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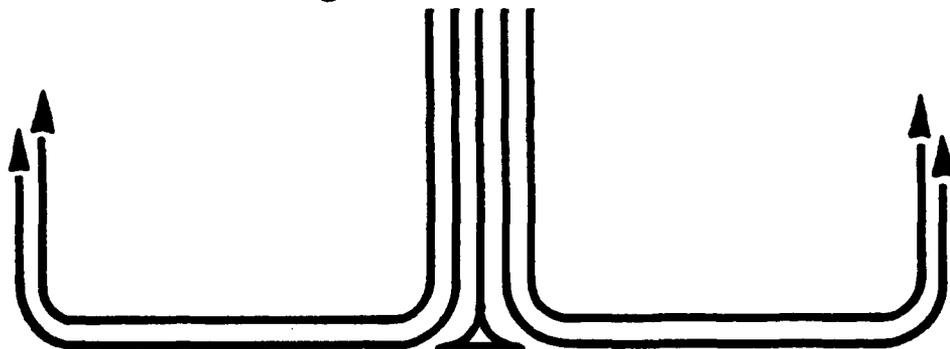
STUDENT REPORT

SQUADRON COMMANDER TRAINING -
AN ASSESSMENT OF NEED

MAJOR PATRICK L. IVEY

88-1335

"insights into tomorrow"



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REPORT NUMBER 88-1335

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AUTHOR(S) MAJOR PATRICK L. IVEY, USAF

FACULTY ADVISOR MAJOR WILLIAM E. SHEPARD, ACSC/CAV

SPONSOR LT COL ROBERT H. LEWIS, ACSC/CAV

Submitted to the faculty in partial fulfillment of
requirements for graduation.

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PREFACE

The purpose of this project was to review and evaluate existing resources for training new and prospective squadron commanders by focusing on: (1) What the new squadron commander needs to know, (2) What information and training is already available, and (3) What can be done to better prepare officers for command. The author, a former squadron commander, based his conclusions and recommendations on his personal experience, interviews with other squadron commanders, graduate surveys from previous ACSC classes, and other resources used in this research listed in the bibliography.

The concept of this study was to use the viewpoint of a new commander preparing for the transition to command. With that in mind, the results shouldn't be construed as criticism, but merely as an attempt to objectively analyze the effectiveness of training resources available. Anyone who has been a commander knows the transition into command and the first few months are extremely critical to establishing credibility and building confidence. Therefore, a secondary goal of this paper was to identify those issues which typically cause problems for new commanders and make recommendations to address them.

The author would like to express his appreciation to Major Bill Shepard for his support, encouragement, advice, and assistance in completing this project. In addition, this project could not have been successful without the cooperation and assistance of: Captain Anna Shaklee (MAC), Captain June Lindner (SAC), Captain Bob Green (TAC), Captain Chuck Crane (ATC), and Captain Barbara Warner (AFCC) who provided books, handouts, and other information from their commands' squadron commander programs for use in developing Chapter Two. The author would also like to acknowledge the contribution of his wife, Becky, who patiently supported him in this endeavor.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Major Patrick L. Ivey graduated from North Carolina State University in 1974, with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Economics, and earned a Master of Science degree in Administration and Management from Georgia College in 1983. His professional military education includes Squadron Officer School completed by correspondence and in-residence, and Air Command and Staff College by seminar.

Major Ivey was commissioned in 1974 through ROTC. Since Completing the Avionics Maintenance Officer course at Lowry AFB, Colorado, he has served in a variety of aircraft maintenance positions in four different commands. From 1974 to 1978, he was a branch OIC in three different maintenance squadrons in the 60 Military Airlift Wing (MAC), Travis AFB, California. From Travis AFB, he went to Torrejon AB, Spain where he was OIC of Enroute Maintenance in the 625 Military Airlift Support Squadron.

In 1980, he was selected for the AFLC Logistics Career Broadening Program at Robins AFB, Georgia. During this three year tour, he learned depot operations and "wholesale" logistics. Major Ivey was then transferred to Suwon AB, Korea in June 1983 where he was a branch OIC in the 6151 Consolidated Aircraft Maintenance Squadron (PACAF). Returning to Robins AFB in June 1984, he was assigned to the 19 Air Refueling Wing (SAC), where he served as maintenance supervisor in two different squadrons, wing Maintenance Control Officer, and, as Commander, 19 Avionics Maintenance Squadron.

Major Ivey's decorations include the Meritorious Service Medal with two oak leaf clusters, and the Air Force Commendation Medal with one oak leaf cluster.

Major Ivey is married to the former Rebecca Jo McDonald of Fort Dodge, Iowa.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



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"insights into tomorrow"

REPORT NUMBER 88-1335

AUTHOR(S) Major Patrick L. Ivey, USAF

TITLE SQUADRON COMMANDER TRAINING - AN ASSESSMENT OF NEED

I. Purpose: To review and evaluate existing resources for training new and prospective squadron commanders, evaluate the need to expand those resources, and make recommendations to better prepare officers for command through more specific training.

II. Problem: There is no "formal" course available to specifically prepare officers for command. Elements of leadership and management theory and some limited classroom "application" of that theory are incorporated primarily in PME courses (SOS, ACSC, AWC), with varying exposure in many ATC and AFIT courses. Both formal and informal research by the author indicate most former commanders got much of their command training on-the-job, sometimes at the expense of the people and organizations they commanded.

III Discussion of Analysis: The author approached the problem by asking three basic questions: (1) What does the new squadron commander need to know? (2) What information and training is already available? (3) What can be done to better prepare officers for command? Chapter One addresses the first question using formal surveys of past ACSC graduates and the author's personal experience, corroborated by informal surveys of other

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commanders, and discussions with peers. In attempting to answer the second question, Chapters Two, Three, and Four cover different resources available to prepare officers for command. Chapter Two reviews five major command orientation programs for new squadron commanders. Chapter Three gives a brief overview and evaluation of the command aspects of the ACSC resident curriculum, and Chapter Four offers a perspective on the need for independent study to augment formal training and enhance personal as well as professional qualities. The author also recommends and strongly endorses several books for commanders' personal libraries. Finally, Chapter Five presents the resulting conclusions and recommendations.

IV. Findings: There is no formal course specifically designed to prepare officers for command. ACSC comes closest to meeting this need, but surveys of former graduates indicate the school's emphasis is more on staff than on command. The surveys also suggested the focus of command training was too heavily oriented toward theories and concepts. The majority of feedback evaluated for this project indicated the need for more specific, "practical" training to better prepare officers for handling the myriad of "people problems" typically faced by commanders.

V. Conclusions: (1) There is strong evidence to support the need for more specific, "practical" training for commanders. The most expedient methods for addressing the problem in the short term are changes/additions to the ACSC curriculum and MAJCOM squadron commander programs. For long term solutions, more study is needed in this area to confirm the magnitude of the problem and to pinpoint the best solutions. (2) MAJCOM squadron commander programs could be enhanced by crossflow of information and unique ideas.

VI. Recommendations: (1) Provide additional specific training for new and prospective squadron commanders on the practical aspects of command. Shift some of the emphasis of current training from theories and concepts to the handling of day-to-day people problems. (2) Have MAJCOMs crossflow information and ideas on their squadron commander programs. (3) Conduct an Air Force-wide survey of commanders and former commanders to determine the need for additional training for new commanders and solicit ideas on where to place the emphasis. (4) Establish some method(s) for "mentorship" or crossflow of information between former, experienced commanders and new or prospective commanders (i.e. seminars at wing level, base level, command level).

Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

Command is probably the most challenging, fulfilling, and rewarding experience one may encounter in military service, but it can also be one of the most demanding, frustrating, and humbling experiences. Most commanders would readily admit to riding this "roller coaster" of emotions during their tenure, but to some the frustrating and humbling memories far outweigh the fulfilling and rewarding, especially in the first 6 - 12 months. There may be any number of reasons for this difference: conflict with superiors, circumstances beyond the control of the commander, unfortunate and untimely incidents, just to name a few. The author submits that there is one factor that may well be a prime contributor, and it is all but overlooked--training.

A Training Problem?

Command is unique in that there is no counterpart to the commander in the civilian world and no other position quite like it in the military. Yet, despite its uniqueness and importance, command is one of the least understood and least prepared for positions in the military. That may sound like a strong statement, but think for a minute about what kind of training is provided for the prospective commander. The closest thing to formal training are the short (usually 3 - 5 day) orientations or workshops conducted by the major commands for their new squadron commanders. The remainder of the training comes from exposure to leadership and management principles in Professional Military Education (PME) courses like Squadron Officer School (SOS), Air Command and Staff College (ACSC), and Air War College (AWC). Leadership and management are also covered in a variety of other Air Training Command (ATC) and Air Force Institute of Technology (AFIT) courses that are routinely taken to enhance job knowledge and overall professional qualities. Some officers have the opportunity to closely "observe" other commanders during their careers, but many more do not. In short, there is a significant difference in the amount and type of training received by the prospective commander prior to his/her selection for and assumption of a command position. Is there a need, then, for additional, specific training for commanders?

Some Interesting Feedback

Surveys of past ACSC graduates have consistently identified squadron "commandership" as the number one item which needs to be included in the

curriculum (6:12). The survey results indicated past ACSC graduates defined "commandership" as the practical aspects of command dealing with day-to-day problems, especially "people problems." The Air Command and Staff College Academic Year '86 - '87 End of Course Critique (6:17) stated:

Depth of study in the command/leadership area continues to be the "most asked for" area by both the current class (phase and end of course critiques) and former graduates (graduate survey). Many students feel ACSC leadership topics cover many of the same concepts as SOS, but does [sic] not have the depth of inspection to adequately prepare them as future commanders.

Comments such as this were derived from survey results which strongly and consistently supported the need for more training for new commanders. The following specific comments are quoted as additional evidence of the dilemma faced by many new commanders:

Now that I am a squadron commander, I realize that I should have been much better prepared. There is no extensive formal course for new commanders. This part of the curriculum should be increased (13:58).

As opposed to being a leader or manager--the problems I had as a commander involving [sic] dealing with specific "people problems"--things not covered in ACSC or its text books. Legal, drugs, medical, etc.--or if they were covered, they did not register (13:58).

Subsequent to ACSC graduation, I served a tour as a maintenance squadron commander. I had to learn the tools of the trade on-the-job. ACSC should try to teach some of the practical tools needed by a commander, i.e. how to develop or administer non-judicial punishment/court martial; how to make death notifications; how to investigate security violations; how to administer a squadron intramural program; how to manage a dorm, etc. (13:58).

After assuming command of a squadron, I felt somewhat unprepared for the tremendous demands of that position. Hundreds of questions arose: How do you conduct a commander's call, a good overweight program, letters to parents program, hometown news release program, etc. Administrative actions were equally perplexing. Control rosters, UIFs, referral APRs; why didn't Air Command and Staff College prepare me better for that role? Now I see squadron commanders, who after 6 months command, do not realize the full extent of their obligations, let alone conduct an "outstanding" program (13:67).

Conclusion

These comments are typical of those found in similar surveys of past ACSC graduates and indicate the need for additional training to better prepare officers for command. It is safe to assume that if comments such as these come from the relatively few who were lucky enough to attend ACSC in-residence, then certainly the problem of inadequate or incomplete training for command is a common dilemma in the Air Force.

The key factors which were consistently cited in the surveys were the "practical tools" needed by a commander to cope with the day-to-day "people problems." Most, if not all, officers have been exposed to leadership and management theory and have at least a cursory knowledge of basic commander responsibilities. However, results of the surveys noted above, along with interviews with other former squadron commanders, confirm that many new commanders are not fully prepared for command. They are overwhelmed with the myriad of responsibilities they have, particularly those which deal with "people problems." For these new commanders, the transition period can be devastating--for them and for the people/organizations they command. Assuming the problem is as widespread as it appears, the question is, how can we give future commanders a head start?

Project Overview

In an effort to answer that question, this project will review and analyze some of the resources available to assist new and prospective squadron commanders in preparing for their demanding positions. The next chapter analyzes the information and resources provided by five major commands in their squadron commander orientations/workshops conducted for new squadron commanders. Chapter Three will give a brief overview of the ACSC resident program and evaluate its effectiveness. Chapter Four will discuss the need for independent study and some of the unique aids and reference materials that could be of significant value to any commander. Chapter Five will contain the final conclusions and recommendations.

Chapter Two

ANALYSIS OF MAJOR COMMAND ORIENTATION PROGRAMS

INTRODUCTION

A major portion of this research project reviewed and evaluated five major command orientation programs provided for new commanders. The purpose of this review was twofold: determine what information was provided to new commanders through these programs and make recommendations to ACSC about material which could be included in its core or elective curriculum.

The five programs selected for review were: Military Airlift Command (MAC), Strategic Air Command (SAC), Tactical Air Command (TAC), Air Force Communications Command (AFCC), and Air Training Command (ATC). Each of these orientations or workshops is structured similarly in that new commanders (and their spouses) travel to the headquarters for 4 - 5 days of briefings by senior staff members (and senior staff spouses). These briefings are directly related to squadron commander concerns, leadership perspectives, and command-specific issues. Since it was impossible for the author to attend each of these workshops, there was no way to get a complete copy of everything presented at them. However, each of the five commands mentioned above sent information booklet(s) and handouts which are given to their commanders for future reference. These booklets and handouts were the primary source of information used in comparing the command programs. It should be noted the author did attend the SAC program. His intent here is not to "grade" or criticize these programs, but merely to provide an objective comparison of the amount and type of information typically provided to new commanders.

Although the information in the booklets provided by each command was similar, there were distinct differences in the content, layout, presentation, and emphasis. The following paragraphs will discuss the general characteristics of each of these programs from the viewpoint of a new commander.

MILITARY AIRLIFT COMMAND

MAC was the most impressive of the five programs reviewed. They provide a superb set of reference materials that are relevant, thorough, functional, and easy to use. Their squadron commander handbook provided much the same information as the other commands with some additional

control, and communications, transportation, operations plans, and operations intelligence. A separate "MAC Issues Book" (17:--) contains an extensive collection of point papers on current issues of interest to commanders. The topics covered are both command-specific as well as Air Force-wide issues. These books are designed with the new commander in mind. The tables of contents are organized under general headings such as: Administration, Engineering and Services, Logistics, etc. Under each major heading are specific topics dealing with issues that typically confront commanders in their day-to-day work. Another unique feature is the standardized format used for all information. Each specific topic in the "MAC Squadron Commander Handbook" (16:--) is covered in a background paper format, organized under the following headings: Objectives, Commander's Responsibilities, Key points, and References. This format is a tremendous asset to any commander who needs a quick reference guide, but it is even more valuable to a new commander who knows very little about these subjects or where to find the information. Other highly functional resources provided are: Guidelines for Command and Tips for Commanders (which will be discussed in Chapter Four), "Military Airlift Command Protocol," "The Other Half," and many others. A unique aspect of the MAC program is an entire morning session devoted to "Leadership Issues Seminars" in which senior staffers with prior command experience sit on panels in a seminar atmosphere and discuss issues and problems of interest or concern to the new commanders. This type of interface with former commanders was consistently recommended by previous ACSC graduates in the surveys referred to in Chapter One. In short, the MAC program provides the most complete and functional resource materials and comes closest to meeting the needs expressed by former ACSC graduates through their graduate surveys.

STRATEGIC AIR COMMAND

The SAC program and information booklets are very similar to MAC's in quality and quantity. The only significant differences are the Leadership Issues Seminars and the separate book of issues which SAC does not have. There are some minor differences in the layout and information covered in the "SAC Squadron Commanders Workshop Handbook" (19:--). The book has a table of contents which lists the major subject areas, but doesn't provide a page reference. The breakdown of the topics covered within each major subject area is located on the pages immediately preceding that section. As a result, there are some minor problems in locating information that could easily be overcome by placing all this information in the central table of contents, or by placing tabs on the subject area pages. The major subject areas are basically the same as MAC's, although there are not as many areas and the SAC booklet requires the user to turn to a particular major subject area to review the specific topic contents. In the MAC booklet, this information is in the central table of contents for quick, easy reference. SAC's format is also standardized, and the content is thorough and functional. The format is in background paper style with a box at the beginning of each paper which highlights the primary and supporting directives applicable to the subject, the office of primary

responsibility (OPR), and the offices to contact for coordination and assistance. This is a unique feature that should be noted for possible incorporation into other booklets. SAC also provides additional resource books that are excellent reference materials for the commander, such as: "Strategic Air Command Protocol," "Guide to Air Force Protocol," "Family Separations" (AFP 30-36), "Commander's Quality Force Guide" (AFP 35-55), as well as those mentioned above provided to MAC commanders.

TACTICAL AIR COMMAND

The TAC program is very similar to MAC and SAC in content and focus. The "TAC Squadron Commanders' Course Booklet" (20:--) has some distinct differences that are worthy of note. The table of contents lists specific topics, the page on which they can be found, and the OPR. Unlike MAC and SAC, the topics are not listed alphabetically or grouped under major subject area headings; however, they are grouped by functional area--for example: information relating to personnel is grouped under DP; maintenance, supply and related logistics information under LG; and civil engineering issues under DE. The information is presented in background paper or bullet background paper format, but the layout is not standard and the amount of information provided varies considerably. The Staff Judge Advocate (SJA) section is an excellent example because it lists seven topics of major concern to a commander, but gives no information, references or reasons why they are listed there. This gives the impression the SJA coverage is inadequate; however, several issues involving the SJA are covered in other sections. For Example, a section on procedures for handling airman discharge cases is covered in the DP area. This section is one feature of the TAC booklet which should be considered for inclusion in other programs because it provides some very useful tools for the commander contemplating disciplinary action. There are sample letters, checklists, and concise summaries of the applicable regulations. Also included are some significant changes to AFR 39-10 and a cross-reference between AFR 39-10 and AFR 39-12. Finally, a table outlines the options open to the commander in dealing with disciplinary action and provides references on where to go for further information. Although they were not provided for this project, TAC distributes basically the same additional hardouts and resource materials to their commanders as MAC and SAC.

AIR FORCE COMMUNICATIONS COMMAND

The AFCC commander's orientation program resembles the TAC program more than any of the others. The table of contents in the "AFCC Squadron Commander Handbook" (14:--) gives only the specific topics covered and the page on which they can be found. There are no groupings or major headings for easy reference. The user must go down the list until he/she finds the correct subject. The AFCC handbook is much more command-specific than the other books reviewed, but this could be driven by the uniqueness of their mission when compared to MAC, SAC, and TAC. Like MAC, AFCC provides its commanders with a separate book of issues that gives information on a wide

variety of command-specific and Air Force-wide issues such as "Professional Relationships - Fraternization," "Officer Strength Reductions," and "Enlisted Retention." These are outstanding sources of the current status and command attitudes on critical issues on which the commander needs to be knowledgeable. AFCC uses the bullet background paper almost exclusively. The layout and amount of information provided, like TAC, vary considerably from one topic to another. However, the overall content and focus of information was similar to the other commands reviewed.

AIR TRAINING COMMAND

The last of the programs reviewed was ATC, which departed considerably from the other commands in format and resources provided. There is no handbook provided for commanders' future use--only a syllabus of instruction (15:--) and individual handouts from each briefing session. The syllabus gives a breakdown of the course into blocks of instruction and the time devoted to each block or subject area. Two significant differences noted in the ATC course were a 3-hour block of "Student Discussion Seminars" and a 9-hour field trip to Lackland AFB. The purpose of the "Student Discussion Seminars" is "to provide commanders the opportunity to discuss concepts and techniques of general interest as well as key points brought forth in preceding blocks" (15:25). The field trip to Lackland AFB allows the commanders "to observe basic military training and engage in observation and discussion with students at the ATC NCO Academy" (15:24). While the field trip to Lackland AFB is an unlikely candidate for inclusion in other programs, the student discussion seminars is an excellent vehicle for exchanging information and mutual concerns. There was no way to compare the format and content of the information presented in ATC with the other four commands since there was no handbook. However, the following quote from the ATC course overview does a good job of describing the overall course objectives and serves as an excellent summary and central idea for all five of the courses reviewed (15:1):

The primary objective is to introduce the concept of Quality Force Development and show the commander how to integrate support and service activities in the development of individual unit members. A collateral objective is to expose unit commanders to the philosophies of the command's key managers, while at the same time offering them the opportunity to exchange ideas with other unit commanders in a seminar environment. A secondary objective is to update unit commanders' knowledge of current and future ATC personnel and support programs, as well as present topics of special concern to ATC and all Air Force members.

SUMMARY

This chapter has given a brief overview of some basic similarities and differences in five major command orientations/workshops for new squadron commanders. The similarities centered around the overall focus and types of information presented. The differences were primarily in the emphasis and presentation of that information and the reference materials provided for future use. The programs focus on the agencies and regulations commanders should be aware of to resolve the typical problems they face. From an objective point of view, all of these programs are providing a valuable and much needed service to their new commanders. Each program has unique aspects that could potentially enhance other programs, and a few of those were highlighted above. Obviously, a lot of time and effort were put into all of these programs to make them responsive to the needs of the commander and the command. With this in mind, the commands should exchange their course materials in an effort to crossflow unique ideas and thereby enhance all the programs. Another possible goal would be the development of a generic commander's handbook for use Air Force-wide. Command-specific items could be added as supplements or in a separate book.

The volume of material disseminated to the commanders at these workshops/orientations is overwhelming. Since the information provided by each of the commands is quite similar, the main differences are in the resource materials given to the commanders for their future reference. These resources are very important because few commanders can retain all the critical information they need to know. A good personal reference library can be a tremendous asset in saving time and significantly enhancing a commander's effectiveness.

Having looked at the major command approach to training new or prospective squadron commanders, the next chapter evaluates how effective the Air Command and Staff College resident program is in preparing graduates for command positions.

Chapter Three

SQUADRON COMMANDER TRAINING OFFERED BY ACSC

INTRODUCTION

The mission of the Air Command and Staff College is, "to enhance the professional knowledge, skills, and perspectives of mid-career officers for increased leadership roles in command and staff positions" (3:1). This chapter will focus on those aspects of the ACSC curriculum which relate specifically to command to determine how effectively the curriculum is meeting the needs of future commanders. Rather than an in-depth evaluation of specific course material, the intent here is to: (1) Give a brief overview of the curriculum content relating to command, and (2) Evaluate the relevance of the information presented and the effectiveness of the methods used.

OVERVIEW OF THE COMMAND ASPECTS OF THE ACSC CURRICULUM

The ACSC curriculum begins the year with the study of leadership because it is an underlying theme throughout the course and a basic concept of the school mission. Leadership is viewed as a different concept than management. In the author's view, management is a sub element of leadership and command is a combination of leadership and management. However perceived, elements of all three--command, leadership, and management, are included in the curriculum with the bulk of the emphasis on command "training" in the leadership aspects of the curriculum.

Four major objectives address the ACSC strategy for leadership development: Concepts of Leadership, the Interpersonal Dimension, the Professional Dimension, and the Organizational Dimension (Command). The first three are presented at the beginning of the academic year and the last one is an integral part of the curriculum for the remainder of the year. The "Introduction to Leadership Studies" explains each objective and its purpose in this way (3:1,2):

Each objective has a major block of instruction dedicated to its achievement:

Concepts of leadership - Analyze historical and contemporary leadership concepts to formulate a personal, working definition of leadership.

Interpersonal Dimension - Analyze interpersonal aspects of individual and group behavior to improve personal effectiveness in inspiring and motivating others.

Professional Dimension - Analyze the professional standards of conduct and the contemporary challenges for professional military service.

Organizational Dimension - Analyze organizational programs, policies, procedures, and techniques available to officers for leading and managing human resources within the military.

The methods used to present this information and illustrate these concepts include: both military and civilian guest lecturers who have distinguished themselves in leadership and management; faculty lecturers; readings from classical and contemporary sources; and student or faculty-led seminars which combine case studies, role playing, discussion, and videotape or film clips. The combination of these methods is designed to provide a "building block" approach that allows students to develop or improve their personal leadership philosophy/perspective.

The first block of instruction (Concepts of Leadership) exposes students to both classical and contemporary theories, concepts, and perspectives which serve as a foundation or frame of reference on which to build. The second block (Interpersonal Dimension) focuses on the principles of interaction with people, both individually and in groups. The third block (Professional Dimension) then turns the focus back on the leader to stress how a leader's professional qualities and behavior affect the people being led. The remainder of the course looks at factors outside the organization that shape and constrain a leader's ability to act or react. The culmination of the program is the Command block offered just prior to graduation in conjunction with a leadership symposium. This block attempts to "pull it all together" while looking at some of the specific "people issues" that commanders typically face. For example, there is a 3-hour seminar on Quality Force issues, a mock administrative discharge board, and a 3-hour lecture session on the military justice system. In summary, the ACSC curriculum attempts to cover a broad spectrum of information related to command. The majority of material focuses on the principles, concepts, and theories of leadership and management. However, more emphasis toward practical application is evident. How effective is the curriculum in meeting the needs of the students?

EVALUATION OF INFORMATION PRESENTED

The primary sources of feedback on the effectiveness of the ACSC curriculum are the graduate surveys and course critiques. Class members are given the opportunity to critique each phase of instruction during their class year as well as an overall program critique at the end of the academic year. Additionally, the school conducts an annual survey of the graduates from two years and six years prior to the current class. The

data from these surveys is compiled, analyzed, and published in reports that are used to evaluate and improve the program. Most of the information used in this paper was taken from a survey of the classes of 1980/1984 and the critique from the class of 1987, because they provided the most current information and reflected essentially the same attitudes and conclusions as the surveys from previous years.

The ACSC Graduate Survey, Classes of 1980 and 1984, came up with three important conclusions regarding the curriculum on command (13:29):

Three areas of knowledge rated most important for the professional military officer are, in order of importance:

- Command and Leadership, U.S. National Security, and Regional Studies.

Graduates feel that ACSC prepares them for duties as a staff officer, then as a leader, then as a commander.

Graduates feel that slightly more emphasis should be placed on Command and Leadership. Remarks indicate a need for more information on practical duties associated with command (i.e. Article 15, Court Martial, dependent care, etc.).

These were general conclusions based on the quantitative analysis of the survey results. However, the free responses and additional comments made to clarify and amplify the answers given provide a better insight into the opinions of the respondents. For example:

I believe there's too much emphasis on staff and too little on command. Most of my contemporaries were already staff officers and looking at command positions in the near future. Increased emphasis on command would be useful. (13:96)

Have more practical exercises, readings, lectures versus theory. (13:88)

Spend more time on quality force issues, use more practical exercises. (13:88)

I had two years of commanding large squadrons (900) prior to ACSC and two years after (320). If you want to improve this area develop exercises that will require officers to develop discharge packages, arrive at punishments in Article 15s and take the inflation out of APRs, make decisions on denying promotions and reenlistments. (13:85)

These are just a few examples of comments and suggestions made by those who graduated in 1980 and 1984. They support the general findings derived from the quantitative analysis and confirm the need for more "practical"

knowledge aimed at preparing prospective commanders for dealing with the day-to-day "people problems." These results also support the findings and recommendations of previous graduate surveys and are assumed to have been at least partially responsible for some recent curriculum changes addressing the practical aspects of command noted above (7:--; 8:--; 9:--; 10:--; 11:--; 12:--). Whether these and other changes in the curriculum over the past eight years are directly related to survey results is inconclusive. However, it does appear the changes being made are attempting to address the issues raised in the surveys. How responsive is ACSC in providing students with effective training for command positions?

Graduate surveys and class critiques show the overwhelming majority of graduates agree the command and leadership training in the ACSC core curriculum did enhance their knowledge and skills in these areas, but they also indicated it could still be improved. The surveys consistently recommended more "practical" applications and less theory. Those who disagreed with the majority felt they already had a good background or a "better idea" before they came to the school:

By the Time I attended ACSC my attitudes and perceptions about leadership are [sic] fairly well established. ACSC did very little to influence my knowledge of leadership, leadership style and what makes a good commander. By this stage of our career we've all seen our fair share of both "Good" & "Bad" Leaders!! (13:86).

Greatly reduce the leadership and management theory content (most attendees have MS in fields stressing this) and teach a commander's course--i.e. how to lead an Air Force organization (13:67).

Better preparation for command/leadership than ACSC is reading In Search of Excellence and A Passion for Excellence (13:86).

Although these comments may seem pompous or overly critical, they have some merit because they illustrate the diversity of viewpoints which characterize the typical graduate survey. The demographics of each class would certainly account for these differing points of view since the students have a wide variety of educational backgrounds and levels of experience. While the majority agreed the school was effectively achieving its mission in relation to command training, there were a few students, like the three quoted above, who felt the school was teaching them something they already knew. The dilemma for ACSC, then, is to create a balance that will provide the necessary knowledge and skills to those who need them while trying to build on, or at least refresh the memories of, those who already have them. This is certainly no easy task, but research into past curriculum changes, along with the graduate surveys and phase critiques, clearly indicate the college is concerned with these inputs. Constructive criticism of the curriculum is encouraged with the intent of making ACSC more meaningful and relevant. Some of the changes that have resulted from this process were

mentioned above: (1) The addition of some practical aspects of command like quality force issues, the mock administrative discharge board, coverage of the military justice system, and (2) Movement of the leadership symposium and the practical aspects of command to the end of the year. These changes to the core curriculum will be augmented by a squadron commander elective course which will be offered during the final mix at the end of the school year. The elective will provide an opportunity for more in-depth study on the "practical" aspects of command for those students who need or want the additional focus on command issues. Conversely, those students who already have the background and experience have the opportunity to choose another elective subject. Overall, the addition of the squadron commander elective should result in graduates who are better prepared and more confident to meet the demands of command and leadership.

SUMMARY

In summary, this chapter has looked at the ACSC approach in training future squadron commanders: the ACSC core curriculum and the Squadron Commander Elective course. The core curriculum provides the opportunity to build or strengthen a firm foundation of theory, concepts, and principles of leadership. In response to feedback from past graduates some specific "practical" elements of command have been added or expanded. While the core curriculum is geared for all students, a special squadron commander elective will allow more in-depth study on some of the specific areas of concern and interest identified by past graduates who have served as squadron commanders after graduation. While it appears progress is being made on providing prospective commanders with more practical knowledge, additional emphasis is still needed in this area.

These last two chapters have given a brief overview of the "formal" training available to squadron commanders. The next chapter offers some strong rationale for a personal development strategy along with several recommendations of outstanding resources that should be considered "must" reading for any squadron commander.

Chapter Four

RESOURCES FOR INDEPENDENT STUDY

INTRODUCTION

Obviously, there are thousands of books, booklets, articles, and any number of resources which cover the subject of leadership and management of people. However, as stated earlier, command is unique. While it incorporates elements of both leadership and management, there are aspects of command that fall outside the realm of leadership and management. The dilemma for new or prospective commanders is finding those resources which relate most directly to command. This chapter offers some insight into where to focus independent study efforts and recommends several books which could easily be described as "textbooks" on command. The views expressed here reflect the author's personal philosophy which was strongly and repeatedly reinforced throughout this research effort. With this as a frame of reference, the following thoughts and recommendations are offered.

TRANSITION TO COMMAND

One of the most important things to realize as a new commander is that there is a change of focus from being a technical expert and a supporter of your unit to being the focal point and leader of your unit. Even if you have been fortunate enough to "fill in" for the commander for short periods of time, it's not quite the same as taking command because, "over-all responsibility for the success or failure of the unit's mission rests solely with the commander." (1:1) This should have a familiar ring to it since most military regulations and much of leadership and management training in the military stresses the ultimate responsibility of the commander in mission accomplishment. Obviously, the commander, like any manager or leader, accomplishes the mission through the efforts of other people, and herein lies the essence of the change in focus. The mission is still the ultimate responsibility, but the commander's focus is on people.

Most officers selected for command have had at least some experience as supervisors, managers, and/or leaders. However, until they have served as a commander, few fully appreciate the extensive responsibilities and powers of a commander, or the lasting influence they can have on their people. The commander is concerned with and involved in every aspect of his/her peoples' performance from the obvious: production and discipline, to the not so obvious: health, morale, welfare, and motivation. The

importance of understanding people--what motivates them, what makes them "tick"--cannot be over emphasized! The following quote from Guidelines for Command says it very well (1:1):

As a commander, you can exert positive or negative influences upon people. The final measure of your leadership image is reflected through the degree of efficiency, productivity, morale, and career motivation of your people.

Just as important as understanding people is having a genuine concern for them. This is an essential characteristic for those striving to be successful commanders. Again, a quote from Guidelines for Command illustrates the point beautifully (1:1):

People obey commands and orders. But, better still, people respond quickly, willingly, and give that "extra effort" to leaders who genuinely care for them.

These quotes, along with many others found in Guidelines for Command are right on target. This book, together with Taking Charge: A Practical Guide for Leaders by Major General Perry M. Smith (Retired) should be considered "must reading" for any new or prospective commander. The insights, advice and guidance provided in these books clearly reflect the most complete, concise, and practical approach to command and/or leadership this author has ever encountered. The observations, recommendations, and principles espoused in these books reflect research and experience that far exceed the scope of this project. What makes these books unique is the way in which they capture the essence of theory and practical application and put them together in an easily understandable and ready to use format. Although there is no checklist approach to command, these books certainly could be considered checklists of the essential concerns.

The original intention of this author was to provide a resource for new commanders which would highlight the important areas in which to place emphasis and study. Guidelines for Command and Taking Charge do such a superb job of covering the key issues, any attempt to improve on them here would be futile and repetitive. Using a simple, logical, and straight-forward approach, these books cover the high points of transitioning into command as well as how to be successful after you get your feet on the ground. Both books should be read carefully and thoughtfully, and kept handy for future reference. Another book that is highly recommended for commanders' personal reference libraries is Tips for Commanders, which was compiled and distributed by the Leadership and Management Development Center (LMDC) located at Maxwell AFB, Alabama. This book is (3:i):

A collection of ideas and initiatives submitted by almost 300 Air Force commanders and leaders. Although they bear no official sanction, they have proven successful in field testing by the contributors.

The idea behind the book was to provide a forum for sharing ideas that have worked in a variety of organizations to improve morale, efficiency, and effectiveness. The last edition was published and distributed in 1985. Of course, all the ideas will not work in every organization, but the book is a great source of unique ideas. It can save a lot of extra work learning the same lessons that someone else has already struggled with and overcome.

As stated at the beginning of this chapter, there are thousands of resources available on the subjects of leadership and management. The three recommended here are especially valuable for new commanders because they bring together a wealth of knowledge and experience that directly relate to day-to-day operations. The wisdom and insight that would take years to acquire the "hard way" are instead placed at the commanders fingertips in easy to understand language. For additional information and further study, Taking Charge has an excellent "selected bibliography" in which General Smith recommends some books of special significance to governmental and military leaders. Along with his recommendations he provides a short descriptive synopsis of each book. For example, in his recommendation for Military Leadership: In Pursuit of Excellence, he states (4:222):

In my opinion, the best collection of useful articles on military leadership that is available. Chapters that are particularly recommended are by James Stokesbury, General Matthew Ridgway, General S. L. A. Marshall. . . .

In this way, he acknowledges the need for constructive use of limited time. Just one more example of why this book is such a valuable resource for the commander who wants to get maximum benefit from the time spent. Having followed General Smith's advice, this author read several of the books recommended in the bibliography and can attest to their relevance and value in gaining a greater perspective on leadership.

Rather than go off on a tangent to describe some of the salient features of these books, the author strongly endorses the books referred to in this chapter, the recommendations in General Smith's bibliography, and the resources listed in the bibliography for this paper. In the interest of time, those listed in this chapter should provide the greatest benefit. However, one should make time to continue a professional reading program no matter how hard it may be to fit into a busy schedule. Most of our great leaders insist reading is a cornerstone to successful leadership. General Matthew B. Ridgway put it this way (5:31):

Read widely and wisely all the history and biography possible. Soak up all the personal experiences you can of battle-tested brother officers. This broadens your understanding of an art of which you can never hope to know all.

Study thoughtfully the records of past successful leaders and adapt their methods to yours.

Of course, the important point is to use the reading to fill voids in experience and knowledge, or to improve on weaker areas that need to be developed. A sound and effective professional reading program must be tailored to the individual, who is the best judge of where to place the emphasis.

SUMMARY

The whole purpose of this chapter, and the entire project, was to point out the resources available to prospective commanders for enhancing their leadership, management, and command skills. Taking Charge: A Practical Guide for Leaders is the best single resource this author has encountered, followed closely by Guidelines for Command. Some other helpful resources are provided by the major commands in their squadron commander workshops/orientations discussed in Chapter Two. In addition, Air University provides suggested reading lists, Tips for Commanders, and a wide variety of course materials through Squadron Officer School, Air Command and Staff College, and Air War College. Those who have been selected for or are contemplating command positions would do well to build a personal library of such resources to help prepare for command and for ready reference when needed. The author is not aware of a specific reading list for command preparation, so the next chapter includes that as one of the recommendations and final conclusions resulting from this research effort.

Chapter Five

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The original intent of this research was to evaluate the need for additional training for prospective squadron commanders and to provide some inputs to ACSC for inclusion in the core curriculum and squadron commander elective course. As stated earlier, the primary source of information was the student critiques of past classes and the graduate surveys. The opinions expressed confirmed the author's views on the need for specific squadron commander training. His views resulted from personal experience, discussions with other squadron commanders, future commanders, and contemporaries at ACSC. The overwhelming conclusion drawn from the formal and informal research is that further study in this area should be pursued. The specific conclusions and recommendations are presented below:

CONCLUSION 1: There is a need for additional, specific training for squadron commanders.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

a. The ACSC squadron commander elective course should focus on the practical aspects of command rather than theory or concepts. Suggested topics: Role of the First Sergeant, what to expect from your orderly room staff, legal aspects of command, battle stress and its effect on the organization, quality force issues, case studies/in-basket exercises on typical day-to-day problems, how to conduct a commander's call, how to handle domestic conflicts, and the commander's role/responsibility in morale and motivation.

b. Use Perry Smith's book, Taking Charge, A Practical Guide for Leaders and Guidelines for Command as textbooks for the squadron commander elective course at ACSC. These books should also be handouts or at least strongly recommended for new commanders by the major command programs for squadron commanders.

c. Have students from the ACSC squadron commander elective course review and evaluate the information packages submitted by the five commands for this project. Forward the results to the commands and use also for improvements to ACSC core curriculum and the elective course.

d. Conduct an Air Force-wide survey of former commanders to determine if they feel a squadron commander course should be developed and, if so, what should be taught. The survey should allow categorization of answers by specialty (i.e., pilot, navigator, aircraft maintenance, missile operations/maintenance, etc.). More specific categories will provide more accurate assessment of the problem and better insight into the solution(s).

RATIONALE: Commanders are selected for command based on their potential leadership qualities, and their prior performance as technical experts and/or staff officers (which frequently is not command-oriented). Although leadership and management concepts are included in most professional military education courses, as are concepts of human behavior, little attention is given to the practical aspects of command that deal with the morale, welfare, and motivation of the people. ACSC Graduate surveys indicate many commanders learn these skills on-the-job. It would be fair to assume that if this problem is so prevalent among in-residence ACSC graduates, it is very likely just as prevalent among the non-resident graduates. With the critical effect a commander has on a unit and its personnel, a lot of damage can be done during the learning process which could be avoided with specifically directed training. The surveys can confirm or deny the existence of problem areas and help to pinpoint those areas needing attention.

CONCLUSION 2: Major commands don't crossflow information on their squadron commander orientation programs.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- a. Major commands exchange information on their programs to crossflow unique ideas and enhance all the programs.
- b. Consider developing/adopting a standard (generic) squadron commander's guide and supplementing it with any command-specific items that need to be included.

RATIONALE: Information provided by the five commands for this research project showed some similarities, but unique ideas from each could have been combined to make a better overall product. If a standard commander's guide isn't practical, at least the crossflow and incorporation of good ideas from other commands will produce a better product and provide greater benefit to the commanders.

CONCLUSION 3: More emphasis should be placed on individual development through a combination of recommended courses, workshops with former commanders, and a personal reading program.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- a. Develop and distribute a suggested reading list of books specifically aimed at squadron commander issues. Get recommendations from the experts on which books are best. (Taking Charge: A Practical Guide for Leaders, Guidelines for Command, and Tips for Commanders should be at the top of the list!)
- b. If a "universal" squadron commander course isn't feasible, develop major command courses or some AFIT/ECI course(s) that address important practical aspects of command--human behavior, group dynamics, legal powers and constraints, motivational techniques, counseling, etc. (actual case studies could be used effectively).
- c. Set up workshops or seminars where new or prospective commanders can meet with and learn from experienced former commanders. This could be done on the wing, base, command level.

RATIONALE: Not only do commanders come from a diversity of backgrounds and educational levels, but the units they command are diversified in the numbers of people assigned, missions, locations, and personnel makeup (i.e., aircraft maintenance squadrons, supply squadrons, and security police squadrons are mostly enlisted personnel with few officers. Operations squadron, on the other hand are almost totally officers with only a few enlisted personnel.) A variety of courses would target those who need the information and avoid wasting resources on those who already have the information or those who are not interested in taking advantage of it. The reading program is well recognized as a valuable resource. The problem is using limited time most effectively. Some shortcuts, like those offered by General Smith in his book would be beneficial.

Closing Comments

One of the toughest aspects of this project was the challenge of covering such a broad subject while maintaining a relatively narrow focus. Each of the chapters, and elements of the chapters could easily be topics for extensive research in and of themselves. The intent here was to give a "broad brush" look at how we prepare officers for command and evaluate the adequacy of this preparation. Whether there is a need for a specific, Air Force-wide squadron commander's course and what information should be included in it is a subject that is beyond the scope of this project. However, there are some definite conclusions that can be drawn from the results presented here.

The author is convinced there is a need for further research into this area. Admittedly, the conclusions stated above are based on a limited sampling--primarily graduates of the ACSC in-residence program. However, those selected to attend ACSC in-residence are supposedly the top twenty percent of Air Force majors. Also, each class is a representative sample of the overall Air Force population. The assumptions made in this paper about similar problems Air Force-wide were based on this logic. The reason for recommending an Air Force-wide survey of former commanders is to confirm the assumptions made, to further define the problem, and to seek viable solutions.

The Air Force expends vast resources on training to ensure people know how to properly operate and repair expensive, high technology equipment. If people are our most valuable asset, can we afford to take any less seriously the proper training of commanders--who have perhaps the greatest single effect on those most important and valuable assets?

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