

DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE  
PRESENTATION TO THE COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND INVESTIGATIONS  
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SUBJECT: REVIEW OF THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES  
REPORT ON PROFESSIONAL MILITARY EDUCATION

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NOVEMBER 30, 2010

NOT FOR PUBLICATION UNTIL RELEASED BY  
THE COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES  
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

## **Introduction**

The Chief of Staff of the Air Force (CSAF) concurs with the general tenets of the House Armed Services Committee report that the “Professional Military Education system is still basically sound” but with systemic and institutional areas that require our heightened focus and effort to improve. We strongly support the idea that education must be relevant to the student and the Services as well as the Department of Defense. To maintain a stronger correlation among education, officer development, and organizational requirements, the Air Force will ensure Professional Military Education (PME) can anticipate and adapt to current and future challenges, not the least of which is meeting the increasing need for additional joint and Service-specific subject matter taught earlier in an officers’ career, and equipping officers with the developmental joint education they need before they are placed into joint assignments.

## **Joint PME**

Falling under the broad genre of system issues, we concur with the need to address the diminished relationship between Joint PME and joint duty assignments. The Air Force is a force provider and, as such, endeavors to meet the requirements detailed in both DoD and joint policy and directives. Addressing this issue requires both the individual and combined efforts of the Services. This same effort will be expended to address two related areas of concern: The preparatory value of PME and tensions among career development, and joint-service requirements and PME.

## **Developing Strategists**

Despite several subcommittee findings concerning our failure to identify and cultivate strategic thinkers, we are actively developing and implementing programs to grow strategists who think both broadly and critically. Combined with a strong Fellowship program, we have recently added a number of advanced academic degree opportunities in history, political science, international relations,

economics, and philosophy to our portfolio. These new degrees are being earned at some of the nation's most prestigious universities and a number are reserved for only our captains. Offering these opportunities earlier in our officers' careers will help the Air Force develop leaders better prepared to meet current and emerging needs. Beyond that, a complete transformation of the company grade officer-level PME programs was just completed, offering an expanded introduction to the Service-specific doctrine in the Air and Space Basic Course, and a dramatically enhanced leadership course that includes joint and staff training at the Squadron Officer School. Through an increased focus on critical thinking at junior levels, we are developing an officer corps that is both capable of, and empowered to solve the problems they will encounter throughout their careers. They are learning and practicing strategic thinking earlier than in the past.

Those that stand out in their strategic-thinking capability have additional opportunities for development in the advanced-learning programs for exceptional students that we have created at both Air Command and Staff College and Air War College. Additionally, we have expanded the student throughput at our School of Advanced Air and Space Studies. We will continue to mentor and track these officers to ensure that their talents and additional specialized developmental education are put to good use in support of the Department's wide array of missions. Additionally, we are in the process of adding a doctoral program for senior development in the School of Advanced Air and Space Studies to extend exceptional students' intellectual growth beyond their residence experience. We are also working to ensure that our assignment policies reinforce the relationship between Joint PME and joint duty assignments, in order to provide officers who are grounded in the complexities of joint, coalition and multinational operations and, therefore, better prepared to overcome the unexpected challenges they will face.

## **Content and Delivery**

Although the Air Force can address issues related to the Process for Accreditation of Joint Education (e.g., reviewing our selection process), the combined Services may need to consider changes in the policy governing student-mix ratios due to faculty manning as a result of operations tempo and end strength. Another issue falling under the heading of content and delivery is our continuing use of pass/fail systems. The Air Force concurs with the report's finding that these systems do not necessarily detract from the rigor of academic programs; however, the Air Force believes Air University's current online distance learning program serves as the model for design, allowing us to evolve beyond the more simplistic correspondence-course approaches of the past. We also concur with the report's finding that we have a need to address faculty and resource concerns at our institutions. Therefore, we are reviewing policies regarding our hiring practices, job advancement and academic freedom, as well as copyright and intellectual property concerns.

## **Conclusion**

The Air Force has made significant advances in the past two years toward its goal of leading the Services in its approach to developmental education. We have "upped our game" with a new distance learning academic/PME program, the complete transformation of company-grade officer Professional Military Education, new advanced courses within the Air Command and Staff College and Air War College, and expanded enrollment and progress toward a doctoral program in the School of Advanced Air and Space Studies. These efforts, combined with conducive personnel policy and developmental opportunities allow us to continue forging the synergistic relationship between Air Force training, experience, and education. We're confident we can continue to produce the officers our nation needs, and deliver them to their assignments fully trained, equipped and ready to excel.