

BULLET BACKGROUND PAPER
ON
CREATING A CULTURE OF JOINT-LITERATE AIRMEN

PURPOSE

There is a need to teach Airmen to fully understand their role in the joint fight. This paper will clarify that objective and present a series of steps that create systematically build this understanding in all Airmen.

OBJECTIVES AND CLARIFICATIONS

- There are two distinct objectives that are typically associated with the question: “How do we teach Airmen to fully understand their role in the joint fight, and how to use education, experience and networking to accomplish that task?”

-- Objective: train and educate Airmen who are able to execute effectively with our joint partners in a joint environment

--- This is the focus of current joint education, but does not actually answer the question.

-- Objective: create a culture within the USAF in which Airmen at every level internalize their role in the joint fight, understand how their work feeds both USAF core missions, and how those missions feed the larger joint force

- Thesis: In order to create a joint understanding at all ranks, joint education and discussion cannot be left as a subject taught and understood only at the senior officer level, but instead taught and discussed at all levels – right down to an Airman Basic

-- This understanding must begin at the ground level and be reinforced and refined throughout an Airman’s career

- Counter to frequent concerns, a greater understanding of the USAF’s role in the joint fight does not erode USAF culture

-- Question typically posed as: How do we teach to joint effects and still maintain USAF culture?

-- USAF culture struggles with a fragmented, job-specific lens **BECAUSE** we don’t emphasize or understand our role in the joint fight.

-- Better joint understanding will reinforce our USAF culture and our pride in the effects that airpower brings to the fight

- Airmen already have a heavy load to bear with current mission and training requirements; a good solution must minimize the cost in terms of additional time spent while maximizing internalization and understanding
- In addition to further opportunities to learn from sister services, current barriers and stigmas to joint assignments that are already available must be systematically dismantled

EXECUTABLE STEPS

- Step 1: Joint Emphasis (BLUF: If you want something to be valued, make the system value it.)
 - USAF Execution: Implement a ‘months of joint experience’ metric
 - Similar in concept to an SEI; all grades/AFSCs; assignments that involve joint interaction - not just “joint billets”; Include flag on SURF that IDs whether person has greater than six months of joint interaction
 - Joint Execution: Expand Joint Individual Skills Training (JIST)
 - Currently utilized for EOD, linguists, etc; Evaluate additional opportunities for shared training; Creates joint interaction and understanding with minimal adding training time; Increases terminology transfer across branches
- Step 2: Establish and promote additional networking and conference opportunities for joint learning across the USAF and joint force (BLUF: networking options are the most sensitive to being executed correctly, but also yield high return for their level of demand on our Airmen’s time)
 - USAF Execution: Create joint experience mentoring interface
 - In order to receive joint experience credit and/or as part of post-deployment duties: Airman with joint experience must mentor/answer questions through established forum over a 3 month period
 - Airmen (including those about to deploy or serve in a joint environment) are able to find mentors to answer questions on joint effects, culture, etc
 - Joint Execution: Establish opportunity for joint contacts by creating voluntary exchange of information between newly operational members of each service (i.e. E-3 to E-3, O-1 to O-1)
 - Joint Execution: Expanded focus on joint conferences relevant to experience level (i.e. FGO: strategic focus, CGO: tactical focus, NCO: technical focus, etc)
- Step 3: Mid-Tier Joint Learning (BLUF: If you want understanding at the squadron level, the NCOs must be driving the conversation. AND The most effective way to learn is to teach.)

-- Joint Execution: Establish joint education emphasis/capstone for NCO Academy (easily scalable to CGO/FGO PME)

--- Phase 1: Current NCOA/ALS/SOS with USAF-specific educational requirements

--- Phase 2: Two-week joint education follow-on with members of other services

--- Phase 3: A capstone exercise after in-residence graduation in which members take what they've learned back to the squadron and teach their joint role to the junior Airmen that they are now responsible for leading

---- Gains additional benefit of creating discussion at squadron level on the joint role in that specific organization

---- Creates mentorship opportunities for NCOs and SNCOs

-- USAF Execution: If joint buy-in is not feasible, a version of this step can be made by retaining the capstone, but accomplishing the joint learning within the curriculum at the service school.

SUMMARY

A full spectrum solution with a number of approaches is necessary to create understanding of our role in the joint fight at all levels of the USAF.