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# United States Air Force International Affairs Career Field

By  
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International relationships are critical enablers for United States Air Force (USAF) expeditionary air and space forces conducting global operations and fighting the war on terrorism. Building these critical relationships requires skilled, knowledgeable, and experienced international affairs (IA) professionals. Our Deputy Under Secretary of the Air Force, International Affairs (SAF/IA) team recognized this need, and developed and implemented an International Affairs Career Field (IACF), which provides Air Force civilian personnel opportunities for career development and advancement. These new opportunities not only provide benefits for individual team members. They work to systematically attract, develop, and retain a workforce that meets the needs of the entire security cooperation community. This article provides an overview of USAF efforts to shape the total force, explains how IA leadership responded to the strategic direction of the Air Force by creating the IACF, and shares the benefits of the new Career Field to Air Force civilians and the broader security cooperation community.

## **Air Force Efforts to Shape the Force**

IACF implementation comes at a time of great importance as the Air Force transforms and re-shapes itself to meet the challenges presented by the *Global War on Terror*. (GWOT). *Air Force Doctrine Document 1-1, Leadership and Force Development*, provides the principles behind total force development and current transformation efforts pertaining to civilian development. The force development concept outlines a framework to maximize individual capabilities by clearly defining three levels of development:

- Tactical
- Operational
- Strategic

Each level builds on the other ensuring Air Force team members possess the necessary skills and enduring competencies needed to meet current and future mission requirements.

The force development concept of operations for civilians takes the principles in *Air Force Doctrine Document 1-1* and outlines a cohesive plan for developing civilians as an integral part of the total force. Every civilian position in the Air Force now belongs to a Career Field that provides a structured framework for civilian development. This will ensure that all civilian team members receive the appropriate education, functional training, and assignment experiences to prepare them to meet present and future challenges.

## **International Affairs Community Response**

The Air Force and U.S. government depend on the political-military expertise of both military and civilian IA personnel to build relationships with U.S. partners and allies that facilitate access and overflight, partner nation capability and capacity, and coalition interoperability. Executing security cooperation programs in support of Air Force and U.S. national security objectives requires strong, competent, and effective IA professionals.

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SAF/IA responded to Air Force direction by implementing a career field for IA civilian professionals in alignment with the total force effort. IACF provides a framework to increase the effectiveness and perpetuate the excellent performance of our IA civilians.

### **International Affairs Career Field History and Concept**

The IACF Development Team recognized the IA civilian workforce as all Air Force civilian personnel who are employed in IA functional areas. These areas include:

- International Security Assistance
- Cooperative Research
- Development or Acquisition
- Foreign Disclosure and Technology Transfer
- International Education and Training
- Financial Management, and Logistics
- Information and Personnel Exchanges

An in-depth analysis of Air Force IA positions identified 319 civil service positions as part of the IACF. The majority of IACF positions are located at SAF/IA, the Air Force Security Assistance Center (AFSAC), and the Air Force Security Assistance Training (AFAST) Squadron. Remaining positions are located at Air Force Material Command Air Logistic Centers (ALCs) and Product Centers, Air Mobility Command (AMC), Air Combat Command (ACC), and Air Force Space Command (AFSPC). As the Career Field matures, positions will be evaluated continuously to ensure that IACF includes all appropriate positions.

IACF was organized under the existing Air Force Career Field framework which provides three key functions:

- Career Field Management and Oversight
- Civilian Development
- Position Management

These functions work together to create a civilian workforce that is responsive to mission requirements and meets IA community needs for skilled, knowledgeable, and experienced IA professionals. Like all other Air Force Career Fields, IACF reports to the Force Development Council through the Functional Authority.

For day-to-day operations management, IACF maintains a Career Field Management Team located at the Directorate of Civilian Force Management, Air Force Personnel Center. The team manages IACF key functions by identifying qualified candidates for:

- Referral to position vacancies
- Recruiting interns to provide entry-level personnel
- Advocating continuing education and functional training such as civilian developmental education, tuition assistance programs, and career broadening
- Administering all other developmental and professional opportunities available to the workforce

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The Career Field Management Team ensures that the Air Force IA community maximizes training and placement opportunities for our civilians and equips our team members to adapt and meet the challenges of the changing global security environment. IACF began initial operations in March 2006 and will achieve full operational capability in October 2007.

### **International Affairs Career Field Benefits**

For individual team members, IACF provides new opportunities for professional growth and development. Air Force IA personnel will have flexible career development paths, thereby increasing opportunities for challenging work experiences with timely, appropriate training and education. This series of experiences and challenges provided by the Career Field will assist IACF team members in gaining vital experience necessary to meet future civilian leadership requirements through IA and the greater Air Force.

At the same time, IACF affords IA leadership the opportunity to deliberately develop team members for positions of increased responsibility in the Career Field. The end result will be civilian leaders that possess the right professional, technical, managerial, and administrative skills necessary to execute the IA mission now and in the future. For more details or if you have questions about information mentioned in this article, please contact the IACF Management Team at (210) 565-1758 or e-mail: [afpc.dpjdc@randolph.af.mil](mailto:afpc.dpjdc@randolph.af.mil).

### **About the Author**

Angela M. Kravetz is the Chief of the Human Capital Development Branch, Under Secretary of the Air Force International Affairs (SAF/IA), Washington, D.C. She oversees the civilian and military human resource programs at SAF/IA providing a full range of responsive human resource services consistent with merit principles to the management of federal and military employees. She also oversees a multi-million dollar International Affairs Workforce Development Initiative Program where she identifies executive training, educational programs and career broadening assignments and opportunities for the Air Force International Affairs civilian and military community. In 1987 she earned her Master of Public Administration, Public Administration, Public Policy and Public Budgeting, University of Nevada Reno, Reno, Nevada. In 1980 she earned her Bachelor of Science Political Science and Speech Communication, Texas Tech University, Lubbock Texas.