

WO ATLDP - a Progress Report

By CW5 Mike Adair and CW5 Al Eggerton

Army Training and Leader Development Panels (ATLDP) were chartered on 1 June 2000 to review, assess, and provide recommendations for the development and training of our 21st Century leaders. Based on their review, the panels were tasked to provide recommendations to improve Army training and leader development programs to meet the Army's Transformation objectives.

The warrant officer panel's mission and specified tasks were approved by the ATLDP Study Director in June 2001. Over the course of thirteen months, the panel conducted surveys, focus groups and personal interviews with more than 10,300 participants. The ATLDP final report containing the findings, conclusions and recommendations was presented to the CSA in July 2002 and approved for implementation in April 2003.

Recommendations in the study's action plan require Army senior leaders to make decisions, set priorities, and allocate resources. The study's recommendations concern the full integration of warrant officers into the Army Officer Corps.

The recommendations address the following:

- the warrant officer's role in the Total Army;
- recruiting, accession and retention;
- pay and compensation;
- professional development and personnel management;
- and training and education.

Warrant officer study recommendations support the conclusion that warrant officers will continue to perform a vital function in the Army of the future as highly specialized, single-track specialty officers. Although small in numbers, the Warrant Officer Corps continues to be an essential element of the Army's ability to leverage technology. The future relevance of the Warrant Officer Corps demands we make significant changes to how we are managed, trained and developed. More importantly, we must recognize and implement fundamental cultural changes. At the heart of the required cultural transformation is the full integration of warrant officers into the larger Army Officer Corps.

Central to this effort is the merging of the separate, stand-alone, warrant officer education system into a single Officer Education System (OES) that includes technically specific warrant officer elements. It is also the impetus to commission WO1s and to create a single, modern Officer Candidate School (OCS) that would combine officer pre-commissioning training with that of warrants.

The success of this endeavor also lies in strengthening the identity of warrant officers with their branches. In support of this effort, warrant officers will wear their branch insignia and colors beginning 9 July 2004. The change to branch insignia and colors is emblematic of the increased importance of warrant officer technical and tactical expertise to the modular, campaign quality Army we are building for tomorrow.

Additionally, warrant officer professional development (DA Pam 600-11) will be integrated into DA Pam 600-3 (Officer Professional Development), and will contain the newly adopted general warrant officer definition as well as definitions by grade.

Our current ability to recruit and assess warrant officers for The Army is limited and requires significant improvements at all levels. Steps are currently being taken to improve warrant officer pay and compensation, and to remove existing impediments to recruiting and accession. Efforts are underway to determine the mission, organization, resources required to develop, implement, and sustain a formal Army-wide (AC, ARNG, and USAR) recruiting and accessions program.

The goal is to implement a single, well-resourced advertising and recruiting plan for the Army. A pivotal feature of the plan is command involvement in the process. Field commanders will be required to assume a greater role in the recruiting of warrant officers (commensurate with their warrant officer and feeder-MOS populations).

Our past and current support systems and processes have not worked very well to ensure the understanding, professional growth and technical development of warrant officers. The full intent of the ATLDP study is to resolve these shortfalls and develop ready and relevant Army warrant officers for the future. While change is an uncomfortable prospect for many, it is vitally important we all understand that change is essential to the long-term health of the Warrant Officer Corps. We can lead it, manage it and make it work to our advantage, or we can maintain the status quo and follow the herd. Warrant officers have always been the leaders and managers of change. Adaptability to always get the mission done is our hallmark.

The ATLDP recommendations simply recognize that we can't continue to get the mission done to the standard without the full support of our Army. The ATLDP recommendation set is our best effort to manage the enormous amount of change represented by our present Army transformation; a package of changes that must push forward on a single front to eventually gain the desired effect of better resourcing, education, recognition, and compensation for warrant officers. It has been almost two years since we gained approval for the initial ATLDP recommendations, and a little over a year since the IPAT implementation strategy was adopted. This article presents to the WOA membership how far along we've come in that short time.

Our warrant officer career program since the late 1980s has been based on a tiered, progressive pyramid of increasing skill, experience, and responsibility. Over the years grade inflation (mostly in TDA) caused position requirements to grow at senior grades without corresponding growth in supporting junior grades, a situation that made it almost impossible to generate sufficient officers to fill senior grade structure. This year, we have finished a grade rollback in all MOS that balances structure back toward the pyramid of percentages determined for WOMA that allows for better and more predictable advancement potential for warrant officers.

The ATLDP initiative to assign warrant officers by PMAD grade is now a reality. We have altered our personnel distribution automation systems so that warrant officers will be assigned and distributed by four individual grades (CW2/CW3/CW4/CW5) versus three grade bands (WO/SWO/WO), enabling a better fit of skills to required duties.

The ATLDP initiative to update and revise DA policy to correctly incorporate WOs wherever appropriate is ongoing. This year, we have written, staffed and have in final legal review a new warrant officer utilization regulation 616-XX which resurrects the pieces of AR 611-112 for warrant officer utilization that were never incorporated in the consolidation of that regulation with AR 600-3.

Under the aegis of this initiative, we have also have written and are preparing to staff a new regulation, 601-xx Warrant Officer Procurement, which is a first step in consolidating a single procurement program for all components to streamline our processes.

Additionally, we are working changes to protocol (AR 600-60) and housing (AR 210-50) regulations to formally recognize the proper relationship of warrant officers to traditional branch commissioned officers.

We are close to completing the first draft consolidation of PAM 600-3 and PAM 600-11, incorporating career management and professional development guidance for all officers into a single manual, a process started with the ADS XXI study. This consolidated manual will put information about the care and feeding of warrant officers in front of our commissioned leaders on a regular basis.

Pay reform has been an issue of concern for the past 5 years. USAWOA has been a leader in pushing for corrections to the compression that resulted from targeted NCO raises in 1999 and 2000. ATLDP cited this issue as the second most important to warrant officers in the field. We have developed a pay table reform plan for warrant officers this year that has been incorporated in the OSD compensation directorate's planning methodology for future pay (these are the folks who actually design and approve pay tables). The first step of this was seen in FY04, and despite this year's seeming setback by the administration's guidance capping raises at ECI plus 0.5% (3.5%), we are assured that the additional changes to the pay table will come in future years. Branch personnel proponent offices are continuing efforts to create a consolidated message of concern from all two star branch chiefs requesting more vigorous support for accelerating the timeline for these changes. Those of us on the Army Staff have been working this issue since before ATLDP convened and will continue to work until we achieve the reforms we seek.

Commissioning warrant officers at the initial grade of WO1 was seen by ATLDP as the solution to ensuring that warrant officers are considered up front, not as an afterthought, in the process of creating legislation that affects career development, compensation, separation, and all other aspects of our profession that are controlled by law. The recommendation to change the law to commission warrant officers at WO1 is in the coordination channel with the Office of Congressional Legislative Liaison, and slated to go before the Congress in the FY06 submission. This process begins in earnest late this year and will serve to make warrant officers an automatic part of legislative initiatives targeted for the officer corps.

The Army's warrant officers have survived for years on their own initiative, and by scrounging resources from whatever source was willing. ATLDP initiatives recognize our need for sponsorship in the perpetual fight for resources if we are to continue to give the Army the technical expert continuity it demands of us. Individual branch advocacy is our route to better resourcing for education, career development and compensation. With that in mind, we have gained CSA approval for wear of individual branch insignia and colors for warrant officers, officially slated to take effect on 9 July 2004. This step will be a signal to the Army that we are serious about our commitment to excellence for the future and the full range of ATLDP initiatives.

TRADOC by far has had the largest implementation workload and is currently working many of the training and education issues. The curricula for warrant officer professional military education will be rejuvenated to reflect how adults learn in today's environment in order to ensure greater learning, development, and sustainment of critical leadership attributes and technical skills.

The Army must provide warrant officers a quality educational experience that provides the tools to successfully lead soldiers and manage systems of systems within the joint operational environment. The success of this initiative requires a fundamental culture change that recognizes the need to integrate officer and warrant officer cohorts into a consolidated officer education system. The benefits of that culture change will be realized in operational units, within officer cohorts, by leaders, and within educational institutions and the military and civilian communities supporting them.

Proposed modifications to integrate warrant officer functional and leader development components into OES and requirements of Force Stabilization will drive the following important changes as recommended by the ATLDP-WO study:

- de-linking training and education opportunities from promotion selection;
- moving training opportunities earlier in a warrant officer's career;
- expanding assignment-oriented training & education opportunities to prepare warrant officers for the unique assignments which may lie outside their normal specialty or that are above their current grade; and
- providing staff skills and leadership training not currently found in WOES.

Those filling the newly established “Chief Warrant Officer of the Branch” positions will play a significant role in advancing warrant officer issues both at the branch and the Army level.

We are a society of sound bites these days. If you can't put it into 25 words or less, or have it take less than 2 minutes and 7 seconds to say (the approximate average length of a Headline News story on CNN), we believe it is not worth saying. Similarly, if anything we feel is important takes longer than a few days to accomplish, we tend to discount its value and start looking for the next initiative to pursue. We can not adopt that philosophy where ATLDP is concerned.

The ATLDP-WO study serves as the road map for warrant officer leader development and education transformation. It is valid, it is comprehensive and it charts our path for the 21st Century. We have accomplished a great deal in the past two years, but there is much more to do. USAWOA has helped to energize the implementation process for the study initiatives. We all must carry that energy forward to ensure our place in a transformed Army of the future.

Editor's note: The final paragraph in this article clearly summarizes the purpose and direction of the ATLDP.

This is the answer when asked: “what is ATLDP all about? “

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At the time of writing of this article CW5 Adair was assigned to the Office of the Army Deputy Chief of Staff, G-3 and CW5 Eggerton was assigned to the Office of the Army Deputy Chief of Staff, G-1.

Other Resources

- ATLDP-WO Final Report (PDF) at www.usawoa.org/downloads/ATLDP_WO_Report.pdf
- "Study Recommends 63 Changes for Warrant Officers" at www.dtic.mil/armylink/news/Aug2002/a20020822atldpwarrant2.html
- Army News Release at www.dtic.mil/armylink/news/Aug2002/r20020822r-02-045.html
- USAWOA Position On ATLDP-WO at www.usawoa.org/ATLDP-WO_WOApaper.htm
- USAWOA Letter on "Eagle Rising" to Army G-1 at www.usawoa.org/downloads/EagleRisingLtrToG1.pdf
- Army Message announcing 9 July 2004 effective date for new CW5 insignia, wear of branch insignia and colors, and wear of 'Eagle Rising' in WOCS and WOBC at www.usawoa.org/downloads/ALARACT-042-2004.pdf.
- History of Warrant Officer Insignia at www.usawoa.org/downloads/WOinsigHist.pdf
- History of Army CW5 Insignia at www.usawoa.org/downloads/HistOfArmyCW5Insignia.pdf
- History of the Army Warrant Officer at www.usawoa.org/wo_hist.htm.
- Warrant Officer Programs of the Other Services at www.usawoa.org/oth_svc.htm.

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