

**UNITED STATES NAVAL WAR COLLEGE
Newport, R.I.**

**ADVANCING ACTIVE DUTY OFFICER MANAGEMENT INTO THE
21ST CENTURY: PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE LAW**

by

John A. Yates

Major, USAF

**Thesis submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College
in partial satisfaction of the program requirements for:**

***ADVANCED STRATEGIST PROGRAM
(ASP)***

Signature: 

9 August 2023

**The contents of this paper reflect my personal views and are not necessarily endorsed
by the U.S. Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.**

UNITED STATES NAVAL WAR COLLEGE
ADVANCED STUDIES IN NAVAL STRATEGY PROGRAM

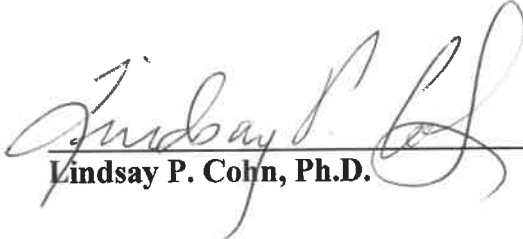
THESIS APPROVAL

Maj John A. Yates, Air Force

Title of Thesis:

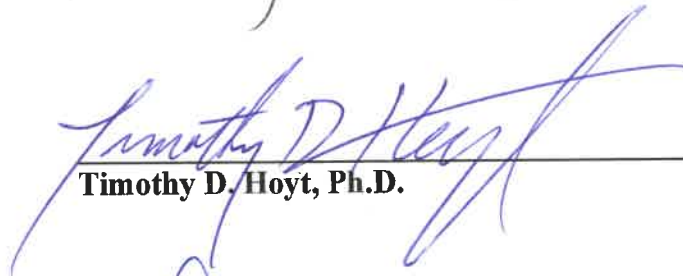
ADVANCING ACTIVE DUTY OFFICER MANAGEMENT INTO THE
21ST CENTURY: PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE LAW

APPROVED BY:



Lindsay P. Cohn, Ph.D.

Thesis Advisor

Well done, John!


Timothy D. Hoyt, Ph.D.

Thesis Committee Member


David A. Brown, MS, MMAS, MA

Executive Director
Advanced Strategist Program

Accepted by the 9th Day of August 2023

REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE			<i>Form Approved</i> <i>OMB No. 0704-0188</i>		
Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing this collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden to Department of Defense, Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports (0704-0188), 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to any penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number. PLEASE DO NOT RETURN YOUR FORM TO THE ABOVE ADDRESS.					
1. REPORT DATE (DD-MM-YYYY) 09-08-2023		2. REPORT TYPE FINAL		3. DATES COVERED (From - To)	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE Advancing Active Duty Officer Management into the 21st Century: Proposed Changes to the Law			5a. CONTRACT NUMBER		
			5b. GRANT NUMBER		
			5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER		
6. AUTHOR(S) John A. Yates, Major, USAF Thesis Advisor: Lindsay P. Cohn, Ph.D.			5d. PROJECT NUMBER		
			5e. TASK NUMBER		
			5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER		
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) Advanced Strategist Program U.S. Naval War College Newport, RI 02841-1207			8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER		
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)			10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)		
			11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)		
12. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Distribution Statement A: Approved for public release; Distribution is unlimited.					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES Thesis submitted to the Naval War College faculty in partial satisfaction of requirements for the Advanced Strategist Program (ASP). Contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the NWC or the Department of the Navy.					
14. ABSTRACT This research explores active-duty officer management through the lens of Congressional-level actions and laws. It seeks to identify shortfalls and potential solutions to better support current and future mission requirements. To this end, three changes are proposed: 1) replace the formulaic field grade limitation tables in Title 10, Section 523 with annual requirements-based submissions incorporated into existing end-strength and manpower authorization processes 2) repeal Title 10, Section 633 and 634 mandatory retirement for O-5 and O-6 officers based on time in service and revise Section 637 selective continuation for O-3 and O-4 officers, and 3) build upon recent retirement system changes by shifting pension vesting to the left (earlier) while shifting payment to the right (later). To place these proposals in context, this research explores historical and contemporary changes to the laws governing active duty officer management while also seeking to answer the fundamental questions: "Why change now?" and "Why didn't change occur then?" The primary audiences for this strategic monograph are members and staffs of the Senate Armed Services Committee and House Armed Services Committee, as well as senior Department of Defense and service component leaders.					
15. SUBJECT TERMS Active Duty Officer Management, Defense Officer Personnel Management Act (DOPMA), Force of the Future, 2019 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), Blended Retirement System (BRS), Officer Promotion, Selective Continuation, Retirement					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT	18. NUMBER OF PAGES 54	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON Executive Director, ASP
a. REPORT UNCLASSIFIED	b. ABSTRACT UNCLASSIFIED	c. THIS PAGE UNCLASSIFIED			19b. TELEPHONE NUMBER (include area code) 401-841-2860

ABSTRACT

This research explores active-duty officer management through the lens of Congressional-level actions and laws. It seeks to identify shortfalls and potential solutions to better support current and future mission requirements. To this end, three changes are proposed: 1) replace the formulaic field grade limitation tables in Title 10, Section 523 with annual requirements-based submissions incorporated into existing end-strength and manpower authorization processes 2) repeal Title 10, Section 633 and 634 mandatory retirement for O-5 and O-6 officers based on time in service and revise Section 637 selective continuation for O-3 and O-4 officers, and 3) build upon recent retirement system changes by shifting pension vesting to the left (earlier) while shifting payment to the right (later). To place these proposals in context, this research explores historical and contemporary changes to the laws governing active duty officer management while also seeking to answer the fundamental questions: “Why change now?” and “Why didn’t change occur then?” The primary audiences for this strategic monograph are members and staffs of the Senate Armed Services Committee and House Armed Services Committee, as well as senior Department of Defense and service component leaders.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. INTRODUCTION 1

STRATEGIC IMPERATIVE – THE CASE FOR CONTINUED CHANGE 4

TIMING – WHY NOW? WHY NOT THEN?..... 5

 Trend 1: The Evolving Strategic Landscape 6

 Trend 2: The Evolving Social Landscape 7

 Trend 3: Money Solves All Problems 8

 The Culmination: Budget Control Act of 2011..... 9

II. HISTORICAL CONTEXT AND RECENT LEGISLATIVE PROGRESS..... 10

A HISTORY OF OFFICER PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT..... 11

 The 19th and Early 20th Century 11

 The Interwar Period..... 12

 The Post-War Period: Officer Personnel Act of 1947 & Officer Grade Limitation Act of 1954 14

 Evolutionary Change: The Defense Officer Personnel Management Act (1980)..... 17

CONTEMPORARY CHANGES IN OFFICER PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT 20

 Blended Retirement System 20

 2019 National Defense Authorization Act 21

III: A WAY FORWARD..... 28

THINKING ABOUT THE POLICY TRADESPACE 29

 Career Flow Structures 29

 Labor Market Context 30

PROPOSALS FOR CHANGE..... 32

 Proposal 1: Base Numbers of Officers in each Grade on Operational Requirements..... 32

 Proposal 2: Remove High-Year Tenure & Increase Selective Continuation Options 35

 Proposal 3: Remove Pension Cliff-vesting at the 20-year Mark..... 39

IV. CONCLUSION 43

AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH 44

BIBLIOGRAPHY 46

I. INTRODUCTION

“I think that no great argument would have to be presented to show that our promotion system has been unsatisfactory. Until we got to the grade of general officer, it was absolutely a lock-step promotion; and short of almost [a] crime being committed by an officer, there were ineffectual ways of eliminating a man. It is illustrated by the fact that the law requires at the present time that an officer that we consider unsatisfactory, [...] we are compelled to submit his name for promotion before we can submit anyone under him. [...]

The Congress has given to us a bill allowing us to build up to a total of 50,000 officers. We want in the integration of those officers first to have a sound, solid system that will be sound and solid for some years to come, so that they may be integrated, so that they may see as to where they stand, and so that we may proceed to their advancement and promotion without the handicaps we have had in the past. Specifically, we need to tell the young fellow who is coming in what his prospects are, how he stands, what he has to do, what standards he has to reach in order to go ahead.”¹ – General Dwight Eisenhower

Following the Second World War, Congress enacted laws governing active duty officer management to address the very problems and hopes General Eisenhower highlighted in his 1947 Congressional testimony. These laws were not revolutionary, but evolutionary. They built upon prior efforts, some starting as far back as the 1860s, to address officer career stagnation and the primacy of seniority over merit in determining promotions that had thus far failed to achieve their aims. The unprecedented scale of the Second World War’s industrialized combat, the inadequacies of the officer corps heading into the war, and the concern that warfare on such a scale might recur provided the impetus for legislative action

¹ Hearings before the Senate Committee on Armed Services, Officer Personnel Act of 1947, 1–2.

to address these issues comprehensively. The laws that followed were guided by a Congressional vision of uniformity across the services, maintaining a “young and vigorous” officer corps, and providing for future remobilization capability.² This vision remained the guiding framework for officer career management throughout the remainder of the 20th century and into the 21st century.

However, it is worth questioning whether this vision remains as relevant in the contemporary or future operating environments as it was in the 1940s and 1950s. Core features of the current officer management system are governed by laws aligned to it – promotions by year-group, up-or-out, high-year tenure by grade, grade limitations scaled to officer population, and voluntary retirement as early as twenty years of service, to name but a few. But these mechanisms increasingly appear crude and archaic when uniformly applied to modern military forces. They make no allowance for very real differences between infantry officers in the field and cyber officers, remotely piloted aircraft officers, or Guardians supporting combat operations from half a world away. Instead, they treat officers as interchangeable inputs in the production function of war, providing 20th-century solutions to 20th-century ways of thinking about officer career management. As a result, recruiting and retaining officers needed to support increasingly technical mission requirements has become ever more difficult and unsustainably expensive.

Moving forward, the United States needs a model that places greater emphasis on differences between services and the career fields within them to better align active duty officer management with service mission requirements. Following the changes implemented in the 2019 NDAA and the implementation of the Blended Retirement System, I propose

² Rostker et al., “The Defense Officer Personnel Management Act of 1980. A Retrospective Assessment,” 90.

three changes to the law to help advance active duty officer management into the 21st century.

First, replace the formulaic field grade limitation tables in Title 10, Section 523 with annual requirements-based submissions incorporated into existing end-strength and manpower authorization processes. The number of authorized active duty O-4, O-5, and O-6 officers in each service should reflect service requirements rather than simple mathematical outputs derived from the officer corps size.

Second, repeal Title 10, Section 633 and 634 mandatory retirement for O-5 and O-6 officers based on time in service and revise Section 637 selective continuation for O-3 and O-4 officers. Title 10, Section 1251 already mandates a retirement age of 62 for officers below O-7, while increasing selective continuation flexibility improves retention options for needed talent that is disinclined or ill-suited to command.

Third, build upon recent retirement system changes by shifting pension vesting to the left while simultaneously shifting payment to the right. Such a change removes the incentive to “gut it out” or “coast” till retirement for those otherwise ready to move on while simultaneously removing the significant financial disincentive for continued service past twenty years.

These proposed changes, like those that came before, are incremental in nature and build upon recent progress toward an officer management system fit for the 21st century. They better align the officer corps structure to service mission requirements, increase the opportunities to retain technical expertise, and improve economic incentives surrounding the retirement system. The 20th-century vision of active duty officer management served the

United States well in its day but continued, iterative improvement is needed to succeed in the increasingly technical and dynamic wars of the future.

STRATEGIC IMPERATIVE – THE CASE FOR CONTINUED CHANGE

The systems and policies governing military officer management must continue to evolve for two categorical reasons. Qualitatively, current systems and policies are inadequate to meet current and future DOD personnel needs, while quantitatively, they are increasingly unaffordable. Taken together, continued change is essential if the United States is to remain a pre-eminent military power.

Every strategic document, from the 2022 National Security Strategy down to service-component strategies, places high-quality people at the center of the American military’s warfighting prowess. At the same time, each recognizes that current personnel systems and policies are no longer fit for purpose. Primarily reflecting employment and social norms of the mid-20th century that emphasized interchangeable quantity over individual quality, these systems are insufficient or even counterproductive to recruiting, developing, and retaining an increasingly technical 21st-century workforce.³ The Marines best articulate the challenge, recognizing that the “essence of all manpower systems is to encourage those you need and want to stay, and separate those who are not performing to standards” while acknowledging that the current framework “lacks the authorities and tools to accomplish [this] in anything but a blunt way.”⁴

³ See the U.S. Army War College’s Strategic Studies Institutes six-part monograph series beginning with Wardynski, Lyle, and Colarusso, *Towards a U.S. Army Officer Corps Strategy for Success: A Proposed Human Capital Model Focused Upon Talent*. as well Kane, “Bleeding Talent: The U.S. Military’s Leadership Breakdown.”

⁴ Berger, “Commandant’s Planning Guidance,” 7.

Furthermore, despite the force approaching its smallest in terms of end strength and force structure following the second world war, military personnel costs are at historical highs and consume roughly 30% of the DOD budget.⁵ Compared with the peak of the Reagan buildup in 1987, at the peak of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan in 2010, the active-duty force was 34 percent smaller and yet cost 47 percent more when adjusting for inflation.⁶ While growth in personnel costs has since plateaued, on an inflation-adjusted basis, the average cost per active-duty member is more than double what it was in the 1980s, well into the All-Volunteer Force era.⁷ As a result, the U.S. is poorly positioned to simply spend its way out of personnel problems moving forward. Instead, we must think harder about the systems and policies in place to ensure they can attract and retain the talented personnel service components require.

TIMING – WHY NOW? WHY NOT THEN?

Proposals to reform officer personal management date back decades. Many highlight the same or similar flaws discussed in the contemporary literature – the developmental rigidity of up or out, the inefficiencies of retiring competent officers in their working-age prime, and the misaligned incentives of the military pension system, among others.⁸ But if proposals for change drafted in the 2010s and 2020s rhyme with those from the 1970s, the question must be asked, why change now? And why didn't change occur then? The cumulative effects of three trends provide an answer: the evolving strategic landscape, the evolving social landscape, and the role of money as personnel management problem-solver.

⁵ Daniels, "Assessing Trends in Military Personnel Costs," 8.

⁶ Ibid., 9.

⁷ Ibid., 12.

⁸ See "The Report of the Presidents Commission on an All-Volunteer Armed Force." "The 20-Year Military Retirement System Needs Reform."

Trend 1: The Evolving Strategic Landscape

Following the Second World War, the Soviet Union emerged as the primary threat to the United States. Hostilities, if they were to break out, were envisioned as set-piece European theater battles requiring the mobilization of large forces.⁹ This was precisely the kind of conflict post World War II officer personnel policies were designed to support – large-scale warfare on the land, sea, and air with “green” draftees commanded by experienced and equally capable (i.e., interchangeable) generalist officers. The transition to an All-Volunteer Force in 1973 did not fundamentally change this paradigm, as the officer corps was already primarily filled with a ready supply of volunteers.¹⁰ Goldwater-Nichols, passed in 1986, reinforced the paradigm by narrowing the golden path for promotion to the most senior ranks.¹¹

The Cold War’s end led to major strategic shifts, but without a commensurate change in officer personnel management. Absent a peer competitor in the 1990s, the United States postured to successfully fight two simultaneous regional conflicts while envisioning a more complicated geo-political environment.¹² From that starting point, the U.S. went on to fight wars in Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, and Iraq while also intervening in Libya, Syria, and Yemen. It engaged in countering violent extremist organizations around the globe while also competing against revisionist powers below the threshold of armed conflict. Coincident with these many conflicts and engagements, two new warfighting domains emerged as co-equal to the air, land, and sea – the cyber and space domains.

⁹ “Building a F.A.S.T. Force: A Flexible Personnel System for a Modern Military,” 21.

¹⁰ “The Report of the Presidents Commission on an All-Volunteer Armed Force,” 70.

¹¹ “Defense Personnel Systems: The Hidden Threat to a High-Performance Force,” 11.

¹² Aspin, “Report on the Bottom-Up Review.”

While the time and place of future conflict are unknowable, the overall situation is clear – the strategic landscape has grown more complex, encompassing more actors, more domains, and more activities across the spectrum of conflict than ever before. While the need to command troops in the field did not disappear, the need for experienced and more technically specialized officers capable of fulfilling new and evolving roles has and will continue to grow.

Trend 2: The Evolving Social Landscape

The officer corps' family dynamics and demographic composition have evolved significantly since the mid-twentieth century. In the 1950s-1970s, officers' wives were expected to uphold volunteer and social obligations corresponding to the military member's rank and role, with their performance impacting their husband's advancement.¹³ Few were formally employed outside of the household. In the 1970s, this began to change, with military spouses increasingly pursuing outside employment on par with their civilian counterparts.¹⁴ As of 2021, approximately sixty percent of officer's spouses are employed or actively seeking employment in the civilian workforce (data excludes dual-mil spouses).¹⁵ This trend encouraged some changes, including resourcing family support services beginning in the 1980s that were previously provided "in kind" by military spouses' networks.¹⁶ However, the evolving need to balance two careers in a single household did not fundamentally change the rigid structure governing officer personnel management.

¹³ Covkin, "A Short History of U.S. Army Wives, 1776-1983."

¹⁴ Grossman, "The Employment situation for Military Wives."

¹⁵ "Military Community Demographics."

¹⁶ Grossman, "The Employment situation for Military Wives."

Coincident with the legislative actions laying the post-war foundation of officer personnel management was the 1948 Women’s Armed Service Integration Act, authorizing women to serve as full, permanent members in the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, and Air Force in a limited number of roles. The law restricted the number of serving women to no more than 2% of each service’s end strength and authorized only a limited number of officers in the grades of O-1 to O-6.¹⁷ The ranks and roles available to women have continuously expanded since, with the last gender-based career field restrictions lifted in 2016.¹⁸ As a result, women now comprise over 19% of the active duty officer corps – 8% are married to another military member, 29% have children, and approximately 8% are single parents.¹⁹

The evolving family dynamic and officer corps composition changed dramatically since the mid-twentieth century, introducing new complexities as families sought to balance two careers and decisions surrounding such milestone life events as parenthood. With these changes, expectations for more flexible work hours, greater control over permanent change of station locations and timing, and a more flexible promotion system increased over time.

Trend 3: Money Solves All Problems

Over the decades, the evolving strategic environment and social landscape presented opportunities for evolutionary improvements to active duty officer management. However, the complexities and difficulties inherent in pursuing such changes through the Department of Defense bureaucracy and Congress led to a path of lower resistance – applying money to the problem.

¹⁷ Women’s Armed Service Integration Act.

¹⁸ Carter, “Implementation Guidance for the Full Integration of Women in the Armed Forces.”

¹⁹ “Military Community Demographics.”

Beginning in the 1960s, Congress added 68 pay, allowance, gratuity, and benefits items to a baseline of 42 across the officer and enlisted force (11 of which Congress had added in the 1940s-50s).²⁰ Moving across time, these trended from adding smaller monthly hardship and incentive pays to adding increasingly large recruitment and retention pays.²¹ Additionally, beginning with recruitment and retention issues in the late 1970s, Congress passed significant pay increases in the early 1980s, a process that repeated in the early 2000s.²²

One can argue that these changes reflect responses to a competitive employment marketplace, particularly following the transition to an All-Volunteer Force in 1973. However, within the context of an otherwise static officer personnel management system, they also present as a single variable solution to a multi-variate problem – money as *the* solution to recruiting or retention problems that might otherwise have been addressed via changes to personnel management.²³ Given that these pay increases led to ever-higher personnel costs concurrent with an ever-smaller military force, this approach could not continue indefinitely.

The Culmination: Budget Control Act of 2011

The culmination of these three trends occurred under the constraints of the 2011 Budget Control Act. With spending capped and personnel costs high and primarily fixed, the Department of Defense reduced end strength while also cutting readiness and long-term

²⁰ “Military Compensation Background Papers,” 9–12. 1960 was used as the dividing line under the assumption it provided sufficient time for OPA & OGLA to be firmly established and open to subsequent revisions

²¹ While recruitment and re-enlistment bonuses date to 1791 and 1795 respectively, the number and specificity of additional recruitment and retention bonuses proliferated since the 1960s.

²² “Defense Personnel Systems: The Hidden Threat to a High-Performance Force,” 10.

²³ Ibid.

acquisition programs to balance the books.²⁴ However, mission requirements were not similarly reduced. The result was a smaller, less ready, and more stressed fighting force, undermining recruiting and retention at a time when Congress and the Department of Defense could not spend their way out of the problem.²⁵

To the question of “Why change now and why didn’t’ change occur then?” one is left with a Churchillian answer: running out of money, Congress and the Department of Defense were forced to think.²⁶ This opened a window to reforms in the 2010s not previously available. Though significant reforms have already been achieved as a result, more can and should be done to advance officer management into the 21st century while the window of opportunity remains open.

II. HISTORICAL CONTEXT AND RECENT LEGISLATIVE PROGRESS

To further advance officer management into the 21st century, two areas must be discussed before potential solutions. First, a history of the existing officer management system is needed to understand how the current system came into being and what specific problems it was designed to address. Second, an overview of recent changes to the law will set the scene for further proposed changes. This will provide the necessary historical context and legislative recency to discuss potential improvements while differentiating issues already “in work” from those remaining unresolved.

²⁴ “Building a F.A.S.T. Force: A Flexible Personnel System for a Modern Military,” 42.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ “Gentlemen, we are out of money; now we have to think” –attributed to Winston Churchill during WWII

A HISTORY OF OFFICER PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT

The 19th and Early 20th Century

During the 19th and early 20th centuries, Army and Naval officer career stagnation was commonplace. Service academy graduates, then the primary source of regular military officers, were not guaranteed a commission at graduation.²⁷ If receiving one, they could expect to spend decades in the junior ranks awaiting promotion in a seniority-based system that advanced one funeral at a time.²⁸ For the Navy, the era's limited rank structure compounded this issue. With only three naval ranks in force before 1862, compared to the Army's seven or more (the number of General Officer ranks varied), a naval officer could expect at most two promotions over a career.²⁹

Congressional actions to tackle the stagnation issue started small in the 1830s before building in the 1860s through 1880s. Following prompting by the Secretary of War, in 1838 Congress increased pay for officers after serving five years in grade, for the first-time linking pay to rank and seniority.³⁰ Following the outbreak of the Civil War, Congress provided authorities to remove older and ineffective generals. Legislation in 1861 and 1862 granted authorities for voluntary officer retirement after 40 years of service, involuntary non-disability retirement, and mandatory retirement after 45 years of service or age 62.³¹ However, Congress did not require the services to exercise these authorities – it was not until 1882 that Congress established age 64 as the mandatory retirement age for all services.³²

²⁷ Rostker et al., "The Defense Officer Personnel Management Act of 1980. A Retrospective Assessment," 75.

²⁸ Hayes, *The Evolution of Military Officer Personnel Management Policies : A Preliminary Study with Parallels from Industry*, 30.

²⁹ Rostker et al., "The Defense Officer Personnel Management Act of 1980. A Retrospective Assessment," 76.

³⁰ Hayes, *The Evolution of Military Officer Personnel Management Policies : A Preliminary Study with Parallels from Industry*, 37.

³¹ "Military Compensation Background Papers," 565–66.

³² *Ibid.*, 566.

While retired pay under these provisions initially varied between the two services, by 1873 it was set at 75 percent for all officers.³³

The next significant change to officer personnel management occurred with the 1916 Navy Act. In attempting to advance “best-fitted” Naval officers while easing out others, the act implemented the first “up or out” policies.³⁴ Captains, Commanders, and Lieutenant Commanders who were not selected for promotion by age 56, 50, and 45 (respectively) had to retire, with pay set at 2.5 times base pay per year of service, not to exceed 75 percent.³⁵ However, in practice the legislation did little to address the stagnation issue as the Navy continued to advance officers merely deemed “fitted” rather than eliminating them.³⁶

Despite efforts to remedy the situation, as the First World War dawned, officer advancement through the ranks continued to proceed at a glacial pace, and mechanisms for removing ineffectual officers were limited to nonexistent in practice.

The Interwar Period

Following World War I, demobilization and repeated force structure cuts in 1919 – 1922 did little to address the stagnation issue permanently. The 1920 National Defense Act directed the Army to categorize regular officers as class “A” or class “B,” with the latter separated with severance pay or mandatorily retired if they had more than ten years of commissioned service.³⁷ Further cuts followed in 1922. However, once major force structure cuts were behind the Army, the class “A” or “B” process failed to effectively function as a

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Rostker et al., “The Defense Officer Personnel Management Act of 1980. A Retrospective Assessment,” 84.

³⁵ “Military Compensation Background Papers,” 567.

³⁶ Rostker et al., “The Defense Officer Personnel Management Act of 1980. A Retrospective Assessment,” 84.

³⁷ “Military Compensation Background Papers,” 567.

pruning mechanism, with promotions resuming lockstep movement based on seniority and available openings, with little regard for actual ability.

Additional legislation in the 1920s marked important changes for the Navy and foreshadowed changes following World War II. First, in 1922 Congress passed legislation equalizing pay across the Army and Navy, the equalization of the six grades below flag/general officer having already occurred in 1862.³⁸ The 1926 Equalization Act also established the Navy's "running mate" system to synchronize Naval line and staff officer promotions.³⁹ Before this change, the maintenance of separate promotion lists with differing grade distributions between line and staff officers meant those commissioned in the same year could, after several years, hold very different ranks.⁴⁰ This move towards consistent promotion timing based on commissioning date would remain a theme moving forwards.

Further changes attempting to improve the situation continued into the 1930s, with significant legislation affecting both the Army and Navy. In 1931, the Navy's "up or out" system transitioned from age-based to time-in-service-based, mandating retirement for Captains, Commanders, and Lieutenant Commanders upon completing 35, 28, or 21 years of service and not being recommended for promotion.⁴¹ It was amended again in 1938, instituting mandatory retirement for Captains, Commanders, and Lieutenant Commanders who twice failed selection for promotion at 30, 28, and 26 years of commissioned service.⁴²

The Army approached the problem from the opposite direction. Legislation in 1935 lifted some grade limitations and permitted automatic seniority-based advancement to First

³⁸ Rostker et al., "The Defense Officer Personnel Management Act of 1980. A Retrospective Assessment," 85.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 86.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ "Military Compensation Background Papers," 568.

⁴² *Ibid.*

Lieutenant at 3 years, Captain at 10 years, Major at 17 years, and Lieutenant Colonel at 23 years, while promotion to full Colonel was contingent on achieving a minimum of 28 years of service and a requisite vacancy opening up.⁴³ While helping move officers through promotions, this change did nothing to prune the force in general or of ineffective officers in particular. Indeed, for the period 1931 to 1940, only 350 Army officers resigned, retired, or were dismissed.⁴⁴

As the United States approached the eve of the Second World War, both services continued to grapple with career stagnation and ineffective systems to retire or remove existing officers. Addressing both would be a key focus of post-war legislation.

The Post-War Period: Officer Personnel Act of 1947 & Officer Grade Limitation Act of 1954

Following the Second World War, congressional legislation focused on three themes supporting a more permanent military establishment: uniformity across the services, maintaining a “young and vigorous” officer corps, and providing for future remobilization capability.⁴⁵ These themes were rooted in challenges from the Second World War, including poor coordination and inconsistencies between the War and Navy Departments (the Secretary of Defense position was also created in 1947), the rigors of combat and the inability of aged officers to cope, as well as the concern war on such a scale might recur. Aligned to these themes, two key pieces of legislation emerged in the post-war era – the Officer Personnel Act of 1947 and the Officer Grade Limitation Act of 1954.

⁴³ Rostker et al., “The Defense Officer Personnel Management Act of 1980. A Retrospective Assessment,” 88.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 90.

The Officer Personnel Act of 1947 was designed to provide an adequate number of officers in the proper grades and ages to meet service needs, authorize grade distributions sufficient to attract high-caliber personnel to the services and eliminate weak officers as early in a career as possible.⁴⁶ The legislation implemented several changes to achieve this.

First, it tightened and extended the Navy's competitive "up or out" promotion system to all services, replacing the Army's seniority-based model. Henceforth, officers would advance through a standardized promotion framework, with minimum time in grade requirements and expected promotion timing specified in law. At each milestone, officers would be centrally boarded for promotion, with those twice passed over either separated or retired, depending on grade.⁴⁷ Of note, some disparity would persist in execution, with the Navy taking a more restrictive approach centered on promoting "best qualified" officers while the Army sometimes promoted merely "qualified" officers.⁴⁸

Second, it tied the number of officers serving in each grade to fixed ratios of overall officer end-strength, with separate limits for non-line career fields such as medical officers and chaplains.⁴⁹ At the same time, it provided for temporary promotions above those numbers, notionally to support needed end-strength flexibility for maintaining mobilization capacity. Critically, the number of temporary promotions for the Army and Air Force were not limited, while limits imposed on the Navy and Marine Corps would soon be perceived as too liberal.⁵⁰

⁴⁶ Ibid., 91.

⁴⁷ Officer Personnel Act of 1947.

⁴⁸ Rostker et al., "The Defense Officer Personnel Management Act of 1980. A Retrospective Assessment," 93.

⁴⁹ Officer Personnel Act of 1947.

⁵⁰ Rostker et al., "The Defense Officer Personnel Management Act of 1980. A Retrospective Assessment," 94.

Finally, it ended the Army's practice of commissioning and promoting officers within independent Army branches. Henceforth, officers would be appointed in the "Regular Army" and centrally promoted, overturning the branch-based promotion system established in 1890.⁵¹ The Army actively sought this change to increase flexibility in officer management by lowering the administrative burden on branch transfers that otherwise could require Senate approval.⁵²

The Officer Grade Limitation Act of 1954 followed, making two crucial changes to Officer Personnel Act policies following several years of execution. First, it transitioned from fixed ratio grade limits to sliding scale limits based on overall officer population size.⁵³ This authorized a larger baseline of field grade officers during peacetime, thereby maintaining the necessary staff overhead and experience for future mobilizations while scaling at a lower rate as end strength grew. Second, it limited the number of officers in each grade to within the new limits, regardless of temporary or permanent promotion status.⁵⁴ This ended the Army and Air Forces' temporary promotion loophole, requiring the services to pursue congressional end-strength waivers for any subsequent overages, something the Air Force would habitually require in the years to follow owing to structural issues with how initial grade limitations were calculated.

Also of note during this period, in 1946 and 1947 Congress passed legislation providing for a 20-year voluntary retirement across all the services.⁵⁵ Out of concern that too many officers were retiring at 20 years and half pay, Congress imposed restrictions on

⁵¹ Ibid., 84.

⁵² Ibid., 92.

⁵³ Officer Grade Limitation Act of 1954.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ "Military Compensation Background Papers," 568–69.

voluntary retirement in the 1954 Defense Appropriations Act.⁵⁶ However, the services argued such a provision was unnecessary, believing most officers would elect to serve a full 30-year career. As a result, the limits were overturned with the Officer Grade Limitation Act of 1954.⁵⁷ However, Congress' concerns would prove to be well founded, with data spanning subsequent decades demonstrating a bias towards retirements around 20 and 24-year marks.

Overall, the Officer Personnel Act of 1947 and the Officer Grade Limitation Act of 1954 laid the foundations for the next seventy years of officer career management. While the next major milestone would be the passage of the Defense Officer Personnel Management Act in 1980, it would be an evolutionary change rooted in the same intellectual framework underpinning post-war legislation — uniformity across the services, maintaining a “young and vigorous” officer corps, and providing for future remobilization capability.

Evolutionary Change: The Defense Officer Personnel Management Act (1980)

Contemporary literature highlights five significant features of the Defense Officer Personnel Management Act (DOPMA) system:⁵⁸

- 1) *A closed system in which, with few exceptions, officers enter at low grades and higher grades are filled through internal promotion*
- 2) *A pyramidal structure for the field grades (O-4 through O-6) relative to each other and to the company grades (O-1 through O-3) collectively, formed by grade ceiling tables based on total officer strength in each of the services*
- 3) *A competitive, up-or-out career flow maintained by established high years of tenure for various grades and requirements that officers twice non-selected for*

⁵⁶ Rostker et al., “The Defense Officer Personnel Management Act of 1980. A Retrospective Assessment,” 95.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 96.

⁵⁸ Robbert et al., “Officer Career Management: Steps Toward Modernization in the 2018 and 2019 National Defense Authorization Acts,” xviii.

- promotion are subject to involuntary separation*
- 4) *Seniority-based promotion timing, including time-in-grade requirements for promotion, defined zones of promotion consideration based on date of rank, and promotion lists sequenced by date of rank*
 - 5) *Uniformity across services, with statutory provisions authorizing or directing the Secretary of Defense to prescribe uniform regulations for implementation.*

Absent historical context, this portrayal might imply that DOPMA made paradigm-shifting changes to officer personnel management. But the system pre-dating DOPMA could be described in much the same manner. DOPMA then was not revolutionary; it was evolutionary – it maintained and reinforced the pre-existing post-World War II vision and framework of officer career management, particularly regarding uniformity.⁵⁹ Three areas impacted by the legislation demonstrate this.

First, DOPMA removed the remaining differences governing mandatory separation and retirement that had persisted between the services.⁶⁰ These included differing mandatory retirement periods, among others. For example, before DOPMA an Army or Air Force O-5 had to retire at 28 years, compared to 26 years for the Navy and Marine Corps. Ostensibly, such differences persisted to fulfill differing management needs between the services, but after decades of experience, Congress saw greater merit in making career expectations more uniform across the services.⁶¹ The result was a single policy governing mandatory separation and retirement by grade applicable to all the services.

Second, DOPMA established a standardized promotion zone framework for all the services. Under this model, cohorts of officers are considered for promotion following

⁵⁹ Rostker et al., “The Defense Officer Personnel Management Act of 1980. A Retrospective Assessment,” 2.

⁶⁰ “Military Compensation Background Papers,” 569–70.

⁶¹ Ibid.

relatively predictable and standardized timelines generally based on their year of commissioning.⁶² When “in the zone” (first promotion consideration), cohorts are considered along with a small number of “below the zone” (one year early) and “above the zone” (once passed over) officers.⁶³ This approach was designed to give greater predictability to the officer corps while increasing uniformity between the services. While it increased the structure surrounding timing and mechanics of promotion, it did not fundamentally change the “up or out” model.

Third, DOPMA updated the officer grade limitation tables. While altering the number of officers authorized by service and grade (generally decreasing them slightly compared to the original OGLA tables), the intellectual underpinnings of the historic model were unchanged. The grade limitation tables remained divorced from service manpower requirements and personnel authorization processes – they represented “legal goals to be met rather than needs to be accommodated.”⁶⁴ While the intent following DOPMA was that these tables would be periodically updated to reflect emerging manpower requirements, in practice, this was rarely done.⁶⁵

The Defense Officer Personnel Management Act of 1980 was an evolutionary legislation that homogenized specific differences between the services regarding separation, retirement, and promotion. It did not, however, usher in any paradigm-shifting changes to the officer personnel management system established by the Officer Personnel Act of 1947 and amended by the Officer Grade Limitation Act of 1954.

⁶² Rostker et al., “The Defense Officer Personnel Management Act of 1980. A Retrospective Assessment,” 12.

⁶³ Defense Officer Personnel Management Act.

⁶⁴ Rostker et al., “The Defense Officer Personnel Management Act of 1980. A Retrospective Assessment,” 8.

⁶⁵ “Report to Accompany The John S. McCain National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2019,” 172.

CONTEMPORARY CHANGES IN OFFICER PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT

Consistent with the argument advanced above about the catalyzing event of the Budget Control Act in the context of other changes, the first paradigm-altering changes to active duty officer personnel management since the Second World War began in 2015 with the passage of the 2016 National Defense Authorization Act, authorizing a new Blended Retirement System. The second came in 2018 with the passage of the 2019 National Defense Authorization Act, which substantially changed laws governing officer personnel management.

Blended Retirement System

The Blended Retirement System broke with the century-old all-or-nothing defined benefit pension in favor of a new defined contribution paired with a reduced defined benefit. New service members entering in 2018 and beyond receive a 1% contribution to their Thrift Savings Plan 401(k) that increases to 5% if the member also contributes 5% of basic pay. Furthermore, depending on service retention needs, they are eligible for a continuation bonus ranging from 2.5 to 13 times basic pay following 12 years of service. In exchange, the pension multiplier was cut from 2.5% to 2.0% times years of service (a 20% reduction). The requirement to serve 20 years for pension eligibility was unchanged, and existing members were allowed to remain under the legacy system or opt into the Blended Retirement System.

Studies leading up to the 2016 NDAA provide three primary justifications for the change as implemented: the evolution of the socio-economic environment, high costs and overly generous benefits, and the inequality of the legacy retirement system. On the socio-

economic front, the century-old pension system was designed in a world of shorter lifespans, single careers, and non-transferrable military skills. Over that period, the world changed substantially. As a result, the Department of Defense consistently paid 40 years of generous retirement benefits for 20 years of service, after which former service members would be gainfully employed in a second career.⁶⁶ Moreover, compared to private sector pension contributions of 4-12% per year, the Department of Defense effectively contributed 75% of annual pay towards retirement, but only for those few who made it to 20 years.⁶⁷ This led to concerns about inequality – fewer than 20% of those who served made it to 20 years and a generous pension, while the remainder departed the service with no employer-sponsored retirement benefits. This starkly contrasted with the private sector, where nearly all Fortune 500 companies offered some combination of defined contribution or defined benefit plan that, by law, must fully vest by the seventh year of employment.⁶⁸

The full impact of the Blended Retirement System will not be known for years or decades. However, by eroding the sharp edge of the legacy retirement system’s 20-year vesting cliff, it appears to be a step in the right direction.

2019 National Defense Authorization Act

The 2019 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) made several substantive changes that depart from the 20th-century paradigm governing officer personnel management. These changes increased flexibility between and within service components by improving

⁶⁶ “Report to the Secretary of Defense: Modernizing the Military Retirement System,” 24.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ McFarland, “Retirement Offerings in the Fortune 500: 1998 – 2019.”

lateral entry opportunities, performance incentives, and softening aspects of the up or out model.

Many of these changes were initially proposed under Secretary of Defense Ash Carter’s “Force of the Future” initiatives in 2015-2016.⁶⁹ However, the speed with which those proposals were generated and the breadth of changes proposed (they ranged from additional parental leave and increasing digital innovation to increasing corporate internships and Ph.D. programs) created problems. Difficulties in messaging, managing the political process, and concerns about readiness limited initial uptake, torpedoing some proposals while delaying the implementation of others. Nonetheless, several Force of the Future initiatives gained sufficient traction to clear the legislative hurdle in 2018. Each is discussed briefly.

Repeal of Requirement for Ability to Complete 20 Years of Service by Age 62 as Qualification for Original Appointment as a Regular Commissioned Officer. (Title 10, Section 532)⁷⁰

Formerly, a criterion for initial commissioned officer appointments was the ability to “complete 20 years of active commissioned service before [one’s] sixty-second birthday.”⁷¹ This limited potential officer accessions to those age 42 or younger, posing an arbitrary age-based constraint on eligibility to join the officer corps. Before the 2005 NDAA, the requirement was eligibility to complete 20 years of active commissioned service before one’s fifty-fifth birthday, limiting accession to those age 35 or younger.⁷² This repeal represents the

⁶⁹ Carter, “The Next Two Links of the Force of the Future.”

⁷⁰ John S. McCain National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2019, Section 501.

⁷¹ Ronald W. Reagan National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2005.

⁷² Ibid.

logical conclusion of an iterative process de-emphasizing the primacy of a “young and vigorous” officer corps in favor of one linking talent and experience to service requirements.

*Enhancement of Availability of Constructive Service Credit for Private Sector Training or Experience Upon Original Appointment as a Commissioned Officer. (Title 10, Section 533)*⁷³

Formerly, constructive credit for lateral entrants was capped at O-4 and applied only to the medical and dental corps (the 2014 NDAA added cyber officers).⁷⁴ The 2019 NDAA raised the authorized grade ceiling to O-6 and removed career field restrictions. It also granted service secretaries wide latitude in awarding constructive credit based on relevant training or experience. Paired with the amendment to Title 10, Section 532, service secretaries now have the authority to directly hire personnel younger than age 62 into grades as high as O-6, where the member’s skillset and experience meet service requirements. This represents a significant departure from the historic closed employment model.

*Standardized Temporary Promotion Authority Across the Military Departments for Officers in Certain Grades with Critical Skills. (Title 10, Section 605)*⁷⁵

Formerly, temporary promotions were only applicable to the Navy. They are now authorized for all services and applicable to grades O-2 through O-5. The law caps the number of temporary promotions by service and requires that 1) the officer possesses a relevant skill in critically short supply as judged by the service secretary, 2) the officer is serving in a position designated for an O-3 thru O-6 that requires such skill, and 3) a promotion board is convened to select officers for temporary promotion. This change holds

⁷³ John S. McCain National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2019, Section 502.

⁷⁴ Robbert et al., “Officer Career Management: Steps Toward Modernization in the 2018 and 2019 National Defense Authorization Acts,” 76. National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2014, Section 502.

⁷⁵ John S. McCain National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2019, Section 503.

the potential to better align rank and compensation with responsibility, providing improved retention incentives. However, the administrative overhead of convening a temporary promotion board may limit utilization in the field.

*Authority for Promotion Boards to Recommend Officers of Particular Merit Be Placed Higher on a Promotion List. (Title 10, Section 616)*⁷⁶

Historically, the officer promotion sequence was based on time in grade (seniority). Those promoted earliest to the previous grade would be promoted earliest to the next. The only exception was for a small cohort of officers promoted “below the zone” (no more than 10% with service secretary approval, 15% with Secretary of Defense approval). Given that time in grade is rooted in arbitrary factors like an officer’s college graduation date, this approach disincentivized performance. With no distinction made between those with stronger records compared to those barely making the cut, weaker performers could arbitrarily be promoted upwards of 12 months earlier than stronger-performing peers.

Service secretaries now have the authority to overturn this anachronistic approach – they may now direct promotion boards to use merit-based sequencing. Where utilized, strong performers will promote toward the front of their cohort, while weaker performers will promote towards the end. This change provides significant incentives and signaling mechanisms. First, it rewards performance with earlier prestige and pay. Second, it gives feedback to cohort members, signaling where they stand compared to their peers. Finally, it signals to the broader officer corps (and potential accessions) that the service values and rewards performance.

⁷⁶ Ibid., Section 504.

*Authority for Officers to Opt Out of Promotion Board Consideration. (Title 10, Section 619)*⁷⁷

The rigid year-group cohort system and fixed promotion windows have historically constrained officer development to well-trodden “golden paths.” This rigidity incentivized checking the right boxes at the right time to ensure an officer’s promotability at the expense of broader, differentiated development. It also created perverse incentives, such as shortening the time spent in key development roles to increase throughput or compensate for lost time, resulting in increased organizational disruption and diminished officer development.

Service secretaries can now approve officer requests to opt out of promotion consideration, provided the officer’s reasoning is to complete a broadening assignment, advanced education, other assignment of significant value to the service, or complete career progression requirements (checking the right boxes) delayed by pursuing one of the prior items. This change softens the up-or-out model’s rigidity, shifting the window where an officer might be twice passed over for promotion to the right in favor of opportunities to develop a more intellectually and experientially diverse officer corps.

However, it also potentially sends the wrong message. Outside of the military, completing advanced education or a job of “significant value” to an employer correlates with higher subsequent compensation and promotion. Under this framework, completing the same in the military potentially results in delayed promotion. It therefore remains to be seen how this change will play out in the field.

⁷⁷ Ibid., Section 505.

*Applicability to Additional Officer Grades of Authority for Continuation on Active Duty of Officers in Certain Military Specialties and Career Tracks. (Title 10, Section 637a)*⁷⁸

Formerly, service secretaries could selectively continue officers above the grade of O-4 in specific service secretary-designated military specialties for up to 40 years of service after being twice passed over for promotion. They can now do so for officers above the grade of O-2. Selective continuation policies for the broader officer population (those outside the designated specialties) remain unchanged. While increasing the opportunities for “up and stay,” this change maintains the institutional default of firing or retiring officers who are not promoted rather than seeking to retain them in their current capacity. The core legislative language surrounding promotion remains telling of institutional norms – officers not selected for promotion are “considered to have *failed* of selection for promotion.”⁷⁹ This framework makes no allowance for whether an officer *desires* to be promoted or, more importantly, whether the service’s best interests are served by promoting a given officer.

*Alternative Promotion Authority for Officers in Designated Competitive Categories of Officers. (Title 10, Section 649)*⁸⁰

The Alternative Promotion Authority allows service secretaries to depart markedly from the legacy model. Under service secretary-designated competitive categories, minimum time-in-grade requirements and above or below the zone promotion considerations do not apply. Additionally, an officer may be considered for promotion up to five times, with the number set by service secretaries for each competitive category designated under this authority. An officer is not considered to have “failed of selection for promotion” until

⁷⁸ Ibid., Section 506.

⁷⁹ 10 U.S. Code § 627

⁸⁰ Ibid., Section 507.

exhausting the number of promotion considerations, potentially delaying the “out” forcing function of the “up or out” system. Finally, officers exhausting all promotion consideration may be selectively continued for up to three years (i.e., for one assignment), with the potential for additional three-year continuations. This duration mechanism differs from the absolute grade and years of service ceilings that govern legacy selective continuation. If not selected for further continuation, officers are separated or retired once their continuation term expires.

While Alternative Promotion Authority combines several interesting ideas, elements do appear problematic. First, there are significant administrative hurdles service secretaries must clear before applying this authority to a competitive category, including pre-emptive congressional reporting requirements. Second, while granting greater flexibility in establishing timing and opportunities for promotion, it is less clear whether the same flexibility is present to iteratively improve a new framework once established. Finally, it is unclear to what degree a five-look window might alter promotion outcomes other than delaying the “out” forcing function. The combined effect of these and other concerns may be to limit the utilization of the Alternative Promotion Authority given the perceived lower-risk approach of maintaining the status quo.

Placed within the historical context, the transition to the Blended Retirement System and passage of the 2019 NDAA represent the first paradigm-shifting changes to officer personnel management since the Second World War. However, more can and should be done to advance active duty officer management into the 21st century.

III: A WAY FORWARD

After reviewing the historical context and recent changes to the law governing active duty officer management, I propose three additional changes to advance active duty officer management into the 21st century. First, replace the formulaic field grade limitation tables in Title 10, Section 523 with annual requirements-based submissions incorporated into existing end-strength and manpower authorization processes. Second, repeal Title 10, Section 633 and 634 mandatory retirement for O-5 and O-6 officers based on time in service and revise Section 637 selective continuation ceilings for O-3 and O-4 officers. Third, build upon recent retirement system changes by shifting pension vesting to the left while simultaneously shifting payment to the right.

Each of these changes can be considered independently, but they are also complementary and may be most effective if enacted in a mutually supporting manner. The theme running throughout is one of flexibility — granting service components increased options to shape organizational structures and retain needed experience while reducing distorting economic incentives. However, before discussing each proposed change, two elements governing the policy trade space must be reviewed – organizational career flow structures and the labor market context.

THINKING ABOUT THE POLICY TRADESPACE

Career Flow Structures

Organizations can operate with closed (enter at the bottom) or open (enter at any level) employment models and with natural or forced attrition. Three distinct career flow structures arise from these choices: up-or-out, up-and-stay, and lateral entry.⁸¹

Up-or-out combines a closed employment model with forced attrition. Members must enter the organization at the bottom and can only remain if the organization permits.⁸² This flow can be advantageous in forcing continuous organizational renewal (youth, fresh ideas, etc.) and strong organizational culture, but it comes with the requirement to continuously re-create the organization's knowledge and experience base, increasing costs. This career flow structure has governed active duty military officers since the Second World War.

Up-and-stay combines a closed employment model with natural attrition — members again enter at the bottom of the organization, but the choice to stay or go is with the member.⁸³ This flow allows members who do not desire advancement or who the organization does not believe are fit for advancement to remain active, contributing members. In retaining this talent, the organization reduces costs associated with continuously re-creating it. However, this comes at the risk of career stagnation or organizational ossification if advancement opportunities or member turnover are curtailed. Historically, the U.S. military has not used this career flow structure, though selective continuation approaches it.

⁸¹ Thie et al., "A Future Officer Career Management System An Objectives-Based Design," 77.

⁸² Ibid., 78–79.

⁸³ Ibid., 79–80.

Lateral entry combines an open employment model with either forced or natural attrition.⁸⁴ Members can enter the organization at any level, allowing organizations to incorporate available talent without the associated costs of growing it in house. This flow can be beneficial when lateral hires do not directly compete with existing members or where organizations do not desire to develop particular training pipelines internally. However, it can be problematic when lateral hires directly compete against existing members. Such leapfrogging can curtail advancement opportunities and build resentment against those who have not “done their time” in the organization’s less desirable roles. Organizations relying heavily on lateral entry may struggle to foster and sustain a consistent culture. This career flow structure has historically been used for medical professionals, though the 2019 NDAA opens the aperture for laterally hiring military officers in any career field.

While each career flow is distinct, an organization does not have to use only one exclusively. They can be combined in ways that best meet organizational needs. This can include using different flows for different sub-organizations or different member populations. It can also include using different flows at different career stages.

Labor Market Context

Two key labor market considerations shape the policy trade space for active duty officer management. These include the military as a monopoly provider of specific services as well as the national employment marketplace within which the military must operate.

First, the military operates as a monopoly provider for state-sanctioned violence. As such, specific career fields such as infantry officer, submariner, and fighter pilot exist only in

⁸⁴ Ibid., 80–81.

the military and must be home-grown. At the same time, other career fields, such as intelligence officer, cyber officer, or developmental engineer, have analogous roles across the wider government or civilian industry. While the former creates an institutional bias towards a closed employment model, the latter illustrates that this need not be the case across all facets of the enterprise.

The second is that the military operates in a competitive marketplace to recruit and retain talent. This marketplace is best characterized as a liberal market economy, where frequent job changes, self-procured training, and flexible terms of employment are normalized.⁸⁵ As such, the military must employ different incentives and mechanisms to attract and retain talent. These include fixed employment contracts, training and education opportunities over and above job requirements, and job security that limits dismissal outside criminal acts to very structured and predictable mechanisms.⁸⁶ It also means the military is more likely to be challenged in retaining personnel rather than in confronting organizational bloat.⁸⁷

The intersection of career flow structures and the employment context both explain and constrain many choices governing officer management. For example, an institutional bias towards a closed employment model makes sense when most personnel perform military-exclusive duties. Given such a model becomes self-reinforcing by the strong organizational cultures it develops, it is understandable that a desire to maintain the status quo (closed employment) persists even if the originating reasons have evolved (fewer personnel performing military-exclusive duties). Likewise, because the military recruits from

⁸⁵ Cohn, “Who Will Serve? Labour Markets and Military Personnel Policy,” 7.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 17–18.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 14–15.

within a competitive liberal market economy where employees are expected to self-train and can be fired at will, the ability to provide training and education in exchange for contracted terms of service is a compelling and effective incentive to serve. Any attempt to replace this approach with widespread lateral entry would prove problematic and costly.

PROPOSALS FOR CHANGE

Proposal 1: Base Numbers of Officers in each Grade on Operational Requirements

The number of officers authorized in each service's field grades is governed by Title 10, Section 523. For each service and any given officer population size, a table in the law establishes ceilings on the number of O-4, O-5, and O-6 officers authorized (grades of O-3 and below are not similarly constrained). These numbers do not scale linearly. In keeping with the theme of future mobilization, smaller total officer populations are authorized a larger share of field grade officers as a proportion of the overall officer population compared to larger officer populations.⁸⁸ Under Title 10, Section 527, the President can suspend this limitation in either time of war or national emergency.

The grade ceilings are a top-down output of the political process, not a bottom-up integration of military requirements.⁸⁹ They presume a pyramidal organizational structure is optimal for each service. This approach was established by the Officer Grade Limitation Act of 1954, though subsequent legislation, including the Defense Officer Personnel Management Act of 1980, periodically revised the authorized numbers.

⁸⁸ This maintains a minimum viable baseline of field grade officers fulfilling various headquarters and staff functions that could be subsequently scaled up in time of war.

⁸⁹ Rostker et al., "The Defense Officer Personnel Management Act of 1980. A Retrospective Assessment," 8.

Reviewing the legislative record since 1980, the authorized numbers were revised seven times.⁹⁰ The only across-the-board revision occurred in 1996. Five updates occurred between 1985 and 2008, each amending tables for a single service. Updates for the Air Force occurred in 1991, for the Army in 2008, and for the Marine Corps in 1985, 2002, and 2011. In 2022, a table for the Space Force was added.

The governing effect of these grade limitations on each service appears mixed. For fiscal years 2022 and 2023, the Air Force appears constrained by all three grade ceilings, while the Army and Navy appear constrained by the O-6 ceiling; the Marine Corps and Space Force do not currently appear constrained by the grade limitation tables.⁹¹

While it may be tempting to view the infrequency of updates and limited constraining effects as the grade tables as working as designed, the Senate Armed Services Committee views them differently:

“The committee notes the officer strength table was originally included as a fundamental feature of the Defense Officer Personnel Management Act (DOPMA) (Public Law 96–513). The strength table was designed to serve as an effective limitation on the number of mid-grade officers within each service. The House report to accompany the legislation (H. Rept. 96–1462) explained that the table would be adjusted over time to align with emerging officer manpower requirements. However, in practice the authorized strength table has rarely been updated and is no longer linked to strategy or actual officer requirements.”⁹²

⁹⁰ “10 USC 523: Authorized Strengths: Commissioned Officers on Active Duty in Grades of Major, Lieutenant Colonel, and Colonel and Navy Grades of Lieutenant Commander, Commander, and Captain,” Amendments.

⁹¹ “Defense Manpower Profile Report for Fiscal Year 2023,” 32–61.

⁹² “Report to Accompany The John S. McCain National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2019,” 172.

MOVING FORWARD

Congress should repeal Title 10, Section 523 in favor of tighter congressional scrutiny of Title 10, Section 115 manpower profile and requirements reporting. The Department of Defense already produces a Congressionally mandated report detailing end strength and officer breakdowns by service and grade over the Future Years Defense Program's five-year window. This report includes a narrative justification by service explaining its manpower requirements within the context of current defense strategy and could be expanded to justify field grade officer requirements. Such a change presents several opportunities.

First, it makes each service's officer grade distributions part of the manpower discussion rather than a product of it. This creates greater flexibility to shape each organizational hierarchy to meet service-specific mission requirements. While this may mean maintaining a pyramid-shaped officer corps structure for some services or communities within services, it may also allow the evolution of different structures. Such changes could expand the number of field grades to simultaneously enable plateauing technical specialists under a model incorporating more up-and-stay provisions (see proposal 2) without curtailing advancement opportunities for those rising to higher leadership opportunities. It might also support more vertical structures, where the natural attrition of technical specialists is backfilled by lateral hiring of comparably skilled personnel to maintain specific operational capabilities or senior oversight of contracted services or acquisition programs.

Second, it diminishes the problematic aspects of lateral entry under a predominantly closed career flow structure. Absent change, laterally hiring an officer as an O-6 decreases the promotion opportunity for the home-grown pool of O-5s (and in turn, O-4s), potentially

building resentment and harming retention. This is true even when their expertise and career fields are mutually exclusive because current law fixes the maximal number of O-6 billets relative to a given officer population size. In removing this restriction, service secretaries could use lateral hiring to build out emerging career fields without harming the existing development pipelines of others.

Third, encouraging the services to think harder about officer requirements by grade and justify their needs to Congress may, in turn, set the scene for a subsequent evolutionary step — transitioning from a rank-in-person to a rank-in-job model. Such a shift would see officers assume a higher grade not based on the arbitrary timing and sequencing of promotion boards and lists but rather upon taking positions of higher responsibility and authority. Such a model already exists for the grades of O-9 and O-10 and could, in future, be utilized at lower echelons to better reward and incentivize performance.

Proposal 2: Remove High-Year Tenure & Increase Selective Continuation Options

Title 10, Section 633 and 634 specifies mandatory retirement for O-5s at 28 years of active commissioned service and for O-6s at 30 years of active commissioned service. Under Section 637, service secretaries may extend this by up to five years for members selected for continuation by a board convened for this purpose. Section 1251 mandates officers below the grade of O-7 retire upon reaching age 62, except for health professionals and chaplains, who may be retained until age 68. As a result, mandatory retirement for O-5s and O-6s is the lesser of the respective years of commissioned service ceiling or the age ceiling.

Members not selected for promotion are considered to have “failed of selection for promotion” under Title 10, Section 627. After twice failing of selection, members in the

grades of O-2, O-3, and O-4 are separated or retired per Title 10, Section 631 and 632. Under section 637, service secretaries may selectively continue O-3s for up to 20 years of active commissioned service and O-4s for up to 24 years of active commissioned service if selected by a board convened for this purpose. Section 637(a) provides for selective continuation of O-3s and above for up to 40 years of active service, but only for specialist career fields designated by the respective service secretary. These are the core mechanisms underpinning the up-or-out model.

Current and projected officer retirements by years of commissioned service yield some insights into the effects of these laws. The Army, Navy, and Marine Corps retire an elevated number (2x – 3x other years) of O-6s at 30 plus years of commissioned service (data does not differentiate between 30-year retirements and selectively continued retirements at 35 years), while similar clustering for O-5s occurs around 20 years of commissioned service (see proposal 3).⁹³ The Air Force presents as an outlier, retiring roughly equal numbers for any given years of commissioned service due to service policies governing the approval and timing of officer retirements. For the grades of O-4 and O-3, the selective continuation ceilings appear to constrain both the Army and Air Force, with no impact to the Navy or Marine Corps (they either retire officers in these grades earlier or not at all).⁹⁴

MOVING FORWARD

Congress should abolish mandatory retirement based on high-year tenure ceilings and consolidate selective retention laws around an up to 40-years of service model. For the grades of O-5 and O-6, the mandatory retirement age should serve as the limiting factor for

⁹³ “Defense Manpower Profile Report for Fiscal Year 2023,” 32–61.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

those otherwise fit and capable of continued service beyond the arbitrary markers of 28 or 30 years of active commissioned service. Likewise, selective retention policies should reflect mission requirements, not member grade or a narrow list of specialized skills. Such changes present several potential advantages.

First, it allows competent officers fit for duty to continue to serve, reducing costs associated with continuously re-creating the officer corps knowledge and experience base. Those officers continuing to perform and meet physical fitness standards can remain valuable contributors, bringing to bear a depth of experience and institutional memory often lacking due to high turnover and a bias towards youth. Those who subsequently do not perform or cannot meet standards can be retired via existing mechanisms tailored to the circumstances (medical boards, UCMJ actions, etc.). While such a change comes at the expense of diminished promotion opportunities for those in lower grades, the impacts appear manageable — fewer than 5% of the O-6 population, the smallest population in question, currently hit an associated ceiling.⁹⁵

Second, it allows greater flexibility for service secretaries to selectively retain competent officers who are not a good fit for further promotion or who do not desire further promotion, but who otherwise desire to continue service. Rather than being constrained by arbitrary criteria such as grade, service secretaries can tailor selective continuation opportunities and duration to relevant criteria such as competitive categories, specific career fields, and year groups as mission requirements demand. Such mission-driven variation

⁹⁵ Taken to the extreme, where each of the approximately 160 Army & Navy O-6s and 30 Marine O-6s currently impacted by high year tenure remained in service until age 62 (approximately 40 years of service, with zero O-6 retirements between 30 and 40 years of service) this total population would represent less than half the number of total O-6s in the Army (around 3,700 in FY22/23), Navy (around 3,200 in FY22/23), or Marine Corps (around 650 in FY22/23).

between and within services could also provide a valuable signaling mechanism to members, helping inform actions leading up to critical promotion windows. For example, consistent selective retention opportunities out to 30 or more years of service in a specific career field might help retain an O-3 desiring to remain in the trenches by providing a viable long-term career path as the member seeks (or doesn't seek) the necessary experience to be competitive for promotion (based on their desires and interests). Absent such an option, the current 20-year ceiling implies a second career will be necessary, driving a decision as to when it is most optimal to start that second career.

Third, it balances risk while setting the stage for further analysis of the remaining up-or-out tenant — the twice “failed of selection for promotion” criteria. By allowing officers in the grades of O-5 and O-6 continued service along with those in the grades of O-3 and O-4 after selective retention board review, services retain competent and effective officers while mitigating adverse selection risks.⁹⁶ Several promotion boards will have vetted the more senior grades over a career, while the scrutiny of selective continuation boards can differentiate poor performers from those providing needed expertise but who are otherwise ill-suited or disinclined for further advancement and responsibility. Under this proposal, the twice-failed of selection criteria remains a key, though admittedly crude and problematically phrased, forcing function for culling underperformers and off-ramping officers from further promotion consideration. However, by increasing the number of officers operating under an

⁹⁶ There remains a concern, real or perceived, among some uniformed officers that absent current up-or-out mechanisms automatically culling the herd, incentives exist for top officers to leave and for bottom officers to remain. The logic is simple, though difficult to test objectively: top performers have many employment opportunities out of uniform that offer better benefits or more rapid upward mobility. They are therefore more likely to leave. Bottom performers do not, and are therefore more likely to remain.

up-and-stay career flow, the services can retain competent officers while also generating data to inform future analysis on the continued viability of the twice-passed-over criteria.

Proposal 3: Remove Pension Cliff-vesting at the 20-year Mark

Multiple sections under Title 10 govern voluntary active duty officer retirement.⁹⁷ For the Army and Air Force, voluntary retirement at 20 years of service is at the discretion of the respective service secretary, while voluntary retirement at 30 years of service is at the discretion of the President. For the Navy and Marine Corps, the service secretary and Presidential roles are reversed at 20 and 30 years, respectively. At 40 years of service, an active duty officer shall be retired upon request. Upon retirement, active duty officers are immediately eligible to receive retired pay, unlike members of the Guard or Reserve, who must generally wait until age 60. The ability to retire after 20 years of service and immediately begin receiving pension payments creates two problematic incentives.

The first centers on the value of a military pension. An O-5 retiring at 20 years and one day receives approximately \$49K annually in 2023 dollars before tax or deductions.⁹⁸ This payment is annually indexed to inflation and carries near-zero default risk – the full faith and credit of the U.S. Government backs it. A comparable inflation-adjusted income with a similar risk profile would require an approximately \$1.5M investment portfolio.⁹⁹ Given the all-or-nothing nature of the pension benefit, it creates a strong (yet incredibly

⁹⁷ Army: Title 10, Sections 7311, 7318, and 7324; Air Force: Title 10, Sections 9311, 9318, and 9324; Navy & Marine Corps: Title 10, Sections 8323, 8322, and 8321

⁹⁸ 2023 Military Pay Chart using high 36 and Blended Retirement System multiplier of 2% x Years of Service

⁹⁹ A traditional 60% stock / 40% bond portfolio of approximately \$1.5M would be needed to annually withdraw \$49k (2023 dollars, indexed for inflation) for 35 to 39 consecutive years (remaining life expectancy for 42 year old male / female) with 95% certainty; estimated via Monte Carlo simulations using U.S. stock and bond market data from 1926 to present. Approximately \$1.35M needed for 90% confidence or \$1.15M for 80% confidence.

expensive) incentive for officers approaching retirement eligibility to remain, even if their heart is no longer in the work. It also creates a stigma around seeking to remove ineffective officers approaching retirement eligibility, given the significant costs they would bear.

The second reflects the immediate payout of the military pension following retirement. Because retirement-eligible officers receive their pension payment regardless of employment status, they experience an effective pay cut by remaining in uniform – they are working to earn only 60% of their basic pay, plus housing allowance and additional pays. The remaining 40% of basic pay would be paid as their pension regardless of whether they continued to serve, fully retired, or sought civilian employment. This creates a strong incentive to retire at the earliest possible point to maximize total income by receiving a military pension and a civilian salary, ideally comparable to or exceeding the officer's previous total military compensation.

Retirement data demonstrates the power of these incentives. The Army, Navy, and Marine Corps retire 2-6x the number of O-5s at 20-22 years of commissioned compared to subsequent years.¹⁰⁰ The highest numbers for each service are at exactly 20 years of commissioned service, with elevated numbers extending into 21 or 22 years, depending on the component.¹⁰¹ Only the Air Force presents itself as an outlier, owing to policies smoothing the retiree numbers across years of commissioned service. This behavior appears consistent across time, with data from the 1970s and 1990s indicating many officers retire shortly after crossing the 20-year mark.¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ While this period coincides with O-6 selection and some departures may be explained by passed-over officers, anecdotally this author has observed several O-6 selects opting to retire rather than promote. Their justification has consistently centered on the lucrative opportunities outside of uniform and the optimum economic timing of making the jump sooner, rather than later.

¹⁰² Rostker et al., "The Defense Officer Personnel Management Act of 1980. A Retrospective Assessment," 96.

MOVING FORWARD

Congress should again update the pension system, shifting eligibility to the left (earlier) while shifting actual payment to the right (later).¹⁰³ While the exact points are open to debate, two present reasonable possibilities – retirement eligibility following 15 years of service and pension payment commencing after the date corresponding to 30 years of service (had the member remained). Such a change presents several potential advantages.

First, earlier retirement eligibility creates an opportunity for officers no longer wishing to serve but who are otherwise incentivized to “gut it out” to 20 years of service under the current system to retire. This removes “dead wood” from the system while creating more space for officers desiring to plateau as technical specialists (Proposal 2) without clogging the promotion pipeline for junior officers. Setting eligibility at 15 years of service ensures eligible officers have met several quality control checks, including an O-4 or selective continuation board. It also coincides with O-5 promotion selection, providing a natural offramp for officers who desire continued advancement but were not selected. Recent legislation has also used 15 years as a retirement eligibility threshold for discretionary force-shaping actions, suggesting it may be a politically palatable reference point.¹⁰⁴

Second, delaying pension payments until the date corresponding to 30 years of service removes the strong financial incentive to retire and start a second career at the 20-year mark. While it preserves similar incentives at 30 years of service, the higher pension payment and later stage of life make these incentives less compelling. Assuming age 62 became the constraining factor on continued service (proposal 2), eligibility for pension

¹⁰³ In keeping with previous pension reforms, such changes should only apply to personnel entering service after enactment

¹⁰⁴ See Temporary Early Retirement Authorities (TERA) authorized at various points between the 1990s and 2010s

payments beginning in an officer's early-to-mid 50s creates an approximately decade-long retirement window. Such an approach, rather than a retirement cliff at age 62, avoids accumulating "dead wood" among officers in their final decade of service (when fitness may be increasingly problematic for some) while also limiting institutional stigmas associated with administratively removing ineffective officers (faced with such actions, they could voluntarily retire instead).

Third, delaying pension payments yields present cost savings that could be utilized more effectively. Accrual accounting methods governing military pensions since 1985 require annual contributions to the military retirement fund based on objective actuarial analysis.¹⁰⁵ As a result, any changes reducing future payouts also generate present cost savings. While such savings could be redirected towards targeted compensation to improve recruitment and retention of specific career fields or year groups, a different approach could also be taken. Archaic workflows and systems governing routine administrative actions, training and readiness management, and medical care, to name but a few, continuously confront military personnel. The cumulative effect of interacting with these systems and workflows amounts to bureaucratic "death by a thousand paper cuts." Investing some of these cost savings in improving these workflows or systems might help recruitment (by better aligning reality with marketing) and retention (by removing pain points that accumulate over a career).

Finally, creating a spread between retirement eligibility and when pension payments commence for active duty officers sets the stage for further analysis of the totality of the officer pension system, both for active duty as well as the Reserve and Guard. While the

¹⁰⁵ Daniels, "Assessing Trends in Military Personnel Costs," 31.

history and mechanics of Guard and Reserve officer management and retirement systems are beyond this research's scope, the services seek to increase permeability between active and Guard / Reserve officers. It is, therefore, worth examining whether the distinctive pension systems remain fit for purpose or whether a new model would be more effective moving forward.

IV. CONCLUSION

Congress passed the foundational laws governing contemporary active duty officer management following the Second World War. Based on experiences from the war, and longstanding unresolved issues, Congress enacted laws guided by a vision of uniformity across the services, maintaining a “young and vigorous” officer corps, and providing for future remobilization capability. This model remained intact through subsequent legislative changes, including the Defense Officer Personnel Management Act of 1980. While successful over the mid to late twentieth century, it is no longer fit for purpose and has become unsustainably expensive.

The Budget Control Act of 2011 provided the impetus for substantive change. Fiscally constrained while simultaneously maintaining a high operational tempo and low readiness levels, Congress and the Department of Defense could no longer paper over long-neglected changes to officer management with compensation increases. Instead, the path was opened for reform. The outcome included a new Blended Retirement System and substantive changes to officer management in the 2019 National Defense Authorization Act.

Building upon this recent progress, I propose three additional changes to help advance officer management into the 21st century. These include replacing formulaic field

grade limitations with requirements-based submissions, increasing the time officers can remain in service, including technical specialists plateauing at lower ranks, and additional pension reform to improve economic incentives. These proposals seek to increase service component flexibility to craft organizational structure and retain needed expertise consistent with mission requirements while reducing distorting economic incentives.

The laws governing officer management following the Second World War reflected the challenges and needs of their era. They served the United States well in their day. But as we look forward to the challenges of the 21st century, we must seek continued improvement to the laws governing our most vital strategic asset, our people.

AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Three areas for further research are outlined below. Each is briefly presented in the proposals for change, and they reflect potential areas for further iterative improvement to active duty officer management as governed by Title 10.

- Transitioning from rank-in-person to rank-in-job – active duty officers are promoted to the next rank based on fixed timelines and processes. The higher rank is tied to the individual selected for promotion (rank-in-person), not based on the job held (rank-in-job). The exceptions are O-9 and O-10 grades, which are only assumed when an O-8 is appointed to an O-9 or O-10 position. Could increased use of rank-in-job increase incentives for performance and help retain talented officers?
- Abolish the twice “failed of selection for promotion” criteria – active duty officers who are twice passed over for promotion must separate or retire if not selectively retained. This may not remove ineffective officers fast enough, given that it is only

triggered during promotion consideration. Also, it may send the wrong signal to officers neither desiring promotion nor whose promotion is in the best interest of the service. Could a better approach deliver the timely removal of ineffective officers without stigmatizing officers whose talents lie outside of higher rank?

- Converge on a single retirement system – different retirement systems govern active duty, Guard, and Reserve officers. Given that Guard or Reserve officers can already spend significant time on active duty and active duty officers can be associated with Guard or Reserve units, does this division continue to make sense? Would a single system better align incentives while increasing permeability between the active duty, Guard, and Reserve?

BIBLIOGRAPHY

“10 USC 523: Authorized Strengths: Commissioned Officers on Active Duty in Grades of Major, Lieutenant Colonel, and Colonel and Navy Grades of Lieutenant Commander, Commander, and Captain,” July 23, 2023.

<https://uscode.house.gov/view.xhtml?hl=false&edition=prelim&req=granuleid%3AUSC-1996-title10-section523>.

“2022 National Defense Strategy of the United States of America.” Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Defense, October 27, 2022.

“2022 National Security Strategy of the United States of America.” Washington D.C.: White House, October 12, 2022.

Armstrong, Keith A. “The War For Talent.” U.S. Army War College, 2001.

Aspin, Les. “Report on the Bottom-Up Review.” Department of Defense, 1993.

Austin, Lloyd J. III. “SecDef Message to the Force.” Department of Defense, March 4, 2021.

Barno, David, and Nora Bensahel. “Can the U.S. Military Halt Its Brain Drain?” The Atlantic, November 2, 2015.

Berger, David H. “Commandant’s Planning Guidance.” United States Marine Corps, July 17, 2019.

Brown, Charles Q. “Accelerate Change or Lose.” United States Air Force, August 31, 2020.

Brown, Charles Q. Jr. “CSAF Action Orders to Accelerate Change Across the Air Force.” United States Air Force, February 7, 2022.

“Building a F.A.S.T. Force: A Flexible Personnel System for a Modern Military.” Bipartisan Policy Center, 2017.

Bukowski, Raven, John Childress, Michael J. Colarusso, and David S. Lyle. *Creating an Effective Regional Alignment Strategy for the U.S. Army*. Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 2014.

Carter, Ash. "Implementation Guidance for the Full Integration of Women in the Armed Forces." Department of Defense, December 3, 2015.

———. "The Next Two Links of the Force of the Future." Department of Defense, June 9, 2016.

Cohn, Lindsay. "Who Will Serve? Labour Markets and Military Personnel Policy," *Res Militaris* 3, 3, no. 12 (2013).

Colarusso, Michael J., Kenneth G. Heckel, David S. Lyle, and William L. Skimmyhorn. *Starting Strong: Talent-Based Branching of Newly Commissioned U.S. Army Officers*. Policy File. Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 2016.

Colarusso, Michael J., and David S. Lyle. *Senior Officer Talent Management: Fostering Institutional Adaptability*. Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute and U.S. Army War College, 2014.

Covkin, Serena. "A Short History of U.S. Army Wives, 1776-1983," n.d.
<https://ushistoryscene.com/article/a-short-history-of-u-s-army-wives-1776-1983/>.

"Creating New Career Options for Officers in the U.S. Military." RAND Corporation, 2005.

Daniels, Seamus P. "Assessing Trends in Military Personnel Costs." Policy File. Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2021.

"Defense Manpower Profile Report for Fiscal Year 2023." Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower & Reserve Affairs, July 2022.

Defense Officer Personnel Management Act. Public Law 96-513 (1980).

“Defense Personnel Systems: The Hidden Threat to a High-Performance Force.” Bipartisan Policy Center, 2017.

Donovan, Matthew P. “Preserving Our Competitive Advantage - Personnel and Readiness Strategy for 2030.” Department of Defense Office of Personnel and Readiness, October 1, 2020.

Dorris, Stephen D. “Leading and Retaining Millennial Officers in the U.S. Armed Forces.” Joint Advanced Warfighting School, April 9, 2018.

Fagan, Linda L. “United States Coast Guard Strategy.” United States Coast Guard, October 12, 2022.

Gibbons, Thomas. “Book Review - Bleeding Talent: How the U.S. Military Mismanages Great Leaders and Why It’s Time for a Revolution.” Naval War College Review 68. Washington: NAVAL WAR COLLEGE PRESS, 2015.

Gilday, Mike. “Chief of Naval Operations Navigation Plan 2022.” United States Navy, July 26, 2022.

Grossman, Allyson. “The Employment Situation for Military Wives,” 1981.
<https://www.bls.gov/opub/mlr/1981/02/art6full.pdf>.

Hayes, James H. *The Evolution of Military Officer Personnel Management Policies : A Preliminary Study with Parallels from Industry*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 1978.

“Health, Health Care, and a High-Performance Force.” Bipartisan Policy Center, 2017.

Hearings before the Senate Committee on Armed Services, Officer Personnel Act of 1947 (1947).

Hoehn, Andrew R., Albert A. Robbert, and Margaret C. Harrell. *Succession Management for Senior Military Positions the Rumsfeld Model for Secretary of Defense Involvement*.

Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2011.

John S. McCain National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2019. Public Law 115-232 (2018).

Kane, Tim. *Bleeding Talent: How the US Military Mismanages Great Leaders and Why It's Time for a Revolution*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012.

———. “Bleeding Talent: The U.S. Military’s Leadership Breakdown,” November 17, 2010. <https://hbr.org/2010/11/bleeding-talent-the-us-militar.html>.

———. “Total Volunteer Force: Blueprint for Pentagon Personnel Reform.” Hoover Digest. Hoover Digest, 2017.

———. “Why Our Best Officers Are Leaving.” *The Atlantic Monthly* (1993); Atlantic 307. Boston: Atlantic Media, Ltd, 2011.

“Losing Our Edge: Pentagon Personnel Reform and the Dangers of Inactions.” Bipartisan Policy Center, 2016.

Markel, Matthew Wade. *Developing U.S. Army Officers’ Capabilities for Joint, Interagency, Intergovernmental, and Multinational Environments*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2011.

———. “The Organization Man at War: Promotion Policies and Military Leadership, 1929--1992.” Harvard University, 2000.

Matthews, Miriam, John A. Ausink, Shirley M. Ross, Matthew Walsh, Albert A. Robbert, John S. Crown, David Schulker, et al. “Championing the Agile Air Force Officer

- Career: Examining the Potential Use of New Career Management Flexibilities.” Policy File. RAND Corporation, 2021.
- Mayberry, Paul W., Hannah Acheson-Field, Charles A. Goldman, Eric Hastings, Kimberly Jackson, and Anthony Lawrence. *Making the Grade: Integration of Joint Professional Military Education and Talent Management in Developing Joint Officers*. Santa Monica, Calif: RAND Corporation, 2021. doi:10.7249/RR-A473-1.
- McCain, John. “SASC Chairman’s Opening Statement to Hon. Brad R. Carson’s Nomination for USD P&R,” February 25, 2016. https://www.armed-services.senate.gov/hearings/16-02-25-nominations_-carson-oconnor-weiler.
- McConville, James C., and Debra S. Wada. “U.S. Army Talent Management Strategy Force 2025 and Beyond,” September 20, 2016.
- McFarland, Brendan. “Retirement Offerings in the Fortune 500: 1998 – 2019,” June 25, 2020. <https://www.wtwco.com/en-us/insights/2020/06/retirement-offerings-in-the-fortune-500-1998-2019>.
- “Military Community Demographics,” 2021. <https://www.militaryonesource.mil/data-research-and-statistics/military-community-demographics/>.
- “Military Compensation Background Papers.” U.S. Department of Defense, 2018.
- “Military Officer Personnel Management: Key Concepts and Statutory Provisions.” Congressional Research Service, May 10, 2016.
- “Military Retirement: Background and Recent Developments.” Congressional Research Service, July 28, 2022.
- Milley, Mark A., and Mark T. Esper. “The Army Strategy.” Washington D.C.: United States Army, November 1, 2018.

Misztal, Blaise, Jack Rametta, and Mary Farrell. “Personnel Reform Lives, But Don’t Call It ‘Force of the Future.’” *War on the Rocks*, August 9, 2018.

<https://warontherocks.com/2018/08/personnel-reform-lives-but-dont-call-it-force-of-the-future/>.

“Modernizing Officer Career Management.” RAND Corporation, 2021.

Moore, S. C., Brent. Thomas, and Raymond E. Conley. *Targeting the Occupational Skill Pairings Needed in New Air Force Colonels*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2010.

“‘Muddling Through’: The Revolutionary Potential of Evolutionary Officer Management Reform.” RAND Corporation, 2021.

National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2014. Public Law 113-66 (2013).

Nolan, Steven T., and Robert E. Overstreet. “Improving How the Air Force Develops High-Potential Officers,” *Air & space power journal* 32, 32, no. 2 (2018): 21–36.

Officer Grade Limitation Act of 1954. Public Law 83-349 (1954).

Officer Personnel Act of 1947. Public Law 80-381 (1947).

Realigning the Stars: A Methodology for Reviewing Active Component General and Flag Officer Requirements, 2018.

“Report to Accompany The John S. McCain National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2019.” Senate Armed Services Committee, June 5, 2018.

“Report to the Secretary of Defense: Modernizing the Military Retirement System.” Defense Business Board. Department of Defense, 2011.

Robbert, Albert A., Katherine L. Kidder, Natasha Lander, Caitlin Lee, Agnes Gereben Schaefer, and William H. II Waggy. “Officer Career Management: Additional Steps

- Toward Modernization.” Santa Monica, Calif: RAND Corporation, 2021.
doi:10.7249/RR4337.
- Robbert, Albert A., Katherine L. Kidder, Caitlin Lee, Agnes Gereben Schaefer, and William H. Waggy. “Officer Career Management: Steps Toward Modernization in the 2018 and 2019 National Defense Authorization Acts.” Policy File. RAND Corporation, 2019.
- Robbert, Albert A., Tara L. Terry, Alexander D. Rothenberg, Anthony Lawrence, and Neil Brian Carey. “Air Force Officer Management Flexibilities: Modeling Potential Policies.” RAND Corporation, 2017.
- Ronald W. Reagan National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2005. Public Law 108-375 (2004).
- Rostker, Bernard D. “Reforming the American Military Officer Personnel System,” 2015.
- Rostker, Bernard, Harry Thie, James Lacy, Jennifer Kawata, and Susanna Purnell. “The Defense Officer Personnel Management Act of 1980. A Retrospective Assessment.” RAND Corporation, 1993.
- Schirmer, Peter, Harry Thie, Margaret Harrell, and Michael Tseng. “Challenging Time in DOPMA: Flexible and Contemporary Military Officer Management.” RAND Corporation, 2006.
- Snow, Daniel P. “United States Army Officer Personnel Reforms and the Decline of Rank Flexibility, 1890s-1920s,” 2014.
- Stitt, Douglas. “Talent Management.” U.S. Army War College, 2012.
- Stringer, Kevin D. (Kevin Douglas). *Distilling the Demographic Dividend : Retaining U.S. Army Officer Talent for the 40-Year Career?* Arlington, Va: Institute of Land Warfare, Association of the United States Army, 2012.

“The 20-Year Military Retirement System Needs Reform.” Comptroller General of the United States, March 13, 1978.

“The Building Blocks of a Ready Military: People, Funding, Tempo.” Bipartisan Policy Center, 2017.

“The Military Compensation Conundrum: Rising Costs, Declining Budgets, and a Stressed Force Caught in the Middle.” Bipartisan Policy Center, 2016.

“The Report of the Presidents Commission on an All-Volunteer Armed Force.” Library of Congress, 1970.

Thie, Harry, and Roger Allen Brown. “Future Career Management Systems for U.S. Military Officers.” RAND Corporation, 1994.

Thie, Harry, Margaret C. Harrell, Roger Brown, and Clifford M. Graff II. “A Future Officer Career Management System An Objectives-Based Design.” Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 2001.

Turner, John S. “Special Operations Officer Talent Management.” Joint Forces Staff College, October 4, 2013.

Wallace, Roy A., Michael J. Colarusso, Andrew O. Hall, David S. Lyle, and Michael S. Walker. *Paid to Perform: Aligning Total Military Compensation With Talent Management*. Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 2015.

Walsh, Matthew, Raymond E. Conley, John S. Crown, Nelson Lim, Christopher E. Maerzluft, Albert A. Robbert, and David Schulker. *Department of the Air Force Officer Talent Management Reforms: Implications for Career Field Health and Demographic Diversity*. Santa Monica, Calif: RAND Corporation, 2021. doi:10.7249/RR-A556-1.

- Wardynski, Casey, David S. Lyle, and Michael J. Colarusso. *Accessing Talent: The Foundation of a U.S. Army Officer Corps Strategy*. Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 2010.
- . *Talent : Implications for a U.S. Army Officer Corps Strategy*. Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 2009.
- . *Towards a U.S. Army Officer Corps Strategy for Success: A Proposed Human Capital Model Focused Upon Talent*. Carlisle, Pa: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 2009.
- . *Towards a U.S. Army Officer Corps Strategy for Success: Developing Talent*. Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 2010.
- . *Towards a U.S. Army Officer Corps Strategy for Success: Employing Talent*. Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 2010.
- . *Towards a U.S. Army Officer Corps Strategy for Success: Retaining Talent*. Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 2010.
- Women's Armed Service Integration Act. Public Law 80-625 (1948).