

Air Force Track System to Increase
Retention, Lethality, and Quality of Life

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Executive Summary

One of the most pressing issues facing the United States Air Force is the ever growing pilot shortage, reaching a deficit of nearly 2,000 pilots and expected to increase (Pawlyk, 2017). A number of factors led to this shortage, including the high operational tempo, the availability of higher paying jobs in the private sector, the additional duties detracting from primary jobs, and the lack of ability to continue as a technically trained line-flier versus transitioning to leadership roles requiring drastically reduced flight time as a more senior service member. However, these issues are not limited to only rated career fields. The Air Force could potentially see critical shortages in all AFSCs. The Squadron Officer School Class 18C Think Tank collective was asked to address this growing retention crisis and its impact on lethality. The authors of this article recommend establishing a track system in both the officer and enlisted ranks to retain experience and maximize lethality in highly technical career fields, called the Air Force Track System (AFTS). This system codifies the existing command track and creates an equally valid technical track. The AFTS delineates the separate tracks with highly skilled, technically minded experts in the technical track with a depth of highly technical experience and in the command track, passionate leaders who are intentionally and deliberately developed for command. Complementing General Goldfein's Revitalizing the Squadron and Additional Duty Reduction initiatives, the AFTS addresses the reasons driving airmen out of the force, thereby increasing the overall warfighting skill set by retaining expertise, and ultimately increasing Air Force lethality. The AFTS demonstrates commitment to airmen through an empowered voice in their career path which will allow airmen to focus their career on their talents and passions either in command and leadership or as a technical expert, resulting in increased retention.

Background

Since the end of the Cold War, the Air Force has experienced a number of significant reductions in force, contributing to the overall decrease in manning by 38% (Grosso, 2017). Examples of these congressionally mandated reductions include the 2005 Program Budget Directive (PBD) 720, which reduced the total active force from approximately 377,000 to approximately 335,000 (a reduction of over 10%) (O'Neill, 2012), and the Air Force's 2014 Reduction in Force (RIF), which further reduced the active force from approximately 327,000 to approximately 310,900 (a reduction of 5%) (Losey, Aug 2017). These regulations, combined with inadequate retention, culminated in a shortage of Air Force pilots in 2016, totaling 1,555 pilots across active duty, the Reserves, and the Air National Guard. The gravest of these shortages exists in the active duty fighter pilot community, which was 873 pilots short in 2016 and was projected to grow to over 1,000 pilots short by the end of fiscal year (FY) 2017 (Grosso, 2017).

The decline in pilots and Airmen in other AFSCs has caught the attention of Air Force Senior leaders. Chief among them are General David Goldfein, Air Force Chief of Staff, who commented that today's Air Force "[is] the smallest we've ever been," (Moon, 2017) and the Honorable Heather Wilson, Secretary of the Air Force, stated, "with 2,000 pilots short, it will break the force" (Losey, Nov 2017). Unfortunately, this drawdown in the service's manning has coincided with an increase in operational requirements, thus creating additional strain on Air Force personnel and decreasing the force's full-spectrum readiness for future conflicts.

There are at least two foreseeable methods to address the dwindling force. The first would be to bring an increased number of accessions into the service. However, one of the major issues with this idea is that it provides a quantity, not necessarily quality, approach to Air Force

human capital. Accessions do not necessarily enter with the requisite skill sets to be lethal on day one of service, thus requiring training. In the current environment however, training is not a priority and the time to do such training is minimal (Grosso, 2017). The second approach, which is the focus of this paper, is to increase the retention of existing personnel. The successful execution of a retention-focused approach will allow the Air Force to retain the skills that existing personnel possess, which provides a greater return on investment from training members, ultimately ensuring that the lethality of the force is maintained.

The officer retention and lethality issue also extends to the Air Force Medical Service (AFMS). The retention of medical personnel has been discussed in depth within the AFMS since at least the 1990s (Rodgers, 1990). AFMS officers, Biomedical Service Corps (BSC), Dental Corps (DC), Medical Corps (MC), Medical Service Corps, and Nurse Corps are an integral part of the Air Force's readiness and their mission is intimately tied to Joint and Air Force Doctrine. In the 1990s, the Air Force conducted a study which showed that the number one reason for MC officer separation was pay; however, it also found that pay alone was not going to solve the retention problem (Rodgers, 1990). The study also found that MC officers would be more willing to remain in the service if administrative/ancillary responsibilities were minimized in order to maximize the provider's time with patients. In addition, it was found in 2013 that O-6 DC officers, who spent the majority of their time practicing their craft, had a higher retention rate than MC officers, who are mostly forced into command at the same rank (Osgood, 2013).

Table 1 is an extract from Lieutenant General Gina Grosso's presentation to the U.S. House of Representatives' Committee on Armed Services, in regards to the pilot shortage (Grosso, 2017). While there are some areas that are outside the Air Force's control (e.g., "Availability of Civilian Jobs") and others that are needed for Air Force lethality (e.g., "The

Potential to Leave Your Family for a Deployment”), there are areas where increasing retention can potentially alleviate the pressure. By retaining personnel above the current rate, the additional duties are spread across more members, reducing the number of additional duties per member. This would facilitate a better work/life balance and, potentially, a more manageable home station tempo. In an ideal case, this cycle continues and the next iteration will further balance the factors of work/life balance, tempo, and additional duties until, at length, the Air Force is able to fully man its requirements. The first step is to increase retention.

Table 1: 2015 Rated Exit Survey Results on the “Top 5 Influencers to Leave,” excerpt from Lieutenant General Gina M. Grosso’s testimony before congress (Grosso, 2017).

Pilot Influences	Top 5
Additional Duties	37%
Maintaining work/life balance and meeting family commitments	31%
Availability of Civilian Jobs	24%
Home Station Tempo (length of duty day/work schedule)	22%
The potential to leave your family for a deployment	21%

Air Force Track System Overview

The Air Force can retain both traditional, command-focused officers and technically adept officers through the codification of the existing command track and the creation of a technical track in select, highly technical AFSCs. The AFTS would allow officers to concentrate their efforts towards becoming a commander or towards developing, honing, and applying their technical knowledge. The implementation of the AFTS provides opportunities to strengthen the force, enhance lethality, and retain technically proficient Airmen to whom the traditional command career progression may not appeal.

As shown on Figure 1 below, Command Duty Officers (CDOs) will follow the traditional command track and promote through the current officer grades. The CDO career will be focused on command and leadership development, following the existing officer career progression through advanced Professional Military Education (PME), staff experience, and key leadership positions. The technical track officers will be called Line Duty Officers (LDO) for a joint-translatable term, utilizing the Navy acronym for their technical officers. Borrowing from the flying community's term "flying the line," Line Duty Officer will focus their career towards technical development and expertise. LDOs will promote from the grades of O-3T through O-6T, with on-ramps at the O-3, O-4, and O-5 levels. The letter "T" is added to the grades to distinguish LDOs from their CDO equivalents. Along the technical track, the highest attainable grade would be O-6T. Capping LDO career progression at O-6T has precedent within the Department of Defense as it is consistent with the U.S. Navy's Limited Duty Officer program, which has been authorized to promote its technical track officers no higher than the grade of O-6 since 1985 (Bureau of Naval Personnel, 2011). The LDO career will be focused on the development of technical expertise in the assigned AFSC while maintaining leadership proficiency.

Officers would have the initial opportunity to apply to become an LDO upon becoming a senior captain with a minimum of seven years of commissioned service within one career field. LDO selection boards will be held on an annual basis, and applications will be accepted for O-3T, O-4T and O-5T. If a member is not selected, he or she will remain on the command track. Officers on the command track in the grade of O-6 and above would not be considered for transition to the technical track; they must remain on the command track. This restriction will safeguard O-6 technical track opportunities for LDOs.

Though the emphasis of this paper is the implementation of the AFTS for officers, the same principles can be applied to developing and implementing an AFTS for enlisted airmen. Enlisted airmen would be assigned to an enlisted leadership track as a senior non-commissioned officer (SNCO) or to a technical track as a technical non-commissioned officer (TNCO). The enlisted leadership track is consistent with enlisted career progression in today's Air Force. Airmen would have the initial opportunity to apply for the enlisted technical track selection upon attaining the grade of E-6. Boards would be held on an annual basis for E-6T and E-7T. The highest attainable grade along the enlisted technical track would be E-8T. Enlisted airmen of the grade E-8 and above would not be considered for transition to the enlisted technical track; they would be required to remain on the enlisted leadership track. By delineating a separate technical enlisted track, individuals are able to continue to hone their technical skills and mentor airmen without becoming preoccupied with their managerial roles and responsibilities.

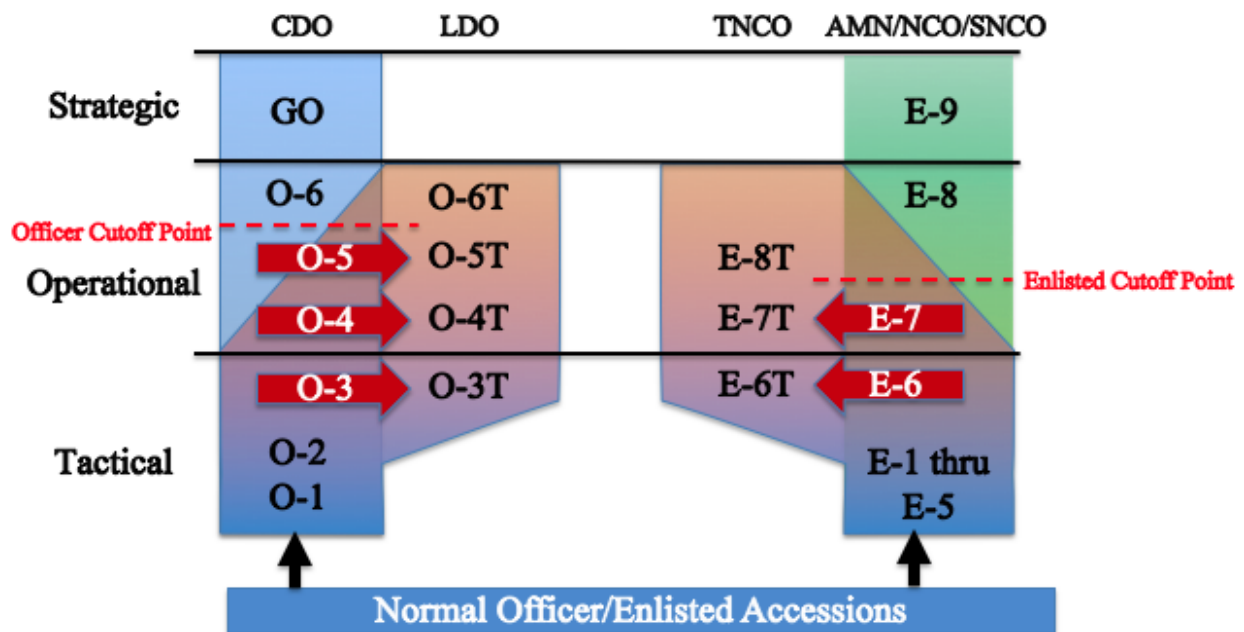


Figure 1: USAF officer and enlisted accessions and promotions for CDOs, LDOs, TNCOs, and SNCOs. The red arrows identify the possible transitions to the officer and enlisted technical career tracks based on officer and enlisted grades.

Implementation Details

The United States Congress controls the baseline end strength of Active Duty, selected Reserve, and Title 10 National Guard personnel, as well as limits the Secretary of Defense and each Service Secretary to only increase that end strength limit by roughly two to three percent at each of their levels (Cornell Law School, n.d.). However, this Congressional permission comes with various restrictions regarding which category of positions and funding may be utilized to accomplish such changes (Cornell Law School, n.d.). The goal of the AFTS is to retain experience in order to maintain and further increase the Air Force's lethality. This is achieved through a combination of flexible personnel authorizations for select technically-focused AFSCs and targeted pay supplements. By identifying and allocating some of the existing funded requirements to an independent technical track, the Air Force avoids the need to establish newly funded authorizations to meet mission demands, against an already restrictive budget. Furthermore, by ensuring that the technical expertise of the force is specifically identified and safeguarded, the Air Force is able to maintain its lethal posture in an array of combat operations regardless of budget fluctuations, which sometimes require personnel expansions or drawdowns.

If the U.S. military goes through another drawdown, the Air Force would have the ability to better target certain skills sets by strategically selecting what percentage of the LDO and CDO to cut. Additionally, this program provides an additional "spigot" to control the force. The Air Force will be able to continually ensure that Field Grade Officer (FGO) levels are kept within the Defense Officer Personnel Management Act of 1980 (Rostker, Thie, Lacy, Kawata & Purnell, 1993). The responsibility will lie with the Career Functional Managers (CFM) to work with functional leaders at the operational, strategic, and tactical levels in order to identify appropriate

positions for realignment. AFSC designations will be augmented for LDO personnel to specify them as technical positions; for example, X14N3 with the “X” prefix denoting the LDO track.

As mentioned above, in order to ensure that the force maintains its lethality in times of fluctuating personnel numbers, the current career pyramids will continue to maintain their familiar structure under the AFTS. However, those identified technical positions and equivalent educational opportunities will be realigned to a new, parallel technical pyramid. Developmental training will remain a requirement for both tracks, but we envision a clear delineation between the necessity for professional enrichment for CDOs versus a more technical edification for LDOs. Doing so would ensure CDOs and LDOs maintain career track integrity, and formalize the developmental requirements between the two fields of study. The CDO track will preserve its emphasis on the current, traditional PME courses, such as the Air Command and Staff College (ACSC) and the School of Advanced Air and Space Studies (SAASS), while the LDO track would concentrate on garnering additional, specialized technical skills via Technical Military Education (TME). TME would incorporate existing programs, such as the Air Force Institute of Technology (AFIT), Education with Industry (EWI), service exchange programs, or career field specific instructor courses, as well as possibly introduce other educational opportunities to officers. These targeted developmental programs ensure that officers continue to develop expertise in their main realm of responsibility, while maintaining proficiency in the other one.

Upon commissioning, all officers default to the CDO track and are not eligible for LDO consideration until they complete Squadron Officer School (SOS) and obtain a minimum of seven years of commissioned service within one career field. Members desiring admittance to the LDO career track will begin by receiving their commander’s or director’s endorsement.

Endorsements for LDO accessions will be accomplished in a similar manner to promotion recommendations on a Promotion Recommendation Form; in contrast, the Technical Recommendation Forms (TRF) will contain the following options: “Do Not Recommend,” “Recommend,” and “Definitely Recommend.” Any endorsement on a TRF is valid for one year from the date it was signed and will need to be updated annually if the member was not selected for the LDO career track. The TRF and LDO transition package requirements will need to be focused on career accomplishments with a background specifically tied to the technical aspects of the member’s career field. This emphasis on technical career accomplishments will assist in ensuring applications thoroughly highlight the ability of a member to contribute his or her technical talents to the Air Force mission. Additional degrees or certifications of a technical nature obtained outside of the Air Force will also be highlighted in the package. This package will then be routed through the Senior Rater to the applicable CFM for review. The CFMs will then match initial LDO candidates with open positions within their AFSC. Entrance into the LDO track will require the member to incur an initial two-year Active Duty Service Commitment (ADSC).

In terms of progression and movement within the career field, LDOs will compete via an LDO board to validate their eligibility for promotion. The frequency and number of LDO promotion boards will be based upon boarded results and position availability. It will be the responsibility of each LDO to locate grade-appropriate positions to apply and compete for. Once validated, similar to the Air National Guard construct, individuals will interview with the gaining commanders for “authorized UMD positions consistent with the individual’s AFSC, skill level and grade to meet the unit’s Unit Tasking Code requirements” in order to promote and move into the billets (National Guard Bureau, 2012). Once in the new position, promotion will be

awarded and members will be required to complete a four year assignment. If a permanent change of station (PCS) is involved, an additional ADSC will be incurred commensurate to the level of skills training as determined by the Air Force. Wing commanders may authorize up to a two-year extension beyond the initial four-year assignment; however, anything beyond this threshold will require Air Force Personnel Center approval. We envision that this requirement will prevent excessive stagnation in the force.

After the Air Force has authorized an individual into the LDO career track and the individual has developed their technical expertise, there will be limited opportunities to return to the CDO track. Traditional retirement and separation options will remain the same in terms of prerequisite Time in Service and ADSC requirements. Returning to the CDO track will not necessarily be easy for the member accomplish, but it will be an option. Similar to entering the LDO track, it will require Senior Rater endorsement, CFM/Assignment Team endorsement, and all other CDO promotion package-required items. Having the CFM endorsement is necessary to show that there is a need for that individual in the CDO track. Once the requirements are met, the package will meet a supplemental CDO promotion board. Applications may be submitted annually, with CFM and Senior Rater endorsement signatures reaccomplished.

If selected for return to the CDO career track, the member must first complete the appropriate level of PME within two years of promotion selection. He or she will incur a two-year ADSC and will not be eligible to return to the LDO career track. The intent is to give individuals choices as their life situations change, in conjunction with preventing them from repeatedly changing tracks, thereby minimizing the workload of CFMs. The only caveat to this option will be for O-6Ts. They will not be eligible to transfer back to the CDO track without

Secretary of the Air Force and Chief of Staff of the Air Force approval. In addition, they must still meet a CDO O-6 promotion board after the completion of required promotion items.

Financial Compensation for Line Duty Officers

When considering financial compensation for CDOs and LDOs, the primary considerations should be changing the current compensation systems as little as possible, while encouraging the retention of top quality technical talent, despite significantly slower LDO promotion cadence. To achieve these dual goals, we will make no changes to the existing compensation for CDOs. LDO compensation will also primarily follow the current compensation system, including unchanged compensation from existing base, housing, subsistence, and any career specific pays (e.g., flight pay).

In addition to these traditional compensation vehicles, we propose the creation of technical supplemental pay, designed to partially compensate LDO personnel whose promotions are expected to come much more slowly than their traditional peers. Figure 2 illustrates expected CDO and LDO promotion timelines, current base pay rates, and the addition of supplemental pay to encourage long term retention of top technical talent. We anticipate that technical supplemental pay would be controlled by AFSC and adjusted within defined limits to account for manning shortages and surpluses. In most career fields and manning situations, we would expect total LDO compensation to be lower than the traditional CDO track, in order to avoid over-incentivizing the technical track. Furthermore, we expect supplemental pay to continually increase throughout a 30 year career for O-3/4/5Ts, a departure from current base pay, which caps out at 14, 18, and 22 years for O-3s to O-5s respectively.

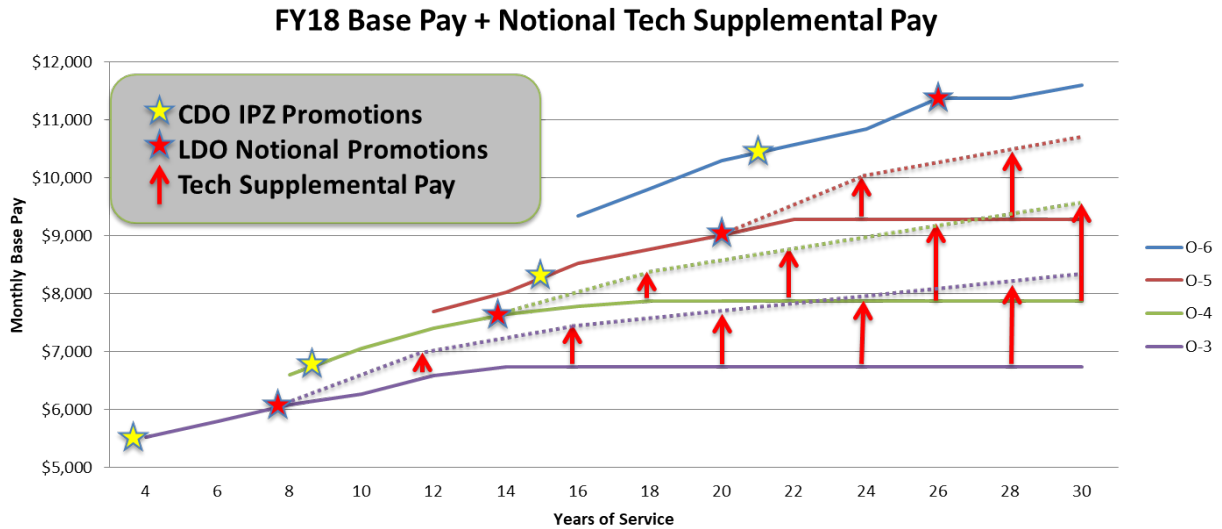


Figure 2: Illustration of CDO In Primary Zone (IPZ) promotions, notional LDO promotions, base pay rates, and technical supplemental pay.

Under both the “High-3” and Blended Retirement Systems (BRS), Airmen become retirement and pension eligible at 20 years of service. By this time, base pay has already capped out for O-3/4Ts, sending a subtle message about his or her continued value to the force beyond the traditional 20 year career. By gradually increasing technical supplemental pay over time, we will provide an incentive for highly experienced technical officers to stay in the force well beyond their eligibility for retirement. Another positive interplay between technical tracks and BRS happens earlier in an Airman’s career, when technical track on-ramps at eight years of service provide a bridge to BRS continuation pay, available at 12 years of service. Providing multiple layered opportunities and incentives like this increases our chances of retaining the best personnel.

We expect total personnel costs to increase under the technical track system due to the addition of technical supplemental pay. We assume that LDO billets will be created through one-for-one flipping of current billets; therefore, traditional compensation costs will not change

from the current system. However, technical supplemental pay will raise baseline personnel costs over current levels. Individual LDOs will earn less than their peer CDOs due to delayed promotion, but LDO billets will cost slightly more than equivalent CDO billets (e.g. O-4 vs O-4T) because of supplemental pay. This expectation is in line with findings from a recent RAND study, which found that a technical track system would cost the Air Force 0.8% more per LDO billet, after accounting for reduced training costs (Robbert, 2017).

Career Progression Examples

Establishing a clear, realistic career progression within the various officer tracks will be an important consideration when implementing the AFTS. An officer electing to progress along the LDO path will most likely be concerned with how technical they will be able to remain along his or her respective career path; the ability to remain technically focused is, after all, the primary motivation for opting into the LDO track. Likewise, an officer electing to remain on the CDO track may be curious as to what training and job opportunities they will need to forego in order to pursue the command and leadership roles associated with their chosen track.

A track system is not a foreign concept in the Air Force. There are over a dozen unique specialties within the BSC career field (Biomedical Engineers, Optometrists, Physical Therapists, etc.) but it is broken down into three informal tracks: command, specialty, and research. This breakdown is shown in Figure 3.

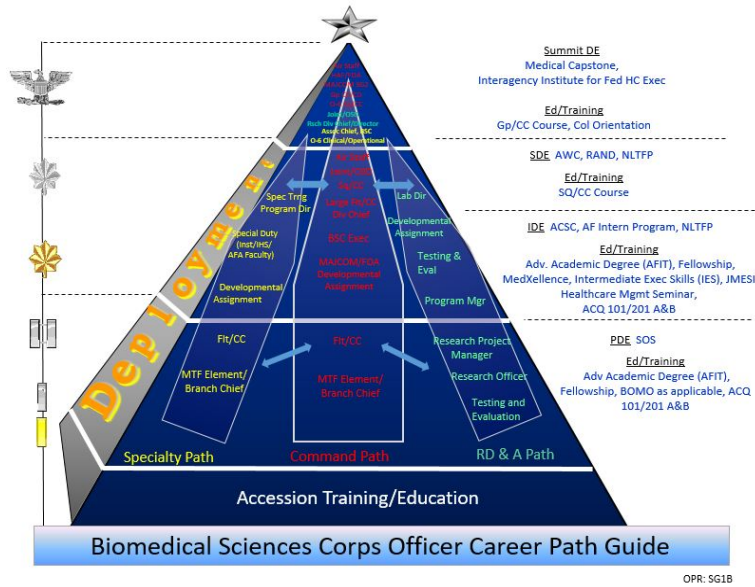


Figure 3: Current BSC Career Pyramid

The LDO track applies to a broad range of AFSCs but for the purposes of this paper we will focus on notional tracks for rated officers (see Figure 4) and Cyberspace Operations Officers (see Figure 5).

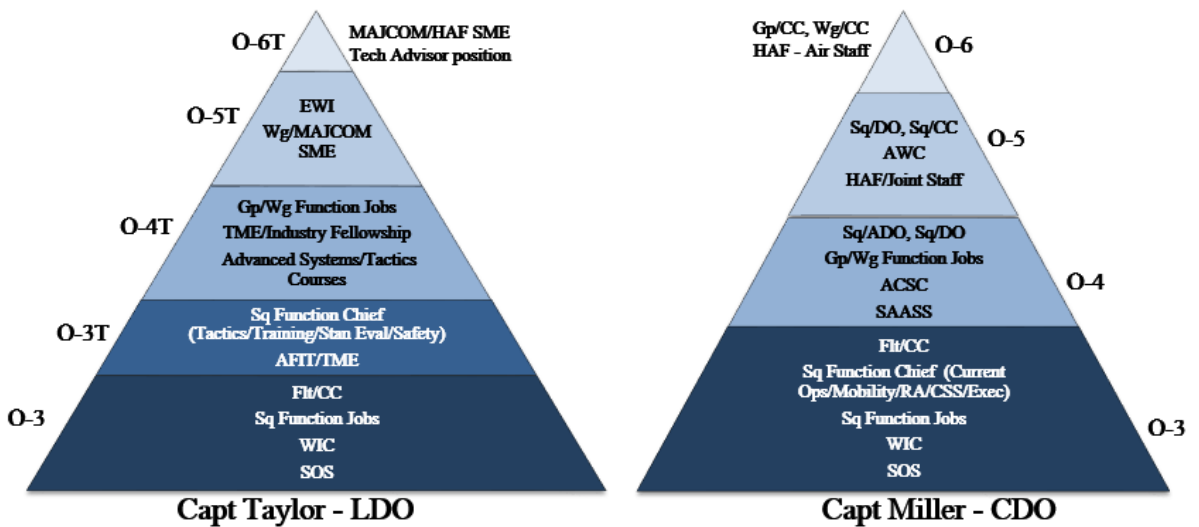


Figure 4: Side-by-side comparison of notional career pyramids for rated officers on LDO & CDO tracks.

The graphic above provides a side-by-side comparison of the notional career pathways for an LDO and CDO in the rated officer community. Readers will notice that the CDO career pyramid is remarkably similar to the current career model, whereby an officer begins in a tactical

role before progressing through various leadership roles at the flight, squadron, and group levels before potentially ascending to wing command and to the general officer ranks. This career progression shares some similarities with the LDO pathway in the early stages, particularly in initial technical training and the opportunity to attend Weapons Instructor Course (WIC) and SOS in-residence. Deviation in PME between the respective pathways begins after this point, with officers on the CDO track attending ACSC and Air War College (AWC), unlike their LDO counterparts.

We expect there to be significant deviations in training and assignments for the rated LDO from the more traditional CDO path once the officer makes the transition. The rated LDO would spend their time as chief of a squadron function in a tactics, training, or safety role, all functions which require high levels of tactical expertise. From this point the rated LDO would seek to attain depth of knowledge rather than breadth of exposure by pursuing training courses in advanced systems and tactics and opportunities for fellowships with industry or a technical graduate degree from AFIT. These TME activities would replace the more traditional PME attended by an officer on the CDO track. Moving forward, the rated LDO could use their in-depth tactical expertise to oversee training, standardization, and evaluation functions at the group and wing levels. An EWI tour could replace AWC for the rated LDO. At the O-5/6T levels, the rated LDO will serve as a subject matter expertise at the wing and higher headquarter levels.

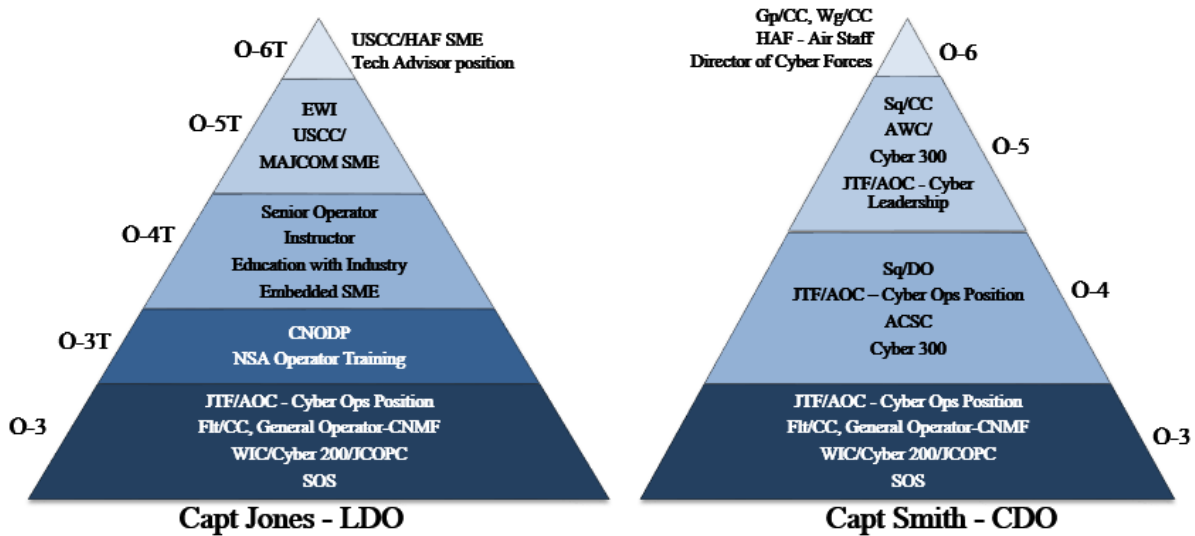


Figure 5: Side-by-side comparison of notional career pyramids for 17D officers on LDO & CDO tracks.

The Air Force originally established the 17D AFSC as the single cyber career field. They broke it down into an A-shred for cyber warfare operations and B-shred for network operations. This split was formalized in 2014 with the creation of the 17S AFSC, formalizing the cyber warfare operations split. The 17S community performs highly technical operations utilizing cyber weapon systems for both offensive and defensive cyber operations (OCO and DCO, respectively). The 17Ds perform roles in line with network maintenance and traditional communication squadron functions. This AFSC evolution in cyber career fields shows that the Air Force has been moving towards technical separation for years and the move to AFTS for cyber would be the culmination of this effort.

Cyber officers in the AFTS would focus on those experiences and career moves that allow them to continue advanced technical training and positions that allow them to directly employ those skills on-keyboard. Currently, many 17S officers are moved off-keyboard as senior lieutenants or junior captains into non-technical leadership roles. Given that these officers have spent nearly an entire year in training before becoming Combat Mission Ready on their weapon systems, the AF is only getting 24-36 months of operations before they move off-keyboard.

Multiple high-performing cyber operators are leaving the service at the completion of their ADSC due to this gross misuse of their time and talents. The exit survey data is lacking on cyber officers leaving active duty, but interviews conducted with several former highly-skilled officers who left the service revealed deep frustration at the disconnect between what they had been trained to do and the restricted window in which they were allowed to exercise and grow their skills (N. Lupien, C. Benson, & D. Wyleczuk-Stern, personal communication, January 18, 2018). As one operator put it: “I left because there was no path available to me that had me getting better at my job, as distinct from getting better as a manager, which I don't [care] about.” Additionally, there is a strong impression that senior leaders are disconnected from the technology and this disconnect adversely affects their decision-making ability. Per the interview: “You need officers aware of the tech so they understand the tools and systems so they make good decisions with it”.

A potential path for AFTS cyber officers would consist of on-keyboard operations for the entirety of their time in O-1 and O-2 grades. As a Technical Captain (O-3T), they could take on flight or team commander roles as long as they remain technically engaged in operations. Potential programs for advanced training at this level are the National Security Agency's Remote Interactive Operator Training course or the Computer Network Operations Development Course (CNODP), also run by the NSA. As they transition into O-4Ts they could pursue EWI or take positions at Air Operations Centers as cyber subject matter experts. They would be placed in positions wherein they remain connected to operations and maintain technical competency. Moving into O-5T, the officer would be positioned to incorporate their in-depth knowledge and expertise throughout all levels of leadership and operations, advising on Major Command and/or Combatant Command staffs, or serving as a technical leader within a squadron. This path would

allow cyber officers to become highly trained, use their skills throughout their careers, and keep critical talent and knowledge in the Air Force.

Implementation Timeline

We envision the implementation timeline of AFTS consisting of four phases after the initial research and approval period has concluded (phase zero). It is estimated that phase one through four would take approximately two years. Phase zero includes the research conducted for this paper as well as further research investigating the feasibility of the AFTS. It is during this phase that Headquarters Air Force Manpower, Personnel and Services should run war gaming scenarios to determine the anticipated impact on manning. Upon the development of a rollout plan and the conclusion of the investigation phase, the AFTS would be ready for final approval.

The primary focus during phase one is the identification by CFMs of AFSC which would benefit from this type of system as well as the selection of specific positions within units which would qualify.

Phase two begins with the launch of a public affairs campaign aimed at educating eligible officers on the new system as well as providing information on the application process. At the end of this phase, the selection boards for each career field would review eligible applicants and select the most qualified.

As phase three begins, selected officers would be required to submit assignment preferences for review and matching by career field managers. All matched members would be programmed for a PCS or a permanent change of assignment at the next assignment cycle.

After the first round of assignments, phase four is initiated. Within phase four, the primary focus would be on managing position vacancies, promotion cycles, and other technical

requirements. Lastly, a review board should be established to identify any system weaknesses and determine the overall impact to the Air Force in terms of increased retention and lethality.

Summary

The Air Force's ongoing retention problem is well documented. Although the small size of our current force is partially due to congressional mandates, data from recent exit surveys indicate there are concerns the Air Force can seek to address in order to retain more of the highly skilled warriors who leave the force prematurely. We submit that the AFTS is an innovative solution to this problem that, if implemented, would greatly aid the Air Force's desire to retain manpower and maximize lethality in highly technical career fields.

This is not to say that the course of action outlined in this article is currently a perfect one. The authors freely acknowledge that this recommended course of action does not address all of the causes underlying the ongoing retention issue. The AFTS can not remove additional duties from the force, nor can it decrease the high deployed operations tempo that currently exists in our service. Our recommended solution to the Air Force's ongoing retention problem only recommends that 10% of the force be allowed to serve in the LDO track; other COAs must be pursued to increase retention across the remainder of the service. Additionally, the solution presented in this article only portray the viewpoint of a relatively small number of captains seeking an innovative solution to a longstanding problem; there are surely constraints and limitations we have either overlooked or are unaware of completely.

Despite these acknowledged limitations, we submit that there are numerous benefits to implementation of the AFTS. The structure of the AFTS will be simple in nature in order to facilitate seamless movement into, within, and out of the LDO track. There will be sufficient rigidity and mobility limitations to ensure stability, as well as adequate manning levels, in the

career fields and the total force. A small level of fluidity will be incorporated into the system by providing a limited number of select individuals the opportunity to return to the CDO track. Furthermore, this system will afford CFMs more freedom to manage career fields as needed to meet mission requirements, as well as give individuals more freedom to compete for their desired path. Ultimately, we recommend the Air Force seek to implement the AFTS as soon as possible in order to retain the highly technical manpower needed to maintain a high level of lethality in the service.

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