

History of the 77th Aeronautical Systems Group

A Continued Metamorphosis in Human-Centered Acquisitions

1982 - 2006

In May 1982, the United States Air Force School of Aerospace Medicine's (USAFSAM) Program Acquisition Division was disbanded and moved to HQ Aerospace Medical Division (AMD). During this transition, the newly acquired division was officially re-designated as the Directorate of Systems Acquisition. Colonel Michael G. MacNaughton served as Director from May 1982 to July 1990. During his tenure, the directorate saw many changes. The first major change occurred in 1987 when AMD was renamed the Human Systems Division (HSD). During HSD's metamorphosis, the Packard Commission streamlined program management, turning the Directorate of Systems Acquisition into a new deputate directly under HSD. This new line organization would be known as the Deputy Commander for Development and Acquisitions Office. The concept of this deputate evolved from a need to develop beyond an exploratory research organization and provide the full spectrum for acquisitions of human-centered technologies. As a result, the new deputate became the product development arm of HSD. In April 1989, the Life Support, Chemical Warfare Defense and Clothing Divisions were organizationally aligned under the Deputy Commander for Development and Acquisitions Office. The objective was to transition these laboratories under a single acquisitions leader to better serve the MAJCOMs. Later that year, in the fall of 1989, the Human Systems Program Office (SPO) was created from the former development and acquisitions deputate. Concurrently, the Commander of the Air Force Systems Command authorized Colonel MacNaughton to become the only true Program Director in HSD at that time. His appointment as the Program Director for the Human Systems Program Office solidified HSD's acquisition identity within the Air Force acquisitions community.

Changes to the SPO continued in the 1990s, starting with Colonel Mahlon H. Long III replacing Colonel MacNaughton as Program Director of the Human Systems Program Office in July 1990. One year later, in July 1991, the SPO was identified as one of 21 selected programs to begin operations under the Integrated Weapon System Management (IWSM) concept and became the first IWSM office to reach full operational capability with the addition of a 60-person sustainment operating location at Kelly AFB. The SPO's momentum to change continued when it dramatically reorganized itself in February 1992. The purpose of this was to increase mission effectiveness and position itself in line with other product center SPOs. As a result, manpower authorizations were distributed with effectiveness in mind and intra-SPO realignments commenced. Some divisions remained the same, others deleted, and a number of new divisions were added. July 1992, the Air Force merged the Air Force Systems Command and the Air Force Logistics Command to create the new Air Force Materiel Command. As a result, the Human Systems Division at Brooks AFB became the Human Systems Center. In 1995, military planners from the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) commission approved the gradual transition of ownership of Brooks AFB from the Air Force to the City of San Antonio. In July 1996, Colonel Steven A. Harman arrived to Brooks AFB and became the SPO's Program Director. The SPO experienced two key events in 1997 that forever changed its internal structure. The first was moving the Life Support Sustainment Operating Location from Kelly AFB to the SPO. The second event was the application of the Integrated Weapon System Management II (IWSM II) program and its effect on the SPO's structure. The IWSM II program dictated the formation of Integrated Product Teams (IPT) empowered to develop and manage

programs under the SPO charter and direction from the SPO Program Director. The new business plan dramatically revised the SPO structure from fifteen divisions down to three. The three remaining divisions were the Product Support Division, Crew Systems Division, and the Training & Medical Information Systems Division. Although the SPO's mission remained unchanged, the IPT structure was formed to support a more effective execution of their programs. A short time later, in 1998, the Life Sciences Equipment Lab and Textile Lab were brought from Kelly AFB to Brooks AFB and realigned under the Program Office. Later that year, in October 1998, the HSC was re-designated as the 311th Human Systems Wing. Shortly thereafter, the SPO bid farewell to Colonel Harman and welcomed Colonel Dartanian Warr as the new Program Director of the Human Systems Program Office in August 1999.

The 1990s eventually gave way to a new millennium, but this did not slow the SPO's drive to evolve. Colonel Albert F. Burnett took over the Human Systems Program Office as the new Program Director in April 2002. During Colonel Burnett's tenure, Brooks AFB and the Program Office continued to undergo major changes. Shortly after Colonel Burnett's arrival to the SPO, the transition of ownership of Brooks AFB was finally complete and the City of San Antonio assumed control of the base and renamed it Brooks City-Base on July 22, 2002. In April 2003, the Chemical Defense Branch, originally under the Crew Systems Division, evolved into a full-fledged division within the Program Office. This change was driven by the Joint Program Executive Officer for Chem-Bio Defense, which was mandated by law to have joint oversight of chem-bio defense. Meanwhile, Colonel Burnett became a dual-hatted Program Director by being appointed the Joint Program Manager – Decontamination for Chem-Bio Defense. At that time, he was the only SPO Program Director to assume this position. In January 2005, another major transformation occurred when the Human Systems Program Office was realigned under the newly formed Agile Combat Support Systems Wing, located at Wright-Patterson AFB. As a result, the SPO was officially renamed the Human Systems Group (HSG) and Colonel Burnett became the unit's first Commander. In July 2005, a change-of-command introduced Colonel Mark J. Donahue as the new Human Systems Group Commander. At that time, the group housed four distinct divisions: the Aircrew Performance Division; the Chem-Bio Defense Division; the Aeromedical & Information Systems Division; and the Product Support Division. Colonel Donahue, like his predecessor, witnessed a major change to Brooks City-Base shortly after his arrival. On November 9, 2005, Brooks City-Base underwent the largest change to date. The BRAC Commission's recommendations for reshaping the Department of Defense officially took effect and became law. Brooks City-Base was officially mandated to close by September 15, 2011; exactly 6 years after President George W. Bush agreed to the Commission's recommendations and forwarded it to Congress. BRAC law by no means slowed the evolution of the HSG and this was absolutely evident less than a year later, in July 2006, when the Agile Combat Support Systems Wing was re-designated as the 77th Aeronautical Systems Wing, in turn transforming HSG into the 77th Aeronautical Systems Group (77 AESG). Simultaneously, the Aircrew Performance and Chem-Bio Defense Divisions stood up as two new Squadrons under the 77 AESG, the 648th and 649th Aeronautical Systems Squadrons (648 AESS / 649 AESS), respectively. Major Gary L. Salmans took command as the new Squadron Commander of the 648 AESS while Lieutenant Colonel Hau T. Tran assumed command of the 649 AESS. The two remaining divisions, the Aeromedical & Information Systems and Product Support Divisions, were left unchanged during the re-designation and reported directly to the 77 AESG.

Today, as the 77 AESG charges into 2007, it finds itself looking into the future, beyond Brooks City-Base. The future, though somewhat uncertain, holds plans to continue the metamorphosis of the 77 AESG. The goal is to send its diverse missions to three separate locations. The 648 AESS will separate its sustainment mission and deliver it to Robins AFB, Georgia, while the 649 AESS relocates to the Army's Aberdeen Proving Grounds in Maryland. 77 AESG's remaining functions will cease operations at Brooks City-Base in 2010 and move to Wright-Patterson AFB, Ohio. Though the 77 AESG will be somewhat fragmented for the first time in its history, the group will still maintain unity despite geographical limitations and prevail as the Air Force's lead in human-centered acquisitions. With a team of 290 outstanding military, civilian, and contractor employees under strong leadership with a clear objective, the 77 AESG continues to do what it does best – develop, acquire, and sustain unparalleled human systems. Almost 25 years after it separated from USAFSAM, the 77 AESG faces tight budgets, reduced manpower, and base closure. With the vast amount of uncertainty ahead, only two things are absolute; the first is the 77 AESG's unwavering commitment to "Every Airman... Every Aircraft... Every Day!" The second... change is inevitable.

77 AESG Leadership:

- Colonel Michael G. MacNaughton
 - o Director, Directorate of Systems Acquisition (AMD/RDS)
 - o Deputy Commander for Development and Acquisitions (HSD/YA)
 - o Program Director, Human Systems Program Office (HSD/YA)
 - o May 1982 – July 1990
- Colonel Mahlon H. Long III
 - o Program Director, Human Systems Program Office (HSD/YA)
 - o July 1990 – July 1996
- Colonel Steven A. Harman
 - o Program Director, Human Systems Program Office (HSC/YA)
 - o July 1996 – Aug 1999
- Colonel Dartanian Warr
 - o Program Director, Human Systems Program Office (311 HSW/YA)
 - o Aug 1999 – Feb 2002
- Colonel Albert F. Burnett
 - o Program Director, Human Systems Program Office (311 HSW/YA)
 - o Commander, Human Systems Group (HSG)
 - o Apr 2002 – July 2005
- Colonel Mark J. Donahue
 - o Commander, Human Systems Group (HSG)
 - o Commander, 77th Aeronautical Systems Group (77 AESG)
 - o July 2005 – Present.