



# Department of Defense **DIRECTIVE**

**NUMBER 1315.17**  
April 28, 2005

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USD(P&R)

**SUBJECT:** Military Department Foreign Area Officer (FAO) Programs

**References:** (a) Section 163 of title 10, United States Code  
(b) DoD Directive 1315.17, "Service Foreign Area Officer (FAO) Programs,"  
February 22, 1997 (hereby canceled)

## 1. REISSUANCE AND PURPOSE

Under reference (a), this Directive:

1.1. Reissues reference (b) to update policies and responsibilities governing Foreign Area Officer (FAO) programs in the Military Departments.

1.2. Changes proponentcy from the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy (USD(P)), to the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness (USD(P&R)).

## 2. APPLICABILITY

This Directive applies to the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Military Departments, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Combatant Commands, the Office of the Inspector General of the Department of Defense, the Defense Agencies, the DoD Field Activities, and all other organizational entities in the Department of Defense (hereafter referred to collectively as the "DoD Components").

### 3. POLICY

It is DoD policy that:

3.1. To achieve national security objectives and success in current and future operations, including the War on Terrorism, the U.S. Armed Forces shall be prepared to conduct military operations in a variety of conditions around the world. The Combatant Commands shall have the requisite war fighting capabilities to achieve success on the non-linear battlefields of the future. These critical war fighting capabilities include foreign language proficiency and detailed knowledge of the regions of the world gained through in-depth study and personal experience. Additionally, these capabilities facilitate close and continuous military-diplomatic interaction with foreign governments and, in particular, with their defense and military establishments, which is essential to developing and maintaining constructive mutually supportive, bilateral and multilateral military activities and relationships across the range of operations.

3.2. The staffs of the Combatant Commands, the Defense Agencies, and the DoD military-diplomatic offices at the U.S. Embassies and diplomatic posts shall include the FAOs to provide expertise in planning and executing operations, to provide liaison with foreign militaries operating in coalitions with U.S. forces, to conduct political-military activities, and to execute military-diplomatic missions.

3.3. To provide this capability for the Department of Defense, the Military Departments shall deliberately develop a corps of FAOs, who shall be commissioned officers with a broad range of military skills and experiences; have knowledge of political-military affairs; have familiarity with the political, cultural, sociological, economic, and geographic factors of the countries and regions in which they are stationed; and have professional proficiency in one or more of the dominant languages in their regions of expertise.

3.4. Officers with potential for service on political-military staffs and for effective military diplomacy shall be competitively selected within the Military Departments and be able to represent the U.S. Department of Defense to foreign governments and military establishments. They shall be educated, trained, and have their careers managed to ensure they are retained for such assignments. Procedures to ensure competitive career advancement for such officers shall be incorporated in personnel management programs, to include opportunities for service at General/Flag Officer ranks.

#### 4. RESPONSIBILITIES

##### 4.1. The Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness shall:

4.1.1. Establish, in coordination with the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, accession, education, and utilization policy for FAOs.

4.1.2. Review, in coordination with the USD(P), the Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the DoD Components' plans for addressing resource needs in accordance with the direction provided by the capabilities-based review conducted by the USD(P), as referenced in subparagraph 4.2.1. Communication to the Commanders of the Combatant Commands shall be forwarded through the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

4.1.3. Review annually the DoD Components' FAO programs.

4.1.4. Establish standard metrics and monitor FAO accession, retention, and promotion rates.

4.1.5. Establish criteria for monitoring and managing FAO personnel in the Reserve components and retired FAOs.

##### 4.2. The Under Secretary of Defense for Policy shall:

4.2.1. Initiate a capabilities-based review to identify emerging regions and languages requiring FAO support, based on national security strategy documents including the National Security Strategy, the National Defense Strategy, and the Security Cooperation Guidance. Provide direction resulting from this review through the USD(P&R) and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, in-turn, to the Heads of the DoD Components.

4.2.2. Conduct an annual policy and strategy review to update the capabilities-based review for the DoD Components' FAO programs.

4.3. The Under Secretary of Defense for Policy and the Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence shall oversee FAO capabilities needs and utilization in the DoD Agencies that they respectively supervise. For combat support activities, such oversight shall be conducted in coordination with the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

4.4. The Heads of the DoD Components shall:

4.4.1. Conduct an annual review of their FAO needs in the Military Department staffing documents.

4.4.2. Annually identify officer positions in their organizations that require the qualifications listed in subparagraph 4.5.1. Provide such information annually to the Secretaries of the Military Departments not later than January 1st.

4.4.3. Provide DoD Component-specific training for assigned FAOs.

4.4.4. Report annually to the USD(P&R) on the need, current staffing, and any significant issues involving FAO staffing or utilization in their organizations.

4.5. The Secretaries of the Military Departments shall develop commissioned FAO management programs to meet the needs of their Department and the other DoD Components and shall:

4.5.1. Develop, resource, and sustain FAO programs designed to develop, retain, motivate, and promote a cadre of officers to meet present and future Defense needs, including service in combined headquarters or standing Joint Task Forces. Officers shall possess the following:

4.5.1.1. Qualification in a principal military specialty as a prerequisite for service as an FAO.

4.5.1.2. Graduate-level education focusing on, but not limited to, the political, cultural, sociological, economic, and geographic factors of specific foreign countries and regions, and duty experience involving significant interaction with host nationals and/or host nation entities in the foreign countries or regions in which they specialize. The Assistant Secretary for Manpower and Reserve Affairs for each Military Department is authorized to grant a constructive credit waiver of the graduate degree requirement if an officer has equivalent regional expertise gained through previous experience in the region. This authority shall be used on a case-by-case basis and shall not be delegated.

4.5.1.3. Foreign language skills at the professional level, (i.e., Interagency Language Roundtable Level Reading 3/Listening 3 and with a goal of Speaking 3), in the dominant language used by the populations of the countries or regions in which they specialize.

4.5.2. Design FAO programs to provide opportunity for promotion into the General/Flag Officer ranks.

4.5.3. Provide for language and regional expertise sustainment and refresher training programs to be provided throughout the lifecycle career of the FAO.

4.5.4. Report on FAO utilizing and managing to the USD(P&R) on an annual basis. This report shall include data responsive to the metrics established for accessing, promoting, and retaining FAOs.

4.5.5. Coordinate efforts with the other Military Departments, where practical, to take advantage of established training programs and initiatives to achieve mutual benefits and resource efficiency.


4.6. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff shall:

4.6.1. Under Section 163(b)(1) of reference (a), oversee FAO program matters in the Combatant Commands, when the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff does not exert any command authority in the Combatant Commands.

4.6.2. Provide an annual report to the USD(P&R) and the USD(P) on the need, current staffing, and any significant issues involving FAO staffing or utilization in the Combatant Commands.

## 5. EFFECTIVE DATE

This Directive is effective immediately.

  
Paul Wolfowitz  
Deputy Secretary of Defense