

## Air Force cadets to be commissioned during cyber-war

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**COLORADO SPRINGS, COLORADO** — At a special Air Force "CORONA" meeting, the service's top generals agreed that in the event of a cyber-war, Air Force Academy cadets studying computer science will immediately become captains so they can take command of a cyberspace squadron. Cadets who minor in computer science will immediately become first lieutenants so they can perform headquarters-level duties as cyberspace liaisons.

The new Air Force "Contingency Cyberspace Battlefield Commissioning Plan" has not gone over well with Army and Marine officials. "For one thing, we've cut back severely on the number of battlefield commissions since Vietnam," one high ranking Marine officer said. "And for another thing, you've got to prove yourself in combat as a leader of men to get one. Yet the Air Force would make a captain out of some 17-year-old Academy freshman just because he can surf the web."

General T. Michael Moseley, the Air Force Chief of Staff, defended the contingency plan during a recent meeting with journalists. "First of all," he clarified, "we're not going to make captains out of freshman. They'll need at least 18 semester hours before we'd even make them a second lieutenant. Second, our contingency plan would only kick in during a global cyber-war, and no one expects that to happen for at least three years."

"Third," General Moseley continued, "this is exactly why military academies exist: to create new leaders who can fight tomorrow's wars. Right now we need young officers whose minds aren't constrained by the limitations of physical combat. Say what you will, but the days of driving armored vehicles through the streets of Baghdad are a thing of the past. Insurgents are giving up their improvised explosive devices in favor of Internet

explosive devices."

"Fourth and most important of all," General Moseley added, "Air Force Instruction 51-604 says a commander doesn't need to be physically present at his unit. Our commissioned cadets will telecommute from the Academy in a dual-hat role. They'd be college students by day and squadron commanders by night."

Moseley's remarks to the media drew outright ridicule from his Army & Marine counterparts. One email making the rounds shows a parody of Batman's sidekick, Robin, away at college. In the original comic book, Robin looks out his dorm window to see the famous Bat Signal projected on the nighttime clouds. But in the parody version, the searchlight projects a USAF logo, and Robin's "letter sweater" bears a captain's insignia.

Army and Marine officials weren't the only ones raising concerns over the new Air Force plan. In an email that was leaked to the press, Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force Rodney J. McKinley observed "the commissioning plan focuses solely on Academy students. We also have an amazing pool of junior enlisted personnel with advanced degrees in computer science. They would make strong, experienced, well rounded commanders."

General Moseley replied to Chief McKinley in a stern email. "We need every enlisted person we can get to lay CAT5 cable and to guard DoD contractors. You can retire if you can't see the logic of working for a computer savvy 19-year-old captain. Otherwise shut up and color."

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While teenage captains may be an oddity in the military, they are relatively common among the captains of industry. Marc Maiffret, an employee with eEye, testified before congress that he had already retired from one career at the tender age of 17. Rishi Bhat was only 15 when his company announced he had retired from the daily grind. Peiter Zatko, better known as "Mudge," got off to a somewhat late start in the corporate world but still managed to retire at the age of 32.

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