



SECRETARY OF THE AIR FORCE  
WASHINGTON

OCT 31 2017

MEMORANDUM FOR DISTRIBUTION C

SUBJECT: AIR FORCE DIRECTIVE PUBLICATIONS REDUCTION

I understand there is consternation about my guidance that Air Force policy instructions should be written without jargon or acronyms. Let me clarify.

The primary purpose of the review of Air Force directive publications is to reduce the burden of unnecessary compliance on our Airmen, and to ensure we are communicating clearly.

Over the past seventy years, we have come a long way in air and space. Simultaneously, we seem to have lost the ability to clearly articulate what we are doing and why, both with each other and with the public. We often confuse people. It is a practice that impedes mission effectiveness.

In order to provide further guidance, here is what I mean:

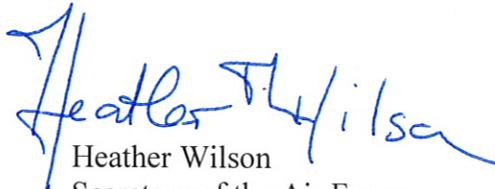
- Feel free to use acronyms found in widely read publications like newspapers and magazines.
- Acronyms that appear in the dictionary like DNA, POW, MIA or UFO which are widely understood are fine.
- Some technical manuals are written for a narrow audience. In specialized publications intended for use only by Airmen who have graduated from special schools (like flight training, intelligence or maintenance schools), you should use good judgement on the use of acronyms to ensure your audience understands what you mean.
- There are standard forms for rank and other military terms, like SSgt and MAJCOM, which Airmen understand, although civilians outside the military often do not. Consider your audience and seek to be understood.

Beyond that, please use common sense. If we need a glossary for people to understand us, we are failing to communicate. If we have so many acronyms that people must refer to our first paragraph every time they see one, we are failing to communicate. In most circumstances, plain English is preferable. If you are confident that even the most junior Airman using your publication will understand what you mean without having to ask someone to explain the jargon or acronyms, use them.

Let's keep the end in mind. We are trying to reduce the volume and specificity of mandatory Air Force publications. We are trying to move authority to use good judgement to

lower levels in the Air Force. When specific guidance is needed, we are trying to make that guidance clear so Airmen understand what is required and why.

I recently read several memoranda from General Hap Arnold written in the 1940s. None of them used acronyms or jargon. They are models of clarity that communicate across decades. It's time to return to those roots.



Heather Wilson  
Secretary of the Air Force