as well. Command authority with regard to the ILO mission is one issue that commanders deal with frequently. Although Airmen are performing Army missions, Air Force senior

leaders prescribe to a generally accepted reality stated in Air Force doctrine, as a foundational doctrine statement, that “Airmen work for Airmen.”²⁰ This of course makes sense because in the end the Air Force is ultimately responsible for ensuring that its Airmen are properly trained and equipped to perform whatever missions they are tasked with doing. Therefore, even when Airmen deploy on an ILO tasking their command authority runs through Air Force chain of command channels. The axiom of “Airmen working for Airmen” has proven truthful, beneficial, and necessary in Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), because there are accounts where Army commanders have tried to use Airmen to perform missions they are not trained to perform. Therefore, Air Force ILO forces “require continuous supervision and oversight by USAF chain of command to ensure [they]...are not misused or tasked for additional Army missions for which they were not trained.”²¹ To ensure ILO Airmen are used properly they are under the Operational Control (OPCON) of the Commander Air Force Forces (COMAFFOR) and under the Tactical Control (TACON) of the Joint Task Force (JTF) in Iraq or Afghanistan depending on where they are based.²² OPCON for ILO Airmen is provided through four Air Expeditionary Wings in the deployed Area of Responsibility (AOR).²³ Although these command relationships seem to work in the different theaters, one can easily see where an Airmen performing Army duties and working with Army units might become confused in terms of his chain of command. Although, these command relationships are necessary, it must be noted that managing ILO forces creates additional resource requirements for the Air Force in terms of leadership, administration, and management of the forces.

ILO taskings are having a large unanticipated dollar cost effect on the Air Force and DoD. In fact, “nearly one in five Airmen currently deployed in support of operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom are filling [taskings] “in lieu of” the Army.”²⁴ It is hard to “pin down” the actual dollar costs of these many ILO assignments. However, just the training costs to prepare an Airman for an ILO Army job are very high. For example, the cost of sending just 50 personnel through Army Interrogator training was an estimated \$860,000.²⁵ “Furthermore, the Air Force member’s home unit funds the training and is required to provide supplemental equipment and uniforms to support the tasking.”²⁶ Training Airmen to guard prisoners is another exuberant expense to both the Air Force and the country that is largely lost once the ILO tasking is completed and there is no future return on the training investment for DoD. For example, “880 Air Force security forces members selected for prison guard duty in Iraq spent one month in prisoner/detainee operations training...followed by a 179 day deployment.”²⁷ This was a significant training and manpower investment for the Air Force. Regrettably, when the Airmen returned the Air Force could not make use of the training the Airmen received or the experiences they gained.²⁸ General Moseley, Air Force Chief of Staff, recently lamented over this dilemma:

We don’t guard prisoners [in the Air Force]. We don’t even have prisons. ... So to take our people and make them a detainee [guard] requires ‘X’ amount of time away from their normal job, and then ‘X’ amount of time deployed and then ‘X’ amount of time getting them back. It’s not the best use of their time or their skills.²⁹

General Moseley, has also publicly noted that “too many [Airmen] are filling jobs for which they are not qualified and that take them away from their Air Force jobs, where they could be more effective.”³⁰ Unfortunately, ILO taskings are proving an unwelcome “Roles and Missions” growth industry for the Air Force and the nation. Regrettably, the

Air Force has found itself pressured into taking on roles and missions it does not want and for which it has not received funding over the years to build capability to perform. For instance, “Army guards at Guantanamo Bay were recently replaced with Air Force personnel. It is now considered an Air Force mission—not an ILO tasking—even though the mission was historically accomplished by the Army.”³¹

In addition to the financial burdens, costs associated with training, and costs to units providing the ILO personnel, there are of course the life and death costs associated with ILO deployments as well. Since the Air Force began providing ILO forces to the Army it has recorded 165 casualties to include 13 Airmen killed in action while performing Army jobs.³² These numbers will certainly grow as the wars continue and as the Air Force increases its support to the Army. As a matter of fact, the Air Force will fill an additional 1,000 ILO requirements in FY08 over what it filled in FY07.³³ Of course, other services are paying these “ultimate costs” as well. Still, in cases where the casualties are Airmen who are performing jobs outside of their core competency areas, Air Force leadership must strive to understand how training or other preparations might have mitigated the Airmen’s risks. The main point to understand is that anytime an Airman is a casualty in combat, Air Force leadership cannot and does not take it lightly.

To ensure casualties are minimized Air Force leaders have instituted various training initiatives to help guarantee Airmen are getting robust combat skills training and adequate equipment to perform the mission. It would be irresponsible for Air Force leaders to do any less. However, the need for Air Force leaders to focus so heavily on ILO training results in a substantial cost to the Air Force. In a nutshell, Air Force leaders must now focus not only on Air Force training to ensure it is adequate, but also focus on

many different aspects of Army training as well. Focusing on this training creates resource issues and other problems the Air Force has had to address.

Ensuring that Airmen assigned to an ILO tasking receive proper training is, of course, a responsibility and major concern for Air Force leaders. As expected, Air Force leaders have not taken this responsibility lightly, and are indeed ensuring Airmen receive the training they need to perform their ILO missions. In fact, the Air Force Chief of Staff has tasked Major General Michael Gould, 2nd Air Force Commander, to add to his “technical training responsibilities, oversight of Airmen throughout the ILO training cycle.”³⁴ Gen Gould has taken this job on with vigor and recently stated, “Our goal is to take care of our people...we want to ensure Airmen can perform safely and effectively in combat alongside our sister services while maintaining their Air Force identity.”³⁵ Interestingly, General Gould has emphasized the point, in the press, that although Airmen are deploying to support Army missions, they will maintain an Air Force chain of command and will have Air Force leadership ready and available if Airmen have concerns or problems while deployed.³⁶ These kinds of statements are likely reassuring to Air Force commanders who are deploying Airmen that they feel responsible for protecting. The statements are also likely reassuring to families who wonder why their spouses, sons, or daughters, who joined the Air Force, are now deploying to basically serve in an Army soldier’s role.

Commanders, families, and even national leaders are rightfully concerned that Airmen are trained properly to perform ILO missions. In fact, in a recent Congressional Hearing, Congressman Solomon P. Ortiz, House Armed Services Committee, asked “what checks are in place to ensure that the Airmen are adequately trained for the

mission they will perform when deployed?”³⁷ The Air Force’s response to the question shows that it is throwing significant effort and resources at ILO training to ensure Airmen are properly trained for the ILO of mission. A synopsis of the answer follows:

Second Air Force focuses on state-side, pre-deployment training conducted by the US Army at one of their Power Projection Platforms (PPP) for combat skills training or Power Support Platforms (PSP) for specialized skills training. Second Air Force tracks AF personnel tasked to deploy in lieu of the Army from the point they are sourced, through training and debarkation to the AOR. ...Once a member arrives in theater, their records are verified by the Personnel Contingency Operations (PERSCO) Team to ensure they received all appropriate training. ...Prior to deploying to the AOR, training requirements are checked/verified by 2nd Air Force and re-verified upon arrival in the AOR...then verified a third time by the commander/unit at the location where they will perform their mission. ...If an individual...missed a required piece of training, they then will be sent back...to receive the needed training prior to being put into the field.³⁸

The above detailed answer shows that the Air Force is going to great lengths to ensure its Airmen are trained to perform their ILO missions. In addition, 2nd Air Force is now hosting In-Lieu-Of Training Equipment and Review Boards “to validate training and equipment requirements for Airmen performing Army missions.”³⁹ During these boards leaders from Air Force Headquarters, Air Force and Army major commands, expeditionary mission support groups, and functional area managers are brought together to discuss training and equipment issues and formulate solutions to any training or equipment problems.⁴⁰

By all accounts, 2nd Air Force is performing its ILO training mission magnificently and Airmen are receiving the training they need to perform their ILO missions. Most Airmen probably share the pride of the 2nd Air Force Commander, Major General Gould, who recently stated, “I am proud to be associated with Air Force people who are so devoted to defending our great nation while being true team players, even when it means stepping outside their normal duties and specialties.”⁴¹ However, one must

wonder what the cost (administrative and other) is to the Air Force to ensure this training. The cost is certainly substantial and causes the Air Force to focus precious training resources to train Airmen to perform missions that they, in all likelihood, will not perform again during their time in the Air Force.

If the Department of Defense (DoD) believes other services should continue to perform missions outside of their core competency areas for a prolonged period of time, there should be a roles and missions debate to determine which service should perform these missions now and in the future. Unfortunately, the services have seemed to shy away from meaningful “roles and missions” debates for years. Fortunately, it seems like now is a good time to have the debate. If the Army really cannot perform certain missions, perhaps another service or agency should be assigned some of those duties and be funded to perform them. As it stands now, if the Army is expected to perform the mission, then the funding for the mission flows to the Army to prepare for the mission. A roles and missions debate would help determine who should perform the mission and who would get the money and resources to perform the mission.

The current ILO business practice is not an equitable practice because the Air Force is not properly resourced with manpower or money to fill the missions. In fact, Air Force Brigadier General Brig Marke F. Gibson recently testified to Congress that “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.”⁴² He went on to say, “we are proud to be part of the joint fight, but we want to get our Airmen out of those roles and back to working their Air Force duties.”⁴³ Brigadier General Gibson’s

testimony is important because it acknowledges that ILO taskings are costing the Air Force, and that the Air Force needs its Airmen to perform Air Force jobs.

Interestingly, there seems to be a perception, at least by the public, that the Army is the only service doing much in Iraq and Afghanistan. Nothing could be further from the truth. The Air Force is flying 80 percent of all OIF sorties and 77 percent of all OEF sorties. Incredibly, in all, the Air Force has flown some 480,000 sorties (strike, airlift, special operations, transport, etc.) in OIF and OEF since 2003. This is an amazing contribution to both OIF and OEF, and a testament to the many Airmen from logisticians; to maintainers; to the aircrew members who fly the missions.

Airmen are certainly busy performing their many missions while deployed in Iraq and Afghanistan. However, CENTCOM is not the only theater of operations where the Air Force is making significant contributions. In fact, Lieutenant General Howie Chandler, Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations, Plans, and Requirements, recently pointed out that the Air Force “needn’t be deployed to be employed. We have approximately 213,000 personnel on-loan supporting the COCOMs daily, about 40% of the total force (Active, Guard, and Reserve only, not civilians).”⁴⁴ The Air Force is, in fact, working the full spectrum of its missions from Air, Space, Cyberspace, Intelligence, running bases, military assistance (i.e. Iraqi Air Force Training), etc., not just in Iraq and Afghanistan, but all over the world.⁴⁵

These core competencies are what the Air Force has trained to do and what Congress has funded it to prepare to do. From a resource perspective ILO taskings are harmful to the Air Force and likely to the nation overall because they force the Air Force to turn its focus and its resources to performing missions that it does not train for and

that Congress has not funded it to perform. For these reasons, the ILO policy deserves examination from a resource management point of view.

Culture

The Air Force, of course, has its own culture and unique cultural assumptions. These assumptions have largely been validated over time beginning when airpower advocates from the early 1900s, such as Billy Mitchell and Hap Arnold, waged a long battle for a separate Air Force, which was finally realized in 1947. The basic assumption of the early advocates that has carried through to current times was that “airpower’s full potential to contribute to warfighting could be realized only if airpower capabilities were a separate, functionally organized military service, co-equal with the other military branches.”⁴⁶

Cultural theorist and psychologist, Edgar Schein, described cultural assumptions as the core of an organization’s culture.⁴⁷ Assumptions are the bedrock that culture is built upon and are so widely accepted as truth that they are literally taken for granted. Assumptions represent “what members believe to be reality and thereby influence what they perceive and how they think and feel.”⁴⁸

Perhaps the most important cultural assumption Airmen have taken for granted since winning the battle for an independent Air Force 60 years ago, is that the Air Force must be a separate functionally organized service. Operating as a separate service has given professional Airmen the autonomy and authority needed to build and develop the world’s most capable Air Force in a way that likely would have been impossible if the Air Force had remained a part of the Army.

Although Airmen take for granted the belief that it is in the Nation's best interest for the Air Force to function as a separate service, the current ILO policy may be chipping away at this assumption and other long-held assumptions as well. In fact, the ILO policy may even be weakening some of the Air Force's core foundational beliefs. For instance, an Air Force Major working at the Pentagon, charged with working current and future space issues, recently returned from an ILO assignment. Coincidentally, just after returning from the assignment he was assigned to brief some 30 Air Force Colonels and Lieutenant Colonels on his division's space, satellite, and ISR related responsibilities in the Pentagon. He started the briefing giving background on himself and talking about much of the work he did with the Army during his recent ILO assignment. It was obvious that his ILO experience was the most formative of his military career, perhaps his life. In fact, he completed most of his sentences during the briefing with an Army "Hooah."

However, the most notable takeaway from a cultural perspective is that this officer did not have deep knowledge of Air Force policy with regard to his own space, satellite, and ISR competency areas. In the end, it was disconcerting that this very bright, mid-level Air Force officer seemed better versed on Army ground operations than Air Force operations even in his own core competency areas. This Pentagon-assigned officer seemed indoctrinated into many aspects of Army culture and even incorporated at least one very verbal cultural artifact (the Army "Hooah"). Unfortunately, this cultural indoctrination took place during a time when mid-level officers in the Air Force are ideally championing and learning to champion Air Force priorities. This kind of story is disturbing because it is at odds with a key element of Air Force doctrine, which calls for professional Airmen to become, first and foremost, airpower advocates. Perhaps former

Air Force Chief of Staff, General Michael Ryan, writing in Air Force Doctrine Document 2, said it best.

Aerospace power is a critical—and decisive—element in protecting our nation and deterring aggression. It will only remain so if we, as professional Airmen, study, evaluate, and debate our capabilities and the environment of the future. Just as technology, world threats, and opportunities change, so must our doctrine. We, each of us, must be articulate, knowledgeable, and unapologetic advocates of aerospace power.⁴⁹

Unfortunately, there are many other stories, which provide anecdotal evidence that suggests that ILO assignments are negatively affecting Air Force culture. Stories include incidents of Air Force junior and mid-level officers who have performed ILO assignments that are unable to explain basic Air Force tenets. Other stories tell of Air Force officers who, when questioned by sister service officers, are unable to answer basic questions on Air Force core beliefs to include the basic tenants of centralized control and command and control authority of aerospace assets.

The ILO policy has even had effects on culture at the visible or artifact level of culture. There are countless stories of Airmen who have filled ILO assignments who became upset when they returned home because the Air Force prohibited them from wearing Army artifacts on their Air Force uniforms. These artifacts include patches and badges (to include the Army's Combat Infantryman Badge) which they believe they earned while serving with the Army.

One can easily speculate that these examples could represent a negative culture shift within the Air Force. Most would certainly agree that it is not good for the Air Force or the nation to have Airmen who are well versed in aspects of ground combat, but fall intellectually short in their own service's cultural assumptions, values, and artifacts.

Ethics

The Counterinsurgency Manual (FM 3-24/MCWP 3-33.5) states that military leaders “are expected to act ethically in accordance with shared national values and Constitutional principles, which are reflected in the law and military oaths of service.”⁵⁰ It goes on to say that, to uphold these ethical principles, leaders must “continually reconcile mission effectiveness, ethical standards, and thoughtful stewardship of the Nation’s precious resources—human and material—in the pursuit of national aims.”⁵¹

As stated previously, Air Force leaders likely instituted the ILO policy with high ethical standards in mind when they rightfully and very non-parochially volunteered to help fill gaps when Army ground capabilities fell short. Air Force leaders certainly understood that ILO support would not allow them to make the best use of precious human and material resources within the Air Force, but they still instituted the policy to support the nation in a time of need. However, the ILO policy is now approaching four years old and it is time to reexamine the policy from many viewpoints, to include an ethical point of view.

One could argue that it is unethical to use Air Force resources (resources meant to organize, train, and equip the Air Force) as ground resources instead. One could also argue that it is unethical to recruit an Airman into the Air Force under the pretense that he will perform Air Force duties and then assign him to a ground ILO assignment. Whether these practices are unethical or not is open to debate, but one issue is certain. ILO tasked Airmen are getting out of the Air Force at an alarmingly higher rate than non-ILO tasked Airmen, which is certainly a resource drain.⁵²

Some outside of the Air Force contend that the Air Force should happily “do its part” to fight the war on terror. Some have even asserted that it is unethical to expect

the Army to bear the deployment burden of the nation's current wars. However, this is a shallow argument that statistics do not support because the Air Force has deployed a significant percentage of its forces since September 11, 2001. In a briefing to Congress one General Officer pointed out that the Air Force has become truly expeditionary and since September 11, 2001, has deployed 243,615 Airmen.⁵³ This is a significant number for a 330,000 person Air Force. Even more significant is the fact that 63,120 Airmen have deployed twice during this time and 59,120 have deployed three times.⁵⁴ This is particularly noteworthy (and troubling to some Airmen) given the fact that the Army recently confirmed, "about 40 percent of the 515,000 active-duty [Army] soldiers have not yet set foot in a combat zone even as the wars stretch into their fifth and sixth years."⁵⁵ To help remedy this situation, the Army has recently identified some 37,000 of the approximate 206,000 who have not deployed for upcoming deployments.⁵⁶ However, this still leaves nearly 170,000 Soldiers that the Army has roped off for a variety of reasons, including medical and legal problems and the fact that some are serving in specialties that the Army does not want to, or feels it cannot, deploy such as recruiters or trainers.⁵⁷

Not surprisingly, frequent and multiple deployments are stressing the Air Force, and ILO deployments are likely compounding that stress. In fact, there is quantifiable evidence that suggest ILO deployments are more stressing than standard Air Force Air Expeditionary Force (AEF) deployments. Furthermore, when an Airman deploys on an ILO assignment the Air Force stands a much lower chance of retaining him in the future. Statistics show that retention rates are 7% lower for ILO tasked Airmen when compared to those who deploy on normal Air Force deployments.⁵⁸

At best, retention rates for ILO Airmen are lower because of the unexpected strains that ILO taskings put on them. At worst, ILO deployed Airmen could be leaving the service because they feel Air Force leadership has let them down and treated them unethically by promising an Air Force experience and giving them an Army job instead.

Certainly, there are Airmen who feel let down by Air Force leadership with regard to the ILO issue. Whether the policy has risen to the level of an unethical practice is at best questionable, but it has affected the Air Force (some would argue negatively) from the perspectives of mission effectiveness and precious resource management. Therefore, the policy deserves scrutiny from an ethical perspective.

Professionalism

Airmen are professionals. The dictionary definition of “professionalism” is “the standing, practice, or methods of a professional, as distinguished from an amateur.”⁵⁹ Professionals are different from bureaucrats or mere amateurs when it comes to most endeavors. Doctors often come to mind when one thinks of a professional. However, even in the profession of medicine, doctors are not interchangeable even though much of their core training is the same. Therefore, few parents would want a pediatrician to perform heart surgery on their child. Similarly, few in the nation would trust an Army truck driver to fly an F-16 fighter jet, or for that matter, an Air Force pilot to drive and protect a truck in an Army convoy.

Since becoming a separate service, the Air Force has concentrated on organizing, training, and equipping an Air Force that is now the most powerful and professional in the world. Although the Air Force has many commonalities with the other services, it is also as different from them as a pediatrician is from a specialized heart surgeon. Airmen

are also specialists and in order to keep a professional edge they must focus their efforts, education, and study on Air Force related competencies.

America is the “client” in this military professional/client relationship. When U.S. citizens (the clients) entrust a responsibility with professionals they count on them to do the job right. In turn, the duty of the professionals is to perform those duties to the utmost of their ability. Some, to include high-level Air Force Generals, are now beginning to argue that ILO taskings are having a negative effect on the professional responsibility that America has entrusted in its Air Force. In a recent interview, the Commander of Air Combat Command, General Ronald Keys, said:

I think there is a danger, and we worry about that across the Air Force—particularly in Air Combat Command—I had better be able to fight tonight, and I’ve got to be able to fight 30 years from now, too. We have a problem, I’m spending money to train people in skills that I don’t maintain in the United States Air Force.” Example: Airmen driving 50-caliber gun trucks in Iraqi convoys, or Airmen serving as volunteer interrogators. He notes that ACC security forces, in any 12-month period, are deployed to Iraq for six months and prepping for the next deployment for two months—eight months in all—making it hard to meet Air Combat Command’s own needs. When it comes to explosive ordnance disposal specialists, truck drivers, and combat engineers, the story is much the same. Providing “outside-the-wire” base security poses a special problem. “I’m paying for light infantry and getting armored fighting vehicles for my folks,” said Keys. “The question is, should I be doing that against all of the other things I should be doing?” Inevitably, Air Force readiness is diminished.⁶⁰

The operational functions of the Air Force are many and complex. These functions range from strategic attack to close air support; from airlift to air refueling; from space launch to counter space operations; from intelligence to surveillance and reconnaissance; from very specific special operations on the ground to combat search and rescue. These are just a few of the extremely specialized functions that the nation expects its Airmen to accomplish professionally. Therefore, if ILO taskings are causing the Air Force to take its eyes off these many “functional balls” which the nation expects

it to carry, then the ILO policy needs examination from not just a cultural and ethical standpoint but from a professional viewpoint as well.

Recommendations

Based on the issues raised in this paper, recommend the Secretary of Air Force convene a study group or perhaps even a blue-ribbon panel to review the effects that ILO assignments are having on Air Force resources, culture, ethics, and professionalism. Although the following questions are not all-encompassing, at a minimum, the panel should strive to answer the following:

- As a matter of policy, should the Air Force support ILO assignments in the future?
- What has it cost the Air Force (actual dollar cost) to fill ILO assignments since the policy was instituted? Include all associated costs such as salaries, training, additional equipment, maintenance cost, etc. in the final analysis.
- Have the costs (manpower and dollar costs) associated with ILO assignments caused the Air Force to not focus, or decrease its focus, on other areas...i.e. what is the ILO opportunity cost to the Air Force?
- Should the Air Force routinely fill ILO assignments for other services if the ILO assignments are outside of Air Force core competency areas?
- Should the Air Force routinely fill ILO assignments for other services if the assignments are within Air Force core competency areas?
- Are filling ILO assignments significantly contributing to deployment strains in the Air Force?
- If there are ILO missions that the Air Force is routinely assigning Airmen to perform, should the Air Force take over any of these missions and make them Air Force functions or core competencies? If so, where should funding come from to perform these missions?
- If the Air Force, as a matter of policy, decides to support ILO assignments, should Memorandums of Agreement exist between the

services that spell out the types of missions and under what circumstances these missions will be supported?

- Will the Air Force's forecast end strength allow it to perform ILO assignments in the future?
- Are costs associated with ILO assignments negatively affecting Air Force modernization efforts?
- Are ILO assignments negatively affecting the Air Force's ability to manage deployments and give Airmen predictability through the AEF process as originally envisioned?
- Is the increased operations tempo, resulting from ILO assignments, experienced at home station by non-deployed personnel affecting home station training operations?
- Is the increased operations tempo, resulting from ILO assignments, experienced at home station by non-deployed personnel affecting home station safety?
- Are command relationships for ILO Airmen adequate...i.e. are Airmen always working for Airmen, and should Airmen always work for Airmen in ILO relationships as Air Force doctrine suggests?
- Are appropriate controls in place to ensure that Airmen are appropriately trained for the wide range of duties they are performing?
- What additional resource requirements in terms of leadership, administration, and management are ILO assignments generating?
- If ILO assignments continue, can business practices be modified to ensure the Air Force is properly reimbursed or funded to perform these missions?
- What negative cultural effects are ILO assignments having on the Air Force?
- Are ILO assignments negatively affecting the Air Force's ethical principles, or its ability to perform thoughtful stewardship of the precious resources—human and material that the nation has entrusted to it.
- Are ILO assignments hurting the "Professional Qualities" desired and needed in specialized Airmen?
- Why are ILO tasked Airmen retention rates 7% lower than non-ILO tasked Airmen, and what can the Air Force do to reverse this negative trend?

Conclusion

The current Air Force ILO policy is affecting, in many cases negatively, not just Air Force capabilities but its resources, culture, ethics, and professionalism as well. This paper provided background information that described how the ILO tasking policy developed in the Air Force. It then analyzed the ILO policy from a resource perspective then shifted focus to show a link between the policy and its current and potential future impacts on the culture, ethics, and professionalism of the Air Force. In the end, it is recommended and asserted that, for the good of the Air Force and the nation, the ILO policy warrants comprehensive examination in the form of a Secretary of the Air Force convened study group or blue-ribbon panel to examine the issue.

If the Air Force elects to undertake the examination, it must take a comprehensive and critical look at the entire ILO policy to determine if the policy warrants continuation, change, or even abandonment. The core question, which a study group or blue-ribbon panel must seek to answer is—"Should the Air Force continue to provide Airmen to perform Army jobs, through some kind of ILO policy, in the future?" Of course, in order to answer this core question the Air Force must answer a series of other questions, many outlined in the recommendations section of this paper, to determine if and how the ILO policy is affecting the resources, culture, ethics, and professionalism of the Air Force.

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