

KICKLIGHTER, CLAUDE M.

From: Reeder, Joe R.
To: Reimer, GEN Dennis
Cc: Kicklighter, LTG(R) Mick
Subject: Foreign Area Officer Program
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Denny-

I share what I understand to be your belief in the enormous value of a healthy Army FAO corps. For the last two years whenever I've travelled overseas, I've met with our FAO contingent in each country, often in an informal setting. In these sessions, FAO's very often express concerns and puzzlement about the Army's treatment of FAO's. I'd like to share with you their recurring comments, which doubtless will not be revelations to you, but may be useful as one more set of data points.

FAO's have repeatedly expressed to me their concern that, year after year, FAO's are selected for resident CGSC -- perceived as the all-important "cut" -- at a percentage significantly below the Army average. FAO's also point out to me their selection rates for battalion command and promotion to colonel are lower than average. Junior FAO's tell me "they learned the facts too late" or became FAO's even though basic branch mentors warned them pursuing the FAO track was hazardous. (I'm also often told anecdotes about "promising young officers" who heeded the advice and "got out of FAO.") Many of the FAO's with whom I've spoken cite as gospel that "CGSC selection boards penalize FAO's because they've spent too much time away from basic branch assignments." FAO's also tell me they have less opportunity to serve in branch-qualifying jobs as XO's and S-3's.

I suspect these problems do not have a simple or single fix. But they seem to be systemic, so any fixes will have to be "top down." Perhaps the one fix that would yield the most significant results in the near term would be to issue to selection boards instructions which tend to move FAO selection rates closer to Armywide averages. There are downsides to that approach, of course. I realize full well there are many legitimate, competing demands for quality officers.

But FAO's provide enormous return on investment in terms of securing national policy objectives. The recurring message I get from ambassadors and country teams is that FAO's are an invaluable asset to them because FAO's furnish an essential bridge to the host nation's military. In my view, FAO's are a significant part of what Dr. Perry has referred to as "defense by other means." Their in-country presence gives us access to and influence on host nation militaries on a day-to-day basis.

That leads me to a second issue. FAO's also greatly influence ambassadors and country teams. Since the Army presently has the only large FAO corps among the Services, the Army has something approaching a monopoly in these influential positions. As you know, a draft DoD directive is now being staffed which would require the other Services to develop expanded FAO programs. My understanding is that Dr. White will almost certainly approve the directive.

While this will have the welcome effect of increasing the number of FAO's at a time when they are needed most, the long-term effect will be an end to the Army's dominance in these key positions. It would be prudent to ensure Army FAO representation, if possible, in those countries most important to the Army. It would also seem to me perfectly legitimate (and efficient), given its preeminent involvement in this field, for the Army to

continue to oversee whatever program Dr. White signs off on. (Do we have anyone closely monitoring this process?)

I'd appreciate discussing this with you, and how we might make the Army FAO corps as viable as possible.

Kind regards -

Joe