

A White Paper to the Foreign Area Officer General Officer Steering Committee

Modernizing Functional Area 48 (Foreign Area Officer) for the Army of
the Future: Achieving the efficiencies required for the Army of 2040

LTC Wes Chaney

Enclosures:

- 1) FAO Traps
- 2) MEL4 Training Pipeline examples 36-months
- 3) IRT OER White Paper
- 4) “The Army FAO Training Program: Time to Break More Glass”

Introduction

Army FAO training began in 1907 in Peking, China with a few select officers who desired to learn more about a foreign culture and were willing to take their families around the world to do so. Not much from that aspect has changed in comparison to today's Army FAOs training. However, the current training program and assignment processes of those of 1907 compared to 2024 could not be any more different. The structure of the United States Army in 1907 versus 2024 is incomparable, and so should Army FAO training, or should it? What has really changed in the skillset of an Army FAO from 1907 to 2024? Comparing those who served as a FAO type in 1907 versus our current FAOs should be analyzed heavily? Have the required skills of an US Army officer traveling to Korea in 2024 versus the first advisor to Korea in 1854 changed at all? Have the skills of a military diplomat changed over time? Has the skillset stayed the same, but the Army's organization and policies changed?

Regularly, when discussing the past, present, and future training and assignment processes for Army FAOs, many FAOs ask the following questions: Is the current training good? Have the skills of a FAO changed in 100 years or not? These are great questions, but what questions should we be asking? Has the organization of the War Department, and now the Department of Defense and the Department of the Army, changed since 1907, and has the FA48 (FAO) functional area adjusted to those changes? Do our current FAOs and their training reflect those changes? Are our FAOs prepared to support the Army of 2030, 2040, 2050, or beyond? Is how Captain Pershing, Major Young, Major Stillwell, Major McGruder, and later Lieutenant Colonel Leide from 1907 to 1985 still the best way to train and assign a FAO today? Are we preparing our FAO trainees to be future Army FAO Colonels and General Officers of 2040? Is the way we conduct In-Region Training the right way? Is Army FAO training really that expensive?

This paper will address the above questions through the following problem statement: How can the FAO GOSC avoid FAO traps while making the training and assignment processes more effective and efficient for the Army FAO of 2040? It will also address three bold modernization changes the GOSC should consider, some of which we have discussed for years but were slowed by FAO traps.

1. Army FAO should focus initial training on orientation towards GCCs, ASCCs, DSCA, and DIA missions and be no longer than 36 months.
2. Army FAO should establish a MEL-4 certification board, key designation board, address EFMP issues, withdraw from the ATAP and VTIP processes, and guarantee first assignments for certain VTIP applicants.
3. The FAO GOSC must formalize its processes and become more engaged in all aspects of the functional area.

Discussion

I served as the Functional Area 48 (Foreign Area Officer) branch chief at the US Army Human Resources Command (HRC) for three years. During that time, I observed the FAO GOSC navigate through many of the same challenges I observed the committee navigate as a major when COL (Ret) Nicolas Lovelace allowed me to observe the GOSC, off camera, in Vicenza, Italy, from 2015 to 2017. I also observed two other vital things concerning the GOSC. First, the GOSC does not realize how much

influence other branches or functional areas' GOSCs play in their HRC branches and proponents. Next, the GOSC continues to task the Council of Colonels and FAO Proponent with the same problem statements to overcome the same obstacles, without any resolution.

As the HRC branch chief, I observed several themes many great FAOs attempted to approach and solve, but almost all reverted to what I outline in enclosure 1 as FAO traps. These traps cause FAOs to miss the mark when modernizing the functional area. Over my three years as the HRC Branch Chief, I compiled the enclosed 29 FAO traps on a sheet of paper on the side of my cubicle wall. When I talked with an emerging FAO leader, I would regularly pull it down, make a copy on the printer, and write their name on the top, and then, as we talked, I would check off their FAO traps and biases as we discussed things. Often, FAO leaders displayed explicit biases in over 50% of these traps, because they are resistant to change based upon how they conducted the FAO training pipeline. Enclosure one of this paper includes these FAO traps. There are likely a few I have missed, some of which differ by region, which is essential to understand when talking to a FAO.

FAOs have allowed the Army's bureaucracy, the Defense Language Institute's legacy, and Army funding stove pipes to dictate how we train our FAOs. We must instead direct that training through Army Regulations, which directs Army funding. Sometimes, the Army staff needs help to understand our requirements, such as Advanced Civilian Schooling (ACS), which is required by a Department of Defense Instruction (DoDI). We have yet to do our Army staff work or adjust to historical changes in our defense institutions. Therefore, it is time to conduct a broad and bold restructuring of how we train and manage the Army's Functional Area 48 (FAO).

Part 1: Army FAO should focus initial training on orientation towards GCCs, ASCCs, DSCA, and DIA missions and be no longer than 36 months.

In 1907, FAOs focused on a single country, as the US Army was sending very limited officers overseas for training and immersion. The Army did this to expand its knowledge of these specific cultures, geography, languages, and many other areas (China and Japan). At the time, there was not a Department of Defense (DoD), Geographic Combatant Command (GCC), or Army Service Component Commands (ASCC), as these few officers reported directly back to the nascent Headquarters Department of the Army G-2/3. These officers were the true strategic scouts, out there alone and unafraid. Today's DoD is more significant, with a broad engagement throughout the world. This makes our FAOs more critical in their purpose, as the DoD is now focused closely on every region in the world. Although the DoD has significantly changed since 1907, our FAO training pipeline has yet to. We still cater to the officer wanting to go off on a sabbatical and immerse in a foreign country without contributing to the new DoD organizational structure. This policy leads directly to our senior Army leaders needing to understand what Army FAOs contribute to the warfighter during FAO training. What do these four units get from an Army officer doing FAO training for 36 to 48 months? It depends on each AOC, but overall, very little. The focus of IRT for the Army of 2040 should shift from a focus on the individual solely learning the region to the individual understanding of how these four units' missions are in each of the countries within the FAO's region and how that FAO can contribute to each of these missions. FAO training should be more formalized and standardized.

We need to move away from thinking solely of our FAO training systems (IRT, Language, ILE, and ACS) as steppingstones and move towards the holistic officer we desire to have. In my opinion, the Army FAO trainee of 2040 can do the following:

1. Speak fluently (3/3/2) in their control language.
2. Understand the DIME of each of the countries and regional organizations in their region and how these affect the mission of the GCC, ASCC, DSCA, and DIA in their region.
4. Effectively speak the US Army to the allies and partners in their region and be able to translate the perspective of the allied and partner nations to our senior leaders.
5. Pass a CI poly.
6. Contribute a written submission for publication to an Army's strategic initiative issue.

These sound like what the current FAO IRT experience is supposed to do, but our current FAO trainees cannot do all of these. In-Country Training was renamed to In-Region Training around 2010 to address FAOs sitting in one country during ICT and not traveling their region. This change in mindset has yet to be fully reached, specifically in the 48B, 48P, and 48E AOCs. Instead of saying IRT must be a certain length, we should make a FAO meet IRT criteria. IRT should be more flexible and molded around the officer's capabilities and timeline while having very distinct criteria for each FAO to meet within their AOC. So be it if a FAO can do it in 6 or 12 months. The goal should be to get the FAO into operational billets within 36 months of training. Too often, the FAO Proponent and HRC FAO Branch argue on behalf of an officer to extend or change their training pipelines to benefit the officer and not the Army. For example, certain AOCs should have shortened IRTs to accommodate their more extended language training, mainly 48G and 48P Chinese Mandarin speakers.

The goals of IRT 2040 should be to familiarize a FAO with DIA, DSCA, the GCCs, and the ASCCs, including their missions and how a FAO supports them. This concept is a shift in mindset from the old ICT/IRT way (1907) to the new IRT way and goals (2040) we should have. I have always been amazed at FAO Proponent members who would disapprove of an IRT FAO trip to an ASCC or GCC headquarters or conference. That is precisely where an IRT FAO should be visiting, along with their regional travels. IRT FAOs should also visit DIA and DSCA before IRT begins to receive a full briefing on their AOC before their travels start. The senior Army FAO at each unit should establish and support a FAO IRT orientation and briefings week for DIA and DSCA. An IRT FAO should only be certified as complete once they have visited and fully understand all four of these units' missions.

FAO Proponent pays the IRTer bills but expects the country team members to guide the IRTer, while the country team members' involvement is 50/50 at best. For example, one IRTer recently was in Brazil and had taken unauthorized leave to Hawaii for over a month before the SCO in Brazil or the FAO Proponent member knew their whereabouts. The officer had yet to write a single IRT report in 9-months. That IRTer was not returned to the primary branch and was allowed to continue training against my recommendations. We dispatch IRTers to our country teams and automatically expect the OSC or SDO/DATT to take on that IRTer and develop them. That is a lot of faith in one person and a single point of failure in the IRT training pipeline. IRT has also become a travel experience when it should be an intensive learning experience with prescribed gates and requirements. I cringe when I see an Africa FAO who climbs Mount Kilimanjaro while on IRT unless they took authorized leave, which few do. IRT should become a tested event, and some FAO trainees should be allowed to fail.

We have also allowed the training program to become something an individual officer believes they get to design instead of the Army dictating the experience based upon what the Army requires that officer to achieve out of the training. No other training pipeline in the Army allows such independence. Honestly, it has grown out of control to the point where officers complain when, for example, their timeline does not allow them to go to ACS in their hometown. Our regulations are so broad that they allow the new FAO transfer to dream of attending Harvard or Stanford and conducting IRT in Paris. In my opinion, FAO Trainees have hijacked the training pipeline, and it needs a stern redirection from the GOSC that:

1. Shortens all training pipelines to no more than 36 months with a focus on language training completion.
2. Directs all FAO trainees to ACS in only three locations with a focus on regional studies only.
3. Aligns IRT with the Army's required tasks and goals, not an individual's desires or goals.

In enclosure 2, and in the subsections below, I provide my recommendation for how all five AOCs can better align to achieve less PCSs and a 36-month training program. This recommendation focuses on reducing PCSs, combining training with SCO and JMAS training locations, reduces unnecessary language training requirements, and aligns each AOC IRT training location to the GCC's regional studies center.

48J – sub-Saharan Africa.

Every three years, the 48J FAO Proponent manager PCSs and the Army G-3/5/7 gets a new bill to establish new IRT sites in Africa. We have shut down and opened the same IRT sites in Africa every three to five years at the detriment of the Army G-3/5/7's budget. The establishment of a new IRT site costs the Army at a minimum \$400,000. Too often, a new SDO/DATT calls Proponent and convinces them his country should have an IRTer, again, and this time they should go to the staff college because he went to a foreign staff college. We have never had a 48J IRTer in Ghana or at the Staff College since the late 1980s, and I surmise it is because the SDO/DATT became a USMC officer, not an Army officer.

Due to the short training timeline of French training, 48Js can do IRT in Africa for 12 months, but should they do it just because they can? Why have we consistently consolidated IRT sites in francophone countries only to expand them back out. The whole point of the previous consolidation was to improve immersion in French and reduce travel issues. As soon as a new LTC became the 48J Proponent manager, he eliminated the GOSC approved plan and expanded back to almost eight plus IRT sites in Africa, many of which were purposely closed because of complaints by the Ambassadors of not filling the site (Mozambique, Botswana, Ethiopia). Based on the year groups, the number of IRTers in Africa tends to wave from 6 to 10 to 14, and this is consistently used to re-establish new IRT sites. FAO Proponent should have a plan for these overflow situations and not allow previous IRTers from SETAF-AF or ACSS, to derail the use of those sites for overflow trainees. The GOSC should investigate whether IRT in Africa is even worth it or if it should be based out of a regional center, such as the Africa Center for Strategic Studies, mirroring the 48E concept. See the FAO trap in enclosure 1 on this subject for a more in-depth look at this trap.

An example timeline of the recommended Army 2040 48J FAO training pipeline is below:

48J	Language Monterey 9 months	ACS and ILE NCR or Monterey 15/16 Months	IRT (ACSS) Washington 6 months	SCO or JMAS Washington 4 to 6 months	34 to 37 months
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This recommendation reduces the entire 48J training pipeline to two PCSs over three years. It allows for low-cost ACS at Monterey or high cost in the NCR. It eliminates IRT based out of US embassies in Africa but allows for extensive travel, and lastly, it allows the SCO or JMAS course to come before, during, or after IRT.

48B – Western Hemisphere.

Too many of the 48B IRTers become assistant SCO Chiefs, leading them to focus on Security Cooperation as a FAO. Too few of the 48Bs also do not go to ILE at WHINSEC, which is almost criminal, in my opinion. There is a Spanish-speaking ILE in the US that gives CGSC ILE credit to US officers, and we send only a few 48B FAOs yearly to it. This ILE opportunity should become mandatory for all 48Bs. 48Bs should focus their IRT more on holistic IRT goals rather than solely on embassy integration and working in the SCO office.

An example timeline of the recommended Army 2040 48B FAO training pipeline is below:

48B	Language Monterey 9 months	ACS NCR or Monterey 12 Months	IRT (WJPC) Washington 6 months	ILE (WHINSEC) FT Moore 4 months (TDY)	SCO or JMAS Washington 4 to 6 months	34 to 36 months
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This recommendation reduces the entire 48B training pipeline to two PCSs over three years, with one four-month TDY. It allows for low-cost ACS at Monterey or high cost in the NCR. It eliminates IRT based out of US embassies in the Western Hemisphere but allows for extensive travel, and lastly, it allows the SCO or JMAS course to come before, during, or after IRT.

48E – Europe/Eurasia.

See FAO language trap of haves and have-nots. 48E should shut down all embassy IRT locations and consolidate back to Garmisch. The US Army is in the process of certifying the NATO ILE course as credit giving and should have all 48Es attend ILE before or after their ILE at Garmisch. Due to timelines, IRT at Garmisch should be flexible to 9 or 12 months, especially for FAOs who must extend at DLI for more language training. A long-term goal should be to re-establish DLI Russian language training at Garmisch, which the FAO Proponent could augment by utilizing language sustainment funding for short courses throughout the year. Re-opening the Garmisch Center to training for all Services, as it was initially done with Air Force and Army, would allow the volume of students to justify the language training.

48E's primary language should only be 50% Russian and 50% no language training up front. The GOSC should analyze whether our niche languages are worth our FAOs' effort in learning and

sustaining them. Mainly Turkish, Vietnamese, Serbian Croatian, Tagalong, Urdu, and French (48E). Few of these FAOs ever serve in the country with these languages. FAOs can argue the same for Chinese and Russian; however, those languages are pacing threat languages with dedicated pipelines for General Officers. Our niche languages should become on-demand training only. HRC could assign those 50% of niche language officers to language training before going to the SCO course or JMAS, especially now that the SCO course is in the National Capitol Region, just like they assign them during the training pipeline. HRC can easily program this training now that it is programming the DAS and SCO billets further out. FAOs should not be learning a language so that they can do IRT in that country and then never use the language again.

An example timeline of the recommended Army 2040 48E FAO training pipeline is below:

48E	Language Monterey 12 months	ACS Garmisch or Monterey 12 Months	IRT (GCMC) and ILE (NATO) Garmisch 12 months	SCO or JMAS Washington 4 to 6 months (TDY enroute) or PCS with language	34 to 36 months
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This recommendation reduces the entire 48E training pipeline to two to three PCSs over three to four years, with one four to six-month TDY. It allows for low-cost ACS at Monterey or high cost in Munich. It eliminates IRT based out of US embassies in Europe and concentrates all IRTers back to Garmisch. Lastly, it allows the language training for those identified as niche languages to come before or after IRT, with the recommended course of action being after IRT and along with SCO or JMAS training. Some would argue that this recommendation re-establishes the 48C AOC, which is an analysis I recommend the FAO GOSC also looks at. Did combining 48C and 48E achieve the results it was supposed to achieve?

48P – Indo Pacific.

See previously mentioned issues with staff colleges. Precisely for this AOC, the Indian Staff College starts at an odd time of year and is almost three hours away by train from the US embassy. In this AOC, we open and close staff colleges based on LTC's decisions. We also focus on language training, such as Vietnamese or Urdu, based upon having an IRT or staff college site, not based on Army requirements. The Army FAO of 2040 should relook what we want our 48Ps to know. We need Korean, Japanese, and Chinese speakers with multiple tours in those countries, but too many become solely native to one country. They must become regionally focused, and the only way to do that is to concentrate their IRT regionally and not solely on the country in which they speak the language. Too many Korean-speaking FAOs are native speakers who spend a year in South Korea for IRT, which they likely already know most of the culture, and then they stay there for two to three tours as a FAO. If you asked them about Indonesia or the Philippines, I surmise most would not know much.

An example timeline of the recommended Army 2040 48P FAO training pipeline is below:

48P	Language Monterey 18 months	ACS Hawaii 12 Months	IRT (DKI APCSS) and ILE (online only) 6 months	SCO or JMAS Washington 4 to 12 months (TDY enroute PCS with language)	44 to 48 months
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This recommendation reduces the entire 48P training pipeline to two to three PCSs over three to four years, with one four to six-month TDY. It allows for low-cost ACS at the University of Hawaii. It eliminates IRT based out of US embassies in the INDOPACOM AOR and concentrates all IRTers in Hawaii. Lastly, it allows the language training for those identified as niche languages to come before or after IRT, with the recommended course of action being after IRT and along with SCO or JMAS training.

These changes would formalize 48Ps as regional FAOs rather than country experts. It would establish the regional base they need, and then they would move off to their countries of the languages they speak for multiple tours with those countries. FAO Proponent should reach out to the University of Hawaii about establishing a China Center of Excellence for our 48Ps, like the one established in 1907 by the University of Berkeley in the early 1900s. Everything a 48P does should be oriented around understanding our pacing threat in their region, which includes understanding all the countries within that region and attending the China Way of War course.

48G – Middle East / North Africa.

48Gs consistently have extensive training timelines due to the language timeline, which regularly puts them at risk for promotion to LTC, and the 48G community has the highest or second highest number of LTCs who retire at 20 years. Because of these issues, the 48G community should decide which is more critical – language proficiency, 12-month IRT, or reducing PCS stress under challenging country conditions. They cannot have all, or if so, very rarely. Because of the potential to need more training as an Arabic speaker, the 48G community should prioritize language over IRT.

An example timeline of the recommended Army 2040 48G FAO training pipeline is below:

48G	Language Monterey 18 months	ACS Monterey or Washington 12 Months	IRT (NESA) and ILE (online only) 6 months	SCO or JMAS Washington 4 to 6	36 to 42 months
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This recommendation reduces the entire 48G training pipeline to two to three PCSs over three to four years, with one four to six-month TDY. It allows for low-cost ACS at Monterey or high cost in Washington. It eliminates IRT based out of US embassies in the Middle East and concentrates all IRTers in Washington.

The reduction of IRT at US Embassies will likely be the biggest obstacle for FAO leaders to overcome. To do so they should ask themselves: 1) Is IRT at a US Embassy and the short PCS a bonus or a hinderance to the FAO family; 2) Is IRT at a US Embassy worth the financial cost in comparison to conducting IRT with extensive travel out of the regional centers; and lastly 3) Is IRT at a US Embassy

really giving family members the exposure to PCSing overseas that we say it is, and if so, how different is that from the knowledge a FAO can gather during extensive travel in region?

Overall, it is an opinion that IRT must be 12 months and must be based out of a US embassy, that we must have FAOs at certain staff colleges, and that every FAO must train a language during the training pipeline. Until Army FAOs overcome these opinions, they are unlikely to conduct the change required to design the Army FAO of 2040. If we are to overcome them, we must break the current IRT training structure as all other factors are involved in that pipeline.

Other nuance changes that should be made:

Trip reports. Trip reports are great, but who reads them, and do all FAOs in IRT write them? We have become lax in this area. FAOs are writers, and we should enforce this requirement. All FAOs should write on an Army Strategic Studies topic during their IRT and present it for publication, or work alongside a regional center staffer to develop a publication during IRT. FAOs incapable of doing so will likely not be effective staff officers or defense attaches.

CI-poly. Too often, we have FAOs who fail the CI-poly two to five years into their career. Although they are helpful in staff areas, they are not applicable if promoted to Colonel and cannot become an SDO/DATT. We should adjust DA-PAM 600-3 to require all FAO trainees to complete a CI-poly before they complete IRT. Some great officers will fail it; however, the FAO GOSC should return them to their primary branch. We can ill afford to continue to promote officers who cannot fulfill our requirements at the Colonel and General Officer levels. Place this requirement in DA-PAM 600-3, and the Army will be required to fund it.

Eliminate staff colleges during IRT. Most FAOs who attend staff colleges are in 48J, 48B, and 48P, with likely 50% in 48P AOC. Few 48Es or 48Gs attend a foreign staff college. Attending a foreign staff college is a FAO trap; see Enclosure 1 for more details. The FAO GOSC should boldly determine whether a FAO attending a staff college is worth the Army's efforts. Of course, FAOs who did attend a staff college will fervently oppose any suggestion that FAOs should not participate in a staff college. However, FAO Proponent often commits to the Army attending a staff college without comprehensively analyzing whether the Army should make this type of long-term commitment. Too often, we fall into the trap of thinking that having an Army soldier participating is more important than the Army FAO's training during IRT. An US Ambassador only cares about having a US service member there; they need to know the effect of that restriction on the FAO's IRT experience. Few FAOs who attend staff college during IRT travel throughout their region, and some still need to get credit for CGSC ILE after attending these foreign staff colleges. Even more, too often, we tie niche languages with FAO IRTers, and then they rarely, if ever, return to serve in that country as a country team member. For example, our sole reason for teaching Urdu is because we have a staff college slot there. The Army FAO IRT vision of 2040 needs to review our staff college commitments and whether we should do them. Personally, I would cancel them all and let the big Army fill the billets. They make country experts who are stove piped in that language and that country, and they are not regional experts, which our current AOC layout needs. FAO should return all staff college billets to MPEP / SON positions for the Army to fill.

In-Region Training OERs. IRT OERs play an important role as a discriminator for our FAOs on the SSC board. The current system is also ripe with OER shopping or ASCC SCD Directors using IRT FAOs as padding for their staff members. Almost all SCD Directors give IRTers HQ OERs. This process

creates a cyclical circle; for example, an officer receives a Highly Qualified OER rating during IRT then later serves on an ASCC staff, which causes the SCD Director to have to give him a Most Qualified to promote to LTC, which causes the next IRTer to get an HQ and on and on. See enclosure three for an in-depth analysis of IRT OERs with an overall recommendation to consolidate all IRT senior raters under the FAO Colonel at DAMO-SSF FAO Proponent.

Part 2: Army FAO should establish a MEL-4 certification board, key designation board, address EFMP issues, withdraw from the ATAP and VTIP processes, and guarantee first assignments for certain VTIP applicants.

MEL-4 certification board. Unfortunately, FAOs are failing portions of our training pipeline and are still moving into their first billets as FAOs. These are a small percentage, but large enough to stain our brand overall. FAO is the only branch or functional area of an Army school where you can fail and move forward. To stop this and realign FA48 standards along with Army standards, the GOSC should mandate the creation of a MEL-4 certification board. The purpose of this board would be three-fold:

1. Remove the responsibility of deciding to return to the primary branch from FAO Proponent Lieutenant Colonels and the Army G-35 and instead make it a FAO GOSC decision.
2. Provide a process through which the FAO GOSC can validate decisions to maintain FAOs who have failed language training, ILE, ACS, or IRT.
3. Provide a process through which the FAO GOSC can certify each FAO before they move from completion of the training program.

The risk to this process is returning to the primary branch of a FAO, which still needs to achieve a training standard but is already slotted for a future assignment. Due to the small numbers, based upon past incidents, this will have a small effect on FAO manning of billets. The upside to this is that we will knowingly and methodically remove officers who fail to achieve the training standards the functional area requires. Almost all the officers I encountered during my three-year tour at HRC who failed one of the training portions went on to struggle in their FAO assignments. Most became SELCON Majors.

Another part of this process is the certification of any Army officer who requests to transfer into FA48 outside of the VTIP process. Too often, the HRC Branch Chief has this decision, who technically has the approval authority directed down to them by the HRC Commander. This situation usually creates unnecessary tension between the HRC FAO Branch and FAO Proponent members. These types of requests usually have high level General Officer influence and having a MEL-4 certification process would reduce this friction, while also establishing a precedence for HRC Branch to follow.

Key designation board. In 2022 the FAO GOSC discussed identifying specific billets as key designated in comparison to a battalion command billet or list. The GOSC decided against that action because the priority of billets change over time due to political military considerations. However, there is still a need to identify key FAO talent early, much like the basic branches do with their battalion command lists. Therefore, I recommend the FAO GOSC establishes a key designation board for FAOs in the second year of being a LTC, just before the SSC board. This board will select FAOs that have the potential to serve at a higher position, specifically O6 SDO/DATT billets. This board will mirror the intent of the basic branches of Brigade Command boards and will include sending these FAOs through

the VCAP system. The board instructions for the Colonel board should specifically include that the promotion board should give FAOs with this designation a higher consideration for promotion. This board would be in person at HRC for the FAO board members and include aspects such as an interview with the FAO. This board will primarily identify FAOs intending to serve as an SDO/DATT at the O6 level, including their family. Too often, the Army promotes FAOs to Colonels who either do not desire to be an SDO/DATT or are navigating to an NCR staff job and retiring at 36 months in grade. Numerous LTCs who have been passed over would have jumped to fill our SDO/DATT billets. However, too often, we promote officers with no intention of serving at the O6 level, which affects our COMO assignments. This board would not be overly selective but select at least 60% of our officers for future potential service as an O6 SDO/DATT. This designator will show the promotion boards our Functional Area values to serve in positions of higher responsibility and provide our force a better focus on our future general officer talent pool.

Deny VTIP to any EFMP family. Unfortunately, EFMP Soldiers affect Army FAO readiness, and the system is not prepared to support the overseas challenges EFMP Soldier's families face. The Army Functional Area 48 (FAO) has struggled to get the Army's medical systems to understand the systems available at US embassies and for Department of State personnel. I averaged around a 10% EFMP change rate during my time as HRC Branch Chief, solely based upon the officer engaging the US Embassy, the host nation schools, or engaging senior Geographic Combatant Command staff members who were sensitive to the nuances of FAO members being stationed overseas. I was able to affect the system because I understood the program extensively, and not every HRC FAO branch chief would have this success. Therefore, FAO should require family members to be medically screened and qualified for transfer to FAO before they are allowed to apply to the VTIP. This is not a new requirement, and it was a standard in Army Regulations until just around the 1990s. As FAO currently maintains around a 39% acceptance rate, this will have minimal effects on our recruitment but will have a maximum impact on our ability to manage our billets worldwide fully. This policy will not affect officers whose families become EFMP during their career as a FAO after being accepted. We are likely to lose a few good officers who would make great FAOs; however, if they cannot go overseas with their families, they are only capable of doing 12-month unaccompanied tours. Too often, our FAOs who are not EFMP are pulling more weight than those who are and it affects our morale.

Remove FAO from Army HRC assignment processes. The Army gave certain branches a waiver from the ATAP assignment cycle for a reason. That is because medical and JAG branches have highly specialized and skilled officers who are different across the Army's brigade combat team concept. Those two branches also have distinct career paths and certification requirements that are managed holistically while managing each officer's talent and personality. The Army has already given FAO a waiver to the ATAP process, and we should elect to withdraw all assignments, including COMO, from the system. Assignments are an area we should select to be unique in the Army. A FAO Colonel should not be able to select an IG billet or FEMA headquarters billet; those are a waste of their skillsets, as the Army would never send a Colonel JAG officer to either of those billets; why would FAO FA48? We do not allow FAOs to apply to the Professor of Military Science (PMS) billets precisely because of their skill set. Allowing those officers to serve in these "retirement billets" ties up Colonel slots we could promote, leading to FAO LTCs and Colonels doing multiple challenging tours. Some will argue that these are retention billets, which, statistically, they are not. The officers who are going into these slots are already out the door. Currently, the ATAP process allows FAOs to become lazy in their skillset and avoid any challenging assignments they might otherwise have been assigned to had they not had so many options. It enables certain AOCs to homestead, prevent team country assignments, or become legacy NCR staff

officers. A FAO either does a FAO billet or retires; plenty of hungry FAOs are awaiting promotion. The ATAP process has allowed FAOs to forget who they are, their language skills, and what Area of Concentration they are. It does not matter if the officer can do a cross-over billet; it matters to the Army because why are they training us for multiple years to work in another AOC? This problem is diminishing the brand of our FAOs and allowing Senior Army Leaders to meet a 48G FAO in INDOPACOM, a 48E MAJ in ARCENT, or, worse, a 48J FAO in a China billet on the OSD. This is where I disagree with COL (R) Tim Mitchell and his Breaking Glass 48X COL proposal. We need our regional specialists serving in certain Colonel positions who have the long-term experience, such as USARJ staff, while also allowing some Colonels to cross AOCs. Those who do cross, must be approved by the GOSC.

The counter to this recommendation is that the HRC FAO Branch will return to a lack of transparency and Soldier buy-in to the process, combined with the opportunity for nepotism. However, most officers think the current ATAP system is already doing this. The ATAP system allows peers on country teams in certain AOCs to select their replacement peers without HRC's knowledge. As FAO billets are mainly joint, the workload placed on joint units to execute ATAP unduly creates more work for them. FAO should continue with the decision to have a DAS and SCO marketplace and then a separate bi-annual marketplace with a specifically HRC-driven assignment list. FAO COMO should tailor their assignment lists to each officer, with at least three options pre-verified by the FAO GOSC. This aspect will drive a top-down talent management process.

48J and 48G VTIP applicants. The FAO GOSC should ensure that the HRC FAO Branch guarantees all first assignments for officers who transfer into 48J and 48G as their primary choice of first AOC during the VTIP process.

Prioritize HRC, COMO, and DAMO SSR/SSF billet assignments. HRC needs help to staff our Proponent with our top talent in all billets, which is at the heart of FA48 FAO issues. This issue is because FAO competes internally between DAMO-SSR and SSF. We must stop this. We must eliminate the retirement aspect of being assigned to FAO proponent; it should become a promotion platform instead. Of the 150+ FAO Colonel positions, we must tell the Army leadership that the senior Army FAO and next General Officer is the G-35 DAMO-SSF FAO Proponency job. Also, the following assignments should receive GOSC approval: 1) HRC FAO Branch Chief, 2) COMO FAO assignment officer, and 3) HQDA G-35 SSR and SSF Colonels and Lieutenant Colonels. COMO briefs the second number to the GOSC, but the others still need to be done. We often do not place FAOs in the HQDA who fully represent our interests or are of the highest quality. Of course, putting too many highly talented officers in these positions leaves little room for everyone's promotion potential in the senior rater's profile. Officers should fight to get assigned to HQDA, but because LTCs perceive those billets as not promoting, not all officers chase after those positions. Also, the DAMO SSR and SSF FAO billets should be the premier billets in the functional area and should be protected and, if gapped, immediately backfilled. The GOSC should direct officers to be assigned to DAMO SSR for 12/24 months and then to SSF for the last 12/24 months of the three-year tour. DAMO SSF should be where FAOs go before promoting to Colonel; if they still need to do JMAS, they can do so and take on an SSC slot or do an SDO/DATT billet once promoted. It will be hard for HRC to stop "landing" officers in these billets, but it can be done.

Part 3: Formalize FAO GOSC's processes and become more institutionally engaged in all aspects of the functional area

I propose three main areas for the FAO GOSC to focus on:

1. Areas where the GOSC is unable, due to funding or bureaucracy issues, to influence changes in the functional area
2. Areas where the GOSC has the authority and ability to modernize the functional area
3. A proposed change to the GOSC and Council of Colonels (COC) communication platform(s)

The difference between these three areas in the past has been overly confusing and has stalled the Council of Colonels and GOSC with inaction, a perceived action, then a bureaucratic answer of no. This in-action is why, in over three years of observing the GOSC, I never saw any change or modernization to the functional area come to fruition, other than the 48P merger. Therefore, this paper will recommend a fundamental shift in the current GOSC and COC format. This paper also challenges the GOSC to identify achievable actions, not just create staff churn on many of the identified FAO traps. The issues within the functional area are solvable, and we can modernize rapidly. However, our leaders do not or perhaps cannot act because they are caught in a system from a spin of officers who are unaware or have biases towards specific areas of operations. We often meet and discuss topics and leave the meeting without actual due outs or tasks that require GOSC members' engagement with Army leaders to make changes. Our proponent members either feel they should be cautious about tasking another colonel of a task and following up. This issue happens because we do not assign tasks or because we have consistently capped the DAMO-SSF Colonel billet leaving it without the required rank to affect change.

Historically, the FAO population has never heard about anything the GOSC and Council of Colonels were doing. The FAO population has yet to learn what the GOSC or CoC discuss at their levels. The process lacks transparency but has recently improved in the past two years, with the CoC representatives briefing their populations monthly through MS Teams. However, the process still needs formality. FAO Proponent should publish the slides and outcomes of all formal GOSC meetings to the entire FAO population one week after each meeting. FAOs understand that the GOSC also meets to have internal discussions, which are optional to be transparent. If the GOSC did this, it would reduce myths, create more ideas, and provide avenues for younger FAOs to inform their CoC members more. The FAO GOSC should also take over the HRC FAO Branch newsletter, assign it to Proponent to execute, and utilize it as a tool to update and brief the entire functional area. If you review the past five years of this newsletter you will find that it is too dependent on the HRC Branch Chief's personality and not consistent enough to completely message to the entire functional area.

Conclusion

Overall, there are a few themes that run throughout all my discussions:

1. Further refine and establish MEL-4 standards and do not waive them.
2. FAO Proponent must be the captain of the FA48 FAO ship; changing it too often and employing it with inadequate talent leads it to steer off course.
3. We must move FAO training from individual to AOC concepts for all five AOCs. Eliminate embassy based IRT and staff colleges and move niche language training to on demand.

4. Formalize the FAO GOSCs role in leading the functional area. Improve GOSC and CoCs communication and decision making.

A FAO should be a fully trained FAO with regional language and expertise, not an individual Army officer who speaks a foreign language and has been stationed overseas for a decade. Regional expertise and language should be the only difference between FAOs; everything else must be standardized and certified and oriented around DIA, DSCA, GCC's, and ASCC's missions. Overall, we have allowed too many cookies designs in our training program and it is causing FAOs not to be standardized when our Army senior leaders engage with them. Therefore, senior Army leaders continue to question the costs of a FAO.