

Air Force Policy Letter for Commanders

From the Office of the Secretary of the Air Force



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THE MISSION: TO DETER WAR WITH WARFIGHTING CAPABILITY. In a speech to the Dayton, Ohio, Area Chamber of Commerce, Gen. James P. Mullins, Commander, Air Force Logistics Command, said: "War, including the unpleasant things that go with it, is so distasteful to our culture that we try to push it out of our minds. In fact, we so dread the word 'war', that we've changed its name to 'defense.' We don't have a War Department any more; we have a Defense Department. We all agree the mission for our military is to deter, defend, then defeat. But we often forget that without the warfighting capability to defend and defeat, there can be no real deterrence.

"The association of our military with the unpleasant images of war and death has historically led American society to excise it from the mainstream of everyday life. Historically, only during periods of extreme threat to our way of life has the military become an integral part of American culture. . . .

"We must, as a free people, break free of the chains of yesterday's mind set. We must recognize that the threat is probably here to stay. We must get used to living with it day in and day out. And we must constantly guard against denying that it exists Our focus now must be on surviving as a free and vibrant people. Our focus now must be on getting serious about the distasteful business of preparing to go to war, if necessary, to defend our way of life. Only if we do this, do we stand any real chance of maintaining the peace. It's time again that we as Americans recognize the fact that the military exists for only one reason: to fight wars. Our national policy is built on the premise that if we're ready enough to fight a war, the war can be deterred. But we must not deny war's possibility, for in doing so, we're really denying ourselves the deterrent we so desperately seek.

"You, as leaders of the local community, must continue to embrace the military as part of your society. . . . But the most important thing, the one thing you must always be cognizant of, is that the military community is part of a unique group. They are members of a dedicated, disciplined organization of citizens who bear the burden of a unique mission . . . who labor for just one cause -- to keep you free. Frankly, they're about all that stands between you and the ominous alternative we don't like to think about."

FUSION CENTERS WOULD USE WARFIGHTING ASSETS BETTER. Gen. W. Y. Smith, Deputy Commander in Chief, U.S. European Command, said in a speech recently, while he was Chief of Staff, Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers, Europe: "Aerospace issues today involve all military forces -- land, naval and air. A primary example is the growing interest in the ability to identify and strike enemy targets, close and relatively distant, in minimum time.

"So-called 'fusion centers' are being designed to bring together collected intelligence from many and varied sensor platforms, to rapidly process the information, to select targets and to dispatch friendly forces equipped with the appropriate weapons to attack these targets. The sensor platforms and weapons of all Services could well be employed in such an endeavor, with the choice of which Service's forces are to be employed depending primarily on the nature and location of the target and of friendly forces -- not Service affiliation. Fusion centers will serve the military commander, employing the aerospace capabilities of the various Services in a way that could reduce unnecessary duplication of both intelligence and warfighting assets within and between Services -- reducing unnecessary duplication in electronics, avionics, armament, munitions and yes, even weapon systems. Unnecessary duplication can no longer be afforded -- not by any single member nation of the Alliance nor by the Alliance as a whole. With government rightly demanding improved and more selective use of resources, such steps as fusion centers become mandatory and will have a high priority."

Lt. Gen. Andrew P. Iosue, Deputy Chief of Staff, Manpower and Personnel, said in a recent letter to commanders that "wider use of Quality Circles within the Air Force will help meet the challenges of the '80s by offering one method to improve productivity."

A Quality Circle (QC) is a group of employees performing similar work who voluntarily meet regularly to identify problems within their jurisdiction, analyze difficulties and recommend solutions to management. Circles normally consist of six to 12 persons from the same work area and meet usually for an hour weekly.

In the Department of Defense Advanced Management Course at the Army Management Engineering Training Activity at Rock Island, Ill., military managers are told that the first Quality Circle was registered with the Japanese Union of Scientists and Engineers (JUSE) in 1962. Conceived by Dr. Kaoru Ishikawa, a professor of engineering at Tokyo University, it was developed under the sponsorship of JUSE. Quality Circles fuse the "quality sciences" introduced to Japan by Dr. Joseph Juran and Dr. W. Edward Demming with the theories of Douglas McGregor, Abraham Maslow, Frederick Herzburg and other humanistic behaviorists.

General Iosue says that "Quality Circles have received a great deal of publicity within recent months primarily because of the very positive effects that evolve from their proper use. QCs are not new to the Air Force, we have had circles operating and providing results for several years."

QCs are not for everyone, and managers should not view them as a panacea. There are several hundred Quality Circles in the Air Force, mostly in Air Force Logistics Command. It has been found that for Quality Circles to operate successfully, top management must endorse and support a participative management environment. It's possible for QC to be viewed by intermediate and middle management as a threat, because problems are identified and solutions recommended in a nontraditional matter. Top management can help remove these perceptions by demonstrating a strong commitment to the QC concept.

Commanders and managers must recognize that QC involves extra costs such as training and time away from the job. Management also must recognize that benefits from QC may take several forms, ranging from improved morale to higher productivity and actual dollar savings. The Air Force has a number of recognition programs that can be tailored to recognize outstanding QC results. The Suggestion Program is one of these.

Management should measure results, if any, and provide their evaluations to the QC group. However, too much emphasis on measurement can reduce the benefits.

Some training is required. Facilitators must receive formal instruction to ensure that the organization can provide adequate training and education for QC members. Facilitators teach group members problem identification techniques and some analytical and communication methods.

The organizational system for a Quality Circle calls for a steering committee plus coordinators, facilitators and leaders. A steering committee, composed of senior management officials (the unit commander, directors of reporting organizations and, as applicable, a union official), serves as a "board of directors" for all QC activities within the unit.

A coordinator is an Air Force employee designated by the unit commander as the QC focal point for the organization. A facilitator trains leaders, monitors progress of circles and assists the coordinator in evaluations. With the assistance of the facilitator, a group leader conducts meetings and serves as the focal point for the group of volunteers in the Quality Circle.

The Air Force Institute of Technology (AFIT) offers a short course for facilitators. There were 400 applicants for the 196 student slots in the first year's (FY 82) Quality Circle Facilitator Course.

Each command (MAJCOM/SOA/DRU) should evaluate QC operations at least annually. The command should establish procedures necessary to evaluate its QC activities -- reviewing costs and comparing them with benefits accrued.