

Policy Change Masks Degrees

Starting with the 1996 major's board, meeting this month, the Air Force will "mask" the advanced academic degree status of candidates from central selection boards considering line officers for promotion to either captain or major, according to Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Ronald R. Fogleman. He announced the policy change in a January news release.

In effect, the Air Force will remove the entry that indicates completion or noncompletion of an advanced degree from an officer's selection brief, a summary of personal and career information used by a promotion board during the selection process. However, once the officer comes up for promotion consideration to lieutenant colonel, the information will again be shown in the brief.

Impetus for the change came from responses to the 1995 Quality-of-Life Survey, in which a majority of officers saw factors other than job performance playing too great a role in promotion consideration. General Fogleman noted that when service officials compared career fields, they found "a considerable difference" in timing of completion of advanced degrees.

The new policy, he said, will "level the playing field" across all career fields, some of which "do not enjoy the same opportunity for off-duty education that others do." He specifically mentioned aircraft maintenance, security police, and operators.

He stressed that the policy change does not lessen the importance of degrees but emphasizes completion "at the right time for the right reasons."