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To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Clint A. Cantrell entitled "United States Air Force Security Forces Merger and Career Satisfaction Relating to Retention." I have examined the final electronic copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, with a major in Psychology.

Eric D. Sundstrom, Major Professor

We have read this thesis and recommend its acceptance:

John Lounsbury, Ph.D., Anthony Nownes, Ph.D.

Accepted for the Council:
Carolyn R. Hodges

Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

(Original signatures are on file with official student records.)

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Accepted for the Council:

Dr. Anne Mayhew

Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate Studies

(Original signatures are on file with official student records.)

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United States Air Force Security Forces Merger and Career Satisfaction Relating to Retention

A Thesis Presented for the
Master of Arts Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Clint A. Cantrell

August 2003

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Dedication

For everyone I need to thank, which I will do in person, ultimately to Megan, for her unlimited (and sometimes unnerving) patience, understanding and endurance.

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Abstract

The relationship between the Air Force merger of Law Enforcement personnel, Security Police personnel, and Combat Arms Training and Maintenance personnel into the Air Force Security Forces Career Field; and job retention was investigated among 209 Air Force Security Forces Enlisted Personnel at five different Air Force bases (Columbus Air Force Base (AFB), MS, Keesler AFB, MS, Eglin AFB, FL, Hurlburt Field Air Base, FL, and Moody AFB, GA). Participants completed a 91-item survey designed to measure merger satisfaction, career and job satisfaction, life satisfaction, job involvement, job stress, turnover intentions and demographic data. The results showed only four items significantly related to job retention. In a simple regression analysis, satisfaction with the merger was significantly associated with retention but was not the best predictor. Career satisfaction was also a significant predictor of job retention and a stronger one. Merger satisfaction was also significantly related to career satisfaction. In a simple multiple regression analysis, however, merger satisfaction was not significantly related to retention. The results in this population of Air Force Personnel indicated that retention was significantly related to whether the major satisfaction in one's life came from the job, the level of satisfaction with the career field, and the amount of time off from work.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Purpose of the Study: Find Key Predictors of Retention in Law Enforcement Employees

Since the Air Force merged Law Enforcement personnel, Security Police personnel, and Combat Arms Training and Maintenance personnel on 31 October 1997, no study has examined the resulting levels of job satisfaction and retention among the enlisted personnel affected by the merger. This study analyzes the relationship between job satisfaction and retention among these enlisted men and women. More specifically, the study attempts to determine if there is a significant link between the merger, job satisfaction, and job retention.

This is an important research question because Security Forces has a lower retention rate than the Air Force overall. Moreover, the retention rate is low enough to be of a concern when coupled with increased levels of operations since the 1980s. It is also important to note that my results may be relevant to the question of retention rates in civilian law enforcement.

Related research: Empirical Studies of Retention in Relation to Other Variables

Job Satisfaction

There is no want for studies regarding law enforcement in its many aspects and job satisfaction. Research and publications on the topic is ubiquitous. In almost every study, law enforcement is cited as a highly stressful occupation (Ayres, 1990; Einsenburg, 1975; Kroes, 1985; Reese, 1986). In fact, it is now a truism that the law enforcement profession suffers from high turnover rates due to low levels of job satisfaction (Reese, 1982). While no one study provides an exhaustive or definitive list

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of law enforcement stressors, most studies cite extremely long work hours, shift work (including alternating shifts), low pay, chronic manpower shortages, boredom, feelings of ineffectiveness, excessive administration, excessive dealings with the legal system (e.g., court appearances), responsibility for other's lives and property, emotional stress due to uncertainty, lack of control over outcomes, and unclear duties and responsibilities (Vila and Kenney, 2002). Interestingly, most studies do *not* cite the fear of bodily harm or death as a substantial stressor (Lester and Gallagher, 1980). Those stressors categorized as operational (i.e., as having potential for violence) are often considered relatively unimportant (Kroes, Margolis, and Hurrel, 1974; Sparger and Giacopassi, 1982). One of the most important stressors is job burnout. Burnout is most often a function of long work hours (Stearns and Moore, 1990). Burnout is significant related to low job satisfaction, job turnover, absenteeism, low morale, and various self-reported indices of personal distress. In short, if an individual finds a job too stressful or overwhelming, that individual is quite unlikely to "re-up."

Interestingly, the stressors that are most often cited (long hours/shift work and frustration with administration) are not unique to law enforcement. In fact, as Malloy and Mays (1984) note, most stressors are related to organizational or administrative issues which are common in non-law enforcement jobs as well. In a large meta-analysis, they find that while law enforcement is a stressful occupation, it is no more stressful than many other occupations. They note that many extant studies are conducted by law enforcement agencies or academics with an agenda, and they attempt to avoid many of the pitfalls of previous research. They suggest that law enforcement jobs may not be

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more stressful than many other types of jobs. The bulk of the literature, they note, is comparative in nature (i.e. it compares police to non-police occupations), and does not explore relationships among groups of law enforcement officials. Malloy and Mays conclude that flawed studies may fail to find significant differences in stressors due only to occupation. In other words, they conclude that some stressors (such as long work hours and lack of personal time) may be significantly related to job retention across a wide spectrum of individuals regardless of occupation. In short, it may be the case that law enforcement itself is not a stressful occupation, but rather that long work hours and other variables that are often present in law enforcement occupations account for low levels of retention.

Malloy and Mays reference research by Selye (1956), Seligmen (1968), Weiss (1968), and Mirsky (1958) who conclude that law enforcement stressors are not unique to the procession. Referring to the "proximity-control hypothesis," Malloy and Mays assert that law enforcement stress may vary from individual to individual and may also vary with specific occupational role (for example, a white police officer on patrol in a minority neighborhood or a state trooper running radar on a high traffic interstate may be particularly vulnerable to stress). To account for these possibilities, Malloy and Mays state: "To account for this role effect, we propose the proximity-control hypothesis that predicts that police stress (that is, physiological arousal, negative psychological state) is functionally related to the physical and psychological proximity of the officer to the society necessitated by the occupational role and the degree to which this interaction requires the social control of others." (Malloy and Mays, 1984, p. 211).

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A second model, the Stress-Diathesis Model (Davison and Neale, 1982), asserts that all individuals, regardless of occupation, experience stress that affects their health, and that even ostensibly high stress occupations such as law enforcement do not predict adverse physical, psychological, or social negative effects among all or even the majority of the members of an specific organization. "Rather, it is hypothesized that psychobiosocial distress results from (a) an inability to manage the stress levels experienced, and (b) a complex interaction of genetic and social-psychological illness mediating variables" (Malloy and Mays, 1984, p. 215). Malloy and Mays evaluate a study conducted by Diskin, Goldstein and Grencik (1977) of 135 male deputies randomly selected from the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department, which finds that officers who rated low on an anxiety scale had high performance ratings regardless of the situation. This reinforces Malloy and Mays main point that "…there is likely significant within-group variance among police officers on salient dimensions that determine their individual responses to stress." (Malloy and Mays, 1984, p. 217). In sum, Malloy and Mays offer the intriguing conclusion that the determinants of job satisfaction and retention are relatively constant across occupations. They also conclude that the stressors present in law enforcement occupations are unique to that profession.

In the end, we must conclude that job satisfaction is a large factor in determining an organization's ability to retain sufficient personnel. Regardless of the individual studies' breakdown of the stressors affecting law enforcement, most share an additional theme: that low job satisfaction—regardless of its cause(s)—negatively influences rates of job retention.

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Job Retention

Research shows (and common sense suggests) that overall job satisfaction is strongly and positively related to retention among law enforcement personnel (Brewer and Wilson, 1995). In fact, the majority of studies on law enforcement job satisfaction devote substantial attention to job retention. Again, a common finding is that low job satisfaction correlates significantly with, and is a strong predictor of, low job retention. Of course, high rates of turnover due to low job satisfaction are a serious concern when loss of personnel can potentially exceed the number of replacement personnel. Indeed, most studies conclude that attrition levels at or above 10 percent are excessive and potentially damaging (Dantzker, 1992; Fry, 1983; Martin, 1990).

Since the mid-1980s, the Air Force has tried to increase overall job satisfaction by implementing such programs as Quality Management. This participatory management strategy based on the theories of Edward Deming has been shown to help increase job satisfaction in police departments (Wycoff & Skogan, 1994). Yet "Today's Air Force still faces a large operation and personnel tempo load. The current deployment force is four times greater than that fielded in 1989, but overall Air Force manning has shrunk by a third. There are pilot retention concerns along with close tracking of enlisted retention, which has dropped from 82 percent to 71 percent," (Dorsey, 1998). This is a distinction that needs to be considered since Peters, O'Connor, Eulberg, and Watson (1988) found that while those job constraints specific to the military were related to job satisfaction, these military stressors were not strongly related to reenlistment. The study observed several career fields including law enforcement.

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At the beginning of the 1990's, there were approximately 11,000 public-sector law enforcement agencies in the U.S. (Slora & Britton, 1990). In addition, 1.5 million individuals were employed in the area of private law enforcement. With pay and benefits in many of these departments equaling or exceeding those received by Air Force enlisted personnel, the appeal to join the Air Force could be on the decline while the attraction to leave the Air Force could potentially be a strong one. This tendency may be exacerbated by that fact that Air Force law enforcement training gives people an edge in being hired into the civilian work force. As Hoover (2001) notes, factors other than job satisfaction may affect law enforcement manning.

The decade of the 1990s was the first in recorded history to witness a reduction in the number of individuals seeking and maintaining law enforcement careers. What accounts for this startling change? Hoover identifies a number of factors. First, there is the economy. A strong economy, he asserts, influences the pool of applicants law enforcement draws from to begin with and can effectively retain. Specifically, a strong economy, such as that that existed throughout most of the 1990s, potentially lowers the number of applicants into law enforcement since civil service jobs are often filled by those seeking job security and regular/structured promotions. Civil service jobs are less attractive to those who emphasize income, and while civil service jobs offer security, they typically do not offer wages equal to comparative jobs in the private sector. In short, Hoover concludes that the better the private sector, the smaller the applicant pool and the greater the potential incentive for existing law enforcement to seek other employment. While no study has yet directly examined the relationship between the

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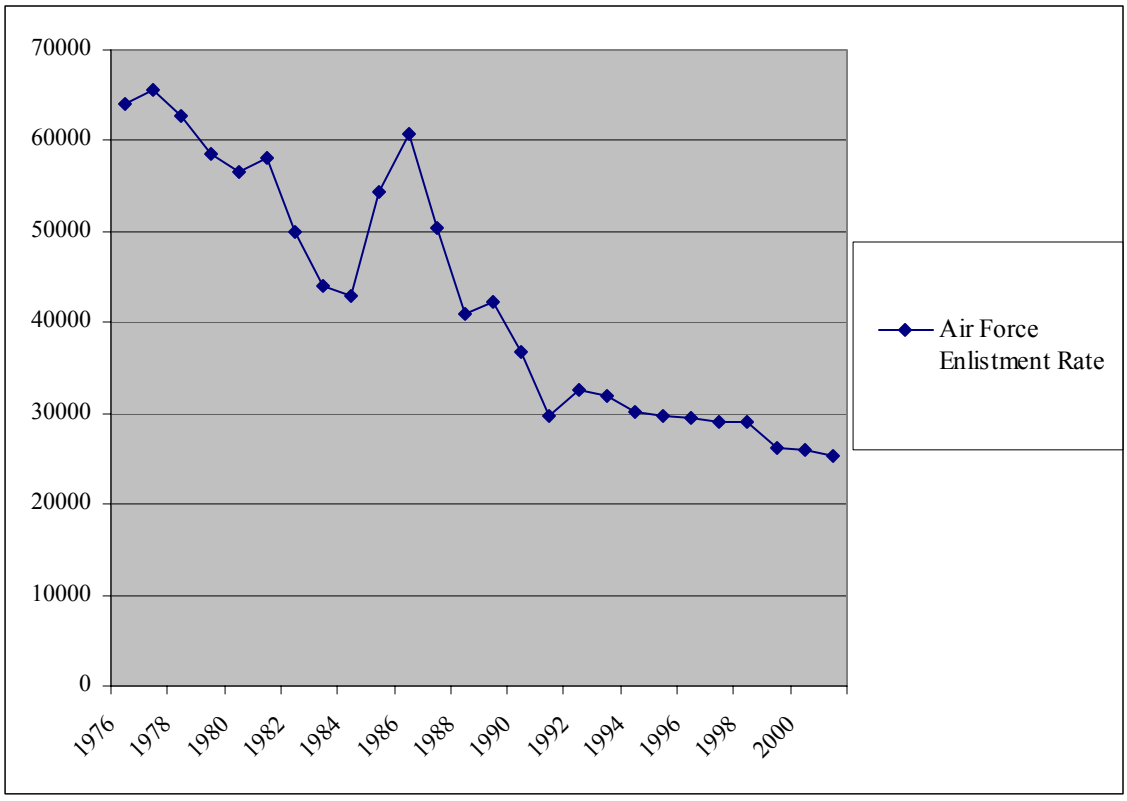
health of the economy and enlistment levels in the military, Figure 1 is suggestive. It shows that a declining number of personnel enlisting in the Air Force during the 1990s.

Hoover also maintains that not only does the civil service job applicant shrink during good economic times, but the applicants who remain are not always the best candidates. The private sector has a strong degree of competition. In a good economy, so many jobs exist that the competition shifts somewhat from the applicant vying for the job to the employer vying for a decreasing pool of applicants.



Source: Air Force Personnel Center, Randolph AFB, TX

Figure 1: Air Force Enlistment Rate from 1976 to 2000

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The private sector competes by increasing pay and/or benefits as well as lowering their standards for hiring. This dynamic response is largely absent from civil employment. Law enforcement jobs tend to be strongly regimented in their hiring practices and in their hiring standards. These factors lead to a situation in which the applicant pool is smaller, but the time it takes to process applicants remains the same. This leads to the possibility of that losses may outstrip replacement.

As Peters, O'Connor, Eulberg, and Watson (1988) indicate, similar factors may affect military job retention as well. A better economy lowers the number of applicants into the military. Moreover, younger applicants often seek educational benefits—benefits that are increased in their availability from the private sector as employers compete to attract employees. Fewer Air Force applicants lowers the available number of personnel that Security Forces has to perform its mission. This reduced manning leads to longer work hours and more stressful work conditions. This in turn increases the number of individuals exiting the career field to seek employment elsewhere. Additionally, the level of training an enlisted member receives, plus the on the job experience, and often law enforcement departments from the federal, state, and local levels giving "veteran's preference points" for honorably discharged military members, make them desirable applicants in the private sector.

Yet another factor Hoover relates to law enforcement job satisfaction and retention is occupational prestige. In law enforcement, occupational prestige varies with public perception. In communities, individual contact with police is generally restricted

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to the occasional traffic ticket. This does not create favorable perceptions of law enforcement officials. Coupled with highly publicized incidents such as Waco and Rodney King, this makes the general occupational prestige of law enforcement quite low. Nonetheless, when an emergency arises or the public needs law enforcement, prestige tends to increase in the short term. For example, if a criminal is breaking into your home or you are being mugged, the occupational prestige of a police officer dramatically increases. Overall, however, prestige remains low, as surges in prestige do not last.

Finally, Hoover focuses on working conditions. Here he supports the general view that the nature of law enforcement work makes the job stressful. Among the stressors are: long and nonstandard working hours, military style administrations, intense situations followed by long monotonous work requirements, no room for error in the performance of required duties, and the fear of harsh discipline and public scrutiny if one fails to perform those duties. Together these working conditions strongly affect recruitment and retention.

Demographic Variables

At its foundation, law enforcement in the Air Force has many of the same characteristics as civilian law enforcement. However, law enforcement personnel in the Air Force must also deal with an additional layer of job stress related to factors specific to the military, such as long deployments to overseas locations that possibly entail frequent and extensive family separations, and the potential for hostile conflict. As the Air Force Personnel Center has reported, the retention of enlisted members steadily decreased during the 1990s. This compounded the problem of decreasing numbers of

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personnel enlisting in the Air Force since the late 1970s. In short, the Air Force has consistently faced a steady decrease in manning that has affected all career fields including Security Forces.

The essential elements of law enforcement are common in both civilian departments and the military law enforcement. In the Air Force, these factors are coupled with factors that are unique to military life. Thus, while many job satisfaction and retention studies are good sources of information, there is a need to narrow the focus and look directly at those factors unique to the military and particularly to the Air Force Security Forces career field.

For almost 35 years, the United States Air Force has conducted Occupational Survey Reports on the Security Police and Law Enforcement career fields on a bi-annual basis. The Occupational Measurement Squadron (OMS), Air Education and Training Command, at Randolph Air Force Base, TX, conducts the survey to collect data regarding the effectiveness of training and the time spent performing work related tasks. The survey essentially measures the management of resources. In this case, the resource is Air Force personnel.

In these reports (United States Air Force Occupational Measurement Squadron, 1997), only one brief section explores job satisfaction. Job interest, perceived utilization of talents and training, sense of accomplishment from work, and reenlistment intentions are the indicators of job satisfaction. OMS coin 1997, OMS conducted a stratified random sample of 5,000 Security Police and Law Enforcement personnel. Combat Arms Training and Maintenance did not fall under either career field at the time and was thus

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not a part of the random sample. Seventy-one percent of those surveyed responded (N = 3,559): 23 percent of the eligible 21,462 personnel in the career fields (which also included the specialty of Military Working Dog personnel, i.e. guard and drug-detection canines), 16 percent (N = 2,219) of the eligible 13,814 Security Police personnel, 16 percent (N = 1,055) of the eligible 6,319 personnel, and 11 percent (N = 189) of the eligible 906 Military Working Dog personnel. The report concluded that while job satisfaction had increased within both career fields since an earlier career field report (United States Air Force Occupational Measurement Squadron, 1992), the trend of lower job satisfaction and retention found within the Security Police career field verses the Law Enforcement Career field still existed. The report also stated that both career fields had lower levels of overall job satisfaction and retention than other career fields.

While the survey ostensibly examines job satisfaction, the survey's intent actually falls within the pattern of what OMS is measuring: the resources and the utilization of those resources. As such, the report presents neither bivariate nor multivariate statistical analyses. This measurement in regards to resources and their usage should not come as a surprise. The management of personnel and equipment is a key part of military administration, especially in the United States Air Force.

Since the mid-1970s, the importance of this measurement of personnel steadily increased as the number of individuals enlisting into the Air Force fell. The motto, "More with Less" became a standard phrase beginning in the late 1980s, indicating that while expectations were increasing and mission tempo worldwide was on the rise, the Air Force had fewer personnel and smaller budgets. In response to these conditions, the Air

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Force began a pattern of consolidations. To increase the allotted resources (often personnel) available to a squadron, the Air Force began to merge separate units into single larger squadrons comprised of interlocking or similar responsibilities. On 31 October 1997, the Security Police, Law Enforcement, and Combat Arms Training and Maintenance were merged into a single unit: Security Forces.

Prior to this, Security Police was the career field for personnel tasked with standing guard at a particular post, Law Enforcement was essentially the military police, and Combat Arms Training and Maintenance was for personnel tasked with ensuring that all Air Force members are qualified on all required weapons. These individual missions remained unchanged. What had changed was that personnel who had previously remained in a single field for the duration of their career now found themselves generalized among all three. The simple reason behind this was the need to increase the number of individuals available to accomplish these missions.

Research Questions

Retention & Satisfaction with Security Forces Merger

Since the Air Force merged Air Force Law Enforcement personnel, Air Force Security Police personnel, and Combat Arms Training and Maintenance personnel, no study has analyzed the resulting satisfaction with the merger or how it relates to retention among the enlisted personnel who comprise the bulk of manning in those career fields. In this study, I propose that merger satisfaction is significantly correlated with retention.

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Retention & Career/Job Satisfaction

This study examines the relationship between job satisfaction and retention among enlisted members in the Air Force Security Forces career fields—Air Force Law Enforcement, Air Force Security Police, and Combat Arms Training and Maintenance. This study proposes that career and job satisfaction are significantly correlated with retention.

Retention & Demographic Variables (job tenure, gender, grade)

Among the variables I measure are the following. First, there is job tenure, which is measured as time in the Air Force. Second, I measure grade. I expect both variables to be positively related to job retention and job satisfaction. Third, I measure the demographic of gender, though I have no expectation it will prove significant.

Best Predictor

While past Air Force-specific research (Peters, O'Connor, Eulberg, & Watson, 1988; Uden & Tanya 1993; United States Air Force Occupational Measurement Squadron, 1997) indicates that career and job satisfaction are significant predictors of retention, no study has analyzed retention relating to the merger of the three law enforcement career fields. I hypothesize that the merger will significantly relate to retention. I do so because both Security Police and Law Enforcement have exhibited lower average levels of career satisfaction than other Air Force career fields (in fact, Security Police has the lowest level of career satisfaction in the Air Force). Individuals who were previously limited to Security Police duties alone now have the opportunity to work in the career fields of Law Enforcement and Combat Arms Training and

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Maintenance. Each career field is thus affected, as each now falls under the single career field of Security Forces.

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II. METHOD

Research Design

This field study used a questionnaire to examine the relationship between Air Force Security Forces merger satisfaction and career and job satisfaction as they relate to enlisted retention.

Procedures

With the permission of each location's Security Forces Commander, this study was conducted at five United States Air Force Bases: Columbus Air Force Base (AFB), MS, Keesler AFB, MS, Eglin AFB, FL, Hurlburt Field Air Base, FL, and Moody AFB, GA. Each location maintained an active Security Forces Squadron of enlisted personnel. Each participant voluntarily completed a job satisfaction and retention questionnaire just after roll call and shift change. No distinction was made based on the enlisted personnel's prior specialty code (i.e. Security Police, Law Enforcement, and Combat Arms Training and Maintenance personnel). In other words, all respondents fell within the newly established Security Forces Squadron. Each squadron was tasked with all duties and responsibilities of Air Force law enforcement, including air base security, and combat arms training and maintenance. Participants at each location all worked 12-hour duty shifts.

Participants

Participants in the study were 209 United States Air Force enlisted people who work within the Security Forces career field. All enlisted personnel were asked to voluntarily participate in the study. On average, 97% of each location's personnel

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participated. The other three percent was unable to complete the survey because they were either deployed or on leave. Of the participants, 174 were male (83.3%), 27 female (12.9%), and 8 (3.8%) did not provide that information. Table 1 summarizes participants' ranks.

Measures

Participants completed a 91-item questionnaire (see appendix). The following instructions appeared at the beginning:

Air Force Security Forces Personnel Survey. Members of the Psychology Department of the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, are conducting this survey as part of an Air Force Security Forces Enlisted Personnel research program. All individuals that participate in the survey remain anonymous. Participants are free to not answer any or all items. For each of the questions, use the following scale to indicate how much you agree or disagree. Clearly darken or X the square that best represents your agreement or disagreement. If you feel an item does not apply to you, simply leave that response blank.

SD=Strongly Disagree
D=Disagree
TD=Tend to Disagree
N=Neutral/Don't Know
TA=Tend to Agree
A=Agree
SA=Strongly Agree

Example: I want to take this survey. SD☐ D☐ TD☐ N☒ TA☐ A☐ SA☐

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Table 1: Participants' Ranks

Rank	*Frequency*	*Percent*
E1: Airman Basic	3	1.4
E2: Airman	11	5.3
E3: Airman First Class	28	28
E4: Senior Airman	82	39.2
E5: Staff Sergeant	44	21.1
E6: Technical Sergeant	16	7.7
E7: Master Sergeant	13	6.2
E8: Senior Master Sergeant	4	1.9
E9: Chief Master Sergeant	2	1.0
Total	203	97.1
Missing	6	2.9
Total	209	100.0

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While participants were informed the surveys were anonymous, some demographic data were collected. Names were not required. The survey was designed as follows: Questions 1-23 explored job involvement, Questions 24-43 explored organizational commitment and retention intentions, Questions 44-70 explored career and job satisfaction, and Questions 71-85 explored job stress. For questions 1-85, the survey used a standard 7-point Likert scale.

The questionnaire also measured the following demographic items: sex, grade, years in Security Forces (to each career specific area), years in the Air Force, level of education, and duration of leave taken over the last year.

Of the larger questionnaire, the following items concerned job retention:

"The major satisfaction in my life comes from my job."

"I'm satisfied with my career field. "

"I'm satisfied with the amount of leave I was able to take in the past"

"I'm satisfied with the merging of Security Police and Law Enforcement into Air Force Security Forces"

"My job prevents me from spending time in non-work activities."

Variables

To assure an unbiased estimator of correlation using the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient, sample size must equal or exceed n=120 at p<.05 (Walker, 1999). Sample size in the field study was n=209. Each of the 209 surveys was coded into SPSS. Each Air Force Base was coded with the labels: 1 = Keesler AFB, MS, 2 = Columbus AFB, MS, 3 = Eglin AFB, FL, 4 = Hulburt

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AFB, FL, and 5 = Moody AFB, GA. Questions 1-85 were coded with the following values: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Tend to Disagree, 4 = Neutral/Don't Know, 5 = Tend to Agree, 6 = Agree, and 7 = Strongly Disagree. Question 86 (Sex) was coded as follows: 0 = Male and 1 = Female. Question 87 (rank) was coded as follows: 1 = Airman Basic, 2 = Airman, 3 = Airman 1st Class, 4 = Senior Airman, 5 = Staff Sergeant, 6 = Technical Sergeant, 7 = Master Sergeant, 8 = Senior Master Sergeant, and 9 = Chief Master Sergeant. Question 88 (time in Security Forces) was coded in months. Question 89 (time in the Air Force) was coded in months. (Both measures were included to capture potential differences in time between those who were in Security Forces from the beginning of their career to those that may have cross-trained into Security Forces from another career field). Question 90 (educational level) was coded as follows: 1 = High school, 2 = Some College, 3 = Undergraduate Degree, 4 = Some Graduate Education, 5 = Graduate Degree. Question 91 (amount of vacation time taken in the last year) was coded in months.

Simple regression and forward multivariate regression analysis of the collected data was conducted in SPSS to assess frequencies and correlations. Further, multiple regression was used to explore issues related to merger satisfaction, job retention, and career and job satisfaction.

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III. RESULTS

Data Analysis

The model building approach was taken to determine which variables from the larger survey made a significant contribution (Walker, 1999). I also analyzed whether merger satisfaction, grade, career satisfaction, and variables of job satisfaction would be significant.

Four simple regression analyses were conducted to analyze the relationship between retention (as a dependent variable) and merger satisfaction; retention and career satisfaction; merger satisfaction (as a dependent variable) and grade; and career satisfaction (as a dependent variable) and grade. My analyses reported the significance level and Somers's *d*.

Two forward selection regression analyses were conducted to analyze the significance of those variables potentially relating to career satisfaction and retention.

Simple Regression Analysis: Retention and Merger Satisfaction

First, I sought to examine the relationship between retention and merger satisfaction. A significant relationship was found between retention and merger satisfaction ($p = .003$), but merger satisfaction was not a good predictor of retention (Somers's $d = .081$).

Second, I sought to examine the relationship between retention and career satisfaction. A significant relationship was found between retention and career satisfaction ($p = .000$), and career satisfaction *was* good predictor of retention (Somers's $d = .396$).

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Third, I analyzed the relationship between merger satisfaction and grade. The relationship was found not to be significant (p = .121).

The final simple regression analysis analyzed career satisfaction as the dependent variable and grade as the independent variable. The relationship was found to be significant (p = .002), but grade was a poor predictor of career satisfaction (Somers's = .110).

Forward Regression Analysis: Career Satisfaction

In addition to these analyses, I conducted a forward regression analysis to determine the best predictor of career satisfaction. The results of this analysis are found in Table 2.

The significant positive estimate for *Major Life Satisfaction from Job* indicates individuals who get major life satisfaction from their job, tend to be more satisfied with their career field than individuals who do not.

Table 2: Regression Results: Satisfaction with Career Field

Variable	*Coefficient (s.e.)*
Constant	2.45(.614)***
Major Life Satisfaction comes from Job	.409(.075)***
Job Prevents Me/Time on Non-Work Activities	-.225(.079)***
Satisfaction w/Merger	.154 (.054)***
Satisfaction w/Past Leave	.134 (.057)**
R^2 = .282	
N = 209	

*** p < .01
** p < .05

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The significant positive estimate for *Major Life Satisfaction from Job* indicates individuals who get major life satisfaction from their job, tend to be more satisfied with their career field than individuals who do not. The significant negative estimate for *Job Prevents Me/Time on Non-Work Activities* means that individuals who say that their job prevents them from spending more time on non-work activities tend to be less satisfied with their career field. The significant positive estimate for *Satisfaction with Merger* means that high levels of merger satisfaction are associated with high levels of career satisfaction (or individuals who are satisfied with the merger tend to be satisfied with their career field). Finally, the significant positive estimate for *Satisfaction with Past Leave* means people who are satisfied with the amount of leave they take tend to be more satisfied with their career field.

The factors that were not significant include working under a great deal of tension, taking ones job home, not having enough time to get everything done on my job, having confidence in organizational leadership, and job interference with family life.

Forward Regression Analysis: Retention

Next, I used forward regression analysis to determine the best predictor of retention. To do this, I took the best predictors from the career satisfaction model and included career satisfaction as an independent variable. The results of this analysis are found in Table 3.

The significant positive estimate for *Satisfaction with Career Field* indicates a tendency for those who are satisfied with their career field to stay in Security Forces. The significant positive estimate *Major Life Satisfaction* suggests that those who get their

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Table 3: Regression Results: Intention to Stay in Security Forces Career Field While in Air Force

Variable	*Coefficient (s.e.)*
Constant	1.18 (.337)***
Satisfaction w/Career Field	.426(.080)***
Major Life Satisfaction comes from Job	.263(.095)***
Satisfaction w/Past Leave	.158 (.064)**
R^2 = .277	
N = 209	

*** p < .01
** p < .05

major satisfaction in life from their job are more likely to stay in Security Forces than those who do not. The significant positive estimate for *Satisfaction with Past Leave* indicates that people who are satisfied with the amount of leave they have taken in the past are more likely to stay in Security Forces than people who are not satisfied with the amount of leave they took in the past. One's feeling that the job interfered with family time was not related to job retention.

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IV. DISCUSSION

Summary of Results

The four simple regression analyses explored the relationships between individual dependent and independent variables. In brief, three findings emerged. First, merger satisfaction was significantly related to retention, as was career satisfaction. However, career satisfaction was a better predictor of retention than merger satisfaction. Second, grade was not a good predictor of career satisfaction. Third, grade was not significantly related to merger satisfaction.

Results indicate that merger satisfaction had no connection whatsoever with intentions concerning job retention. At first glance, merger satisfaction appears to be significantly related to job retention intention. However, with other variables controlled, this relationship disappears. As expected, career satisfaction and the feeling that one's major satisfaction comes from work, are significantly related to retention. Contrary to expectations, however, the amount of leave one has taken in the past significantly related to both career satisfaction and retention. Also, the feeling that one's job prevents one from spending time in non-work activities is significantly related to career satisfaction but not job retention intention.

Contribution to Current Research

The results from this field study support the conclusion that law enforcement is a career field marked by low levels of career satisfaction and high rates of attrition (Brewer and Wilson, 1995; Reese, 1982). The present results built upon previous studies conducted by the United States Air Force Occupational Measurement Squadron in 1992

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and 1997 and incorporate them in an effort to explore the significance of the merger of Security Police, Law Enforcement and Combat Arms Training and Maintenance on career satisfaction and job retention intention. Although merger satisfaction was not a significant predictor in a multivariate regression analysis where career satisfaction was included, nearly 70% of the enlisted personnel surveyed were dissatisfied with the merging of the three career fields. This study closely matches Air Force Personnel Center (AFPC) retention rates for the fiscal year 1998. The Air Force Personnel Center concluded that enlisted retention for first-term airman (those who were eligible to reenlist for the first time) was 36.07 percent, while I find (in the summer of 1998 before AFPC gathered its data) a first-term airman reenlistment rate of 34 percent. Both of these numbers illustrate a significant problem in the area of retention, as most studies conclude that attrition levels at or above 10 percent are excessive (Dantzker, 1992; Fry, 1983; Martin, 1990).

One finding was of interest because it contradicts previous studies (e.g., Lester and Gallagher, 1980; Kroes, Margolis, and Hurrel, 1974; Sparger and Giacopassi, 1982). That finding is this: the high level of tension inherent in law enforcement work does not appear to be related to either career satisfaction or retention intention.

Ultimately, career satisfaction is the best predictor of retention. Thus, because over 70 percent of the enlisted personnel are either dissatisfied or neutral, the elements that pertained to career satisfaction are of interest. As my data indicate, amount of time spent at work is strongly correlated with career satisfaction. This supports research indicating that the career field of law enforcement—despite its unique stressors—is not

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necessarily unique in the factors that contribute to job satisfaction and retention. In sum, any occupation that requires long work hours and unpredictability is bound to unsatisfying for many people (Stearns and Moore, 1990). This dissatisfaction, not surprisingly, may lead to low levels of retention.

Limitations

While this study supports current research on law enforcement and extends extant findings on Security Forces within the Air Force, the topics of career field satisfaction and job satisfaction require further attention. As my results indicate, career satisfaction was the single most important variable in all models of job retention. While time taken for leave and the feeling that the job steals time from non-work activities were significant, a composite measure would probably be more useful in helping us better understanding which variables relate to career and job satisfaction and thus potentially job retention. If a measure were generated to more accurately pinpoint the variables that relate to the job taking time away from non-work activities and lack of vacation time, we could learn more. In addition, we could use further research on the significance of deployment length and presence in overseas locations, both of which were mentioned by many respondents in post-survey question sessions.

Implications for Practice

Analyses indicate that career satisfaction among these Air Force respondents was relatively low. Those variables that remained significant in all models relating to career satisfaction were amount of leave taken and amount that the job takes time away from non-work activities. Each participant in the study worked a set twelve-hour shift. This

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shift schedule was the result of decreased staffing, and the fact that fewer individuals could be on leave at any given time due to manpower shortages. As this trend continued throughout the early 1990s, it became impossible to staff three eight-hour shifts. Thus, at each location I visited, all squadrons were on two twelve-hour shifts. Yet participants indicated that the time needed to get ready, travel to work, check into the armory, stand Guard-mount (the Air Force Security Forces roll-call), report to their assigned post, and then reverse the process 12 hours later, led to an *actual* shift time of 14 to 15 hours.

While staffing and career field satisfaction are areas that require further research, the fact that time for leave and relaxation is significant suggests that these matters deserve further attention as well. Measures taken to reduce or streamline the process of shift change could result in increases in job satisfaction. In other words, a 12 hour day should ideally be a 12 hour day, as opposed to a 14 to 15 hour day.

Conclusions

The present study supports the conclusion that law enforcement as an occupation is characterized by low levels of career satisfaction and job retention. Low levels of career satisfaction are significantly related to total amount of time off from work, and how much work interferes with non-work activities. The overwhelming and significant relationship with job satisfaction meant that merger satisfaction had little or no role in either career satisfaction of retention intention.

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APPENDIX

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Air Force Security Forces Personnel Survey Members of the Psychology Department of the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, are conducting this survey as part of an Air Force Security Forces Enlisted Personnel research program. All individuals that participate in the survey remain anonymous. Participants are free to not answer any or all items. If there are any questions regarding this study please contact 2nd Lt. Clint A. Cantrell at (423) 558-7956.	**Directions**: For each of the questions, use the following scale to indicate how much you agree or disagree. Clearly darken or X the square that best represents your agreement or disagreement. If you feel an item does not apply to you, simply leave that response blank. **SD=Strongly Disagree** **D=Disagree** **TD=Tend to Disagree** **N=Neutral/Don't Know** **TA=Tend to Agree** **A=Agree** **SA=Strongly Agree** **Example: I want to take this survey.** **SD☐ D☐ TD☐ N☒ TA☐ A☐ SA☐**
1. I live, eat, and breathe my job.	**SD☐ D☐ TD☐ N☐ TA☐ A☐ SA☐**
2. The most important things I do are involved with my job.	**SD☐ D☐ TD☐ N☐ TA☐ A☐ SA☐**
3. The major satisfaction in my life comes from my job.	**SD☐ D☐ TD☐ N☐ TA☐ A☐ SA☐**
4. I enjoy my work more than anything else I do.	**SD☐ D☐ TD☐ N☐ TA☐ A☐ SA☐**
5. I work under a great deal of tension.	**SD☐ D☐ TD☐ N☐ TA☐ A☐ SA☐**
6. Problems associated with my job keep me awake at night.	**SD☐ D☐ TD☐ N☐ TA☐ A☐ SA☐**
7. I often "take my job home with me" in the sense that I think about it when I'm doing other things.	**SD☐ D☐ TD☐ N☐ TA☐ A☐ SA☐**
8. My job requires more work than one person can do.	**SD☐ D☐ TD☐ N☐ TA☐ A☐ SA☐**
9. I never seem to have enough time to get	**SD☐ D☐ TD☐ N☐ TA☐ A☐ SA☐**

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everything done on my job.	
10. I frequently have to take work home to keep up.	**SD☐ D☐ TD☐ N☐ TA☐ A☐ SA☐**
11. There is a lot of pressure on my job because of so much work.	**SD☐ D☐ TD☐ N☐ TA☐ A☐ SA☐**
12. I feel fidgety or nervous while at work.	**SD☐ D☐ TD☐ N☐ TA☐ A☐ SA☐**
13. The most important things that happen to me involve my work.	**SD☐ D☐ TD☐ N☐ TA☐ A☐ SA☐**
14. I feel badly if I don't perform well on my job.	**SD☐ D☐ TD☐ N☐ TA☐ A☐ SA☐**
15. The major satisfaction in my life comes from my job.	**SD☐ D☐ TD☐ N☐ TA☐ A☐ SA☐**
16. I will take on extra duties and responsibilities in my work.	**SD☐ D☐ TD☐ N☐ TA☐ A☐ SA☐**
17. How well I perform on my job is extremely important to me.	**SD☐ D☐ TD☐ N☐ TA☐ A☐ SA☐**
18. The most important things I do are involved with my job.	**SD☐ D☐ TD☐ N☐ TA☐ A☐ SA☐**
19. I'll stay overtime to finish a job even if I'm not paid for it.	**SD☐ D☐ TD☐ N☐ TA☐ A☐ SA☐**
20. I enjoy my work more than anything else I do.	**SD☐ D☐ TD☐ N☐ TA☐ A☐ SA☐**
21. I am able to use abilities I value on my job.	**SD☐ D☐ TD☐ N☐ TA☐ A☐ SA☐**
22. The most important things I do concern my job.	**SD☐ D☐ TD☐ N☐ TA☐ A☐ SA☐**
23. I feel good when I perform my job well.	**SD☐ D☐ TD☐ N☐ TA☐ A☐ SA☐**
24. I am willing to put in a great deal of	**SD☐ D☐ TD☐ N☐ TA☐ A☐ SA☐**

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effort, beyond that normally expected in order to help this organization be successful.	
25. I feel very little loyalty to this organization.	**SD☐ D☐ TD☐ N☐ TA☐ A☐ SA☐**
26. I would accept almost any type of job assignment in order to keep working for this organization.	**SD☐ D☐ TD☐ N☐ TA☐ A☐ SA☐**
27. I am proud to tell others that I am part of this organization.	**SD☐ D☐ TD☐ N☐ TA☐ A☐ SA☐**
28. I could just as well be working for a different organization as long as the type of work was similar.	**SD☐ D☐ TD☐ N☐ TA☐ A☐ SA☐**
29. This organization really inspires the very best I me in the way of job performance.	**SD☐ D☐ TD☐ N☐ TA☐ A☐ SA☐**
30. I find that my values and the organization's values are similar.	**SD☐ D☐ TD☐ N☐ TA☐ A☐ SA☐**
31. It would take very little change in my present circumstances to cause me to leave this organization.	**SD☐ D☐ TD☐ N☐ TA☐ A☐ SA☐**
32. I am extremely glad that I chose this organization to work for, over others I was considering at the time I joined.	**SD☐ D☐ TD☐ N☐ TA☐ A☐ SA☐**
33. There's not too much to be gained by sticking with this organization indefinitely.	**SD☐ D☐ TD☐ N☐ TA☐ A☐ SA☐**
34. Often I find it difficult to agree with this organization's policies on important matters relating to its employees.	**SD☐ D☐ TD☐ N☐ TA☐ A☐ SA☐**
35. For me this is the best of all possible organizations for which to work.	**SD☐ D☐ TD☐ N☐ TA☐ A☐ SA☐**
36. Deciding to work for this organization	**SD☐ D☐ TD☐ N☐ TA☐ A☐ SA☐**

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was a definite mistake on my part.	
37. I often think about cross training into another career field.	**SD**☐ **D**☐ **TD**☐ **N**☐ **TA**☐ **A**☐ **SA**☐
38. I will actively look to cross train in the next year.	**SD**☐ **D**☐ **TD**☐ **N**☐ **TA**☐ **A**☐ **SA**☐
39. I will probably not reenlist in the Air Force.	**SD**☐ **D**☐ **TD**☐ **N**☐ **TA**☐ **A**☐ **SA**☐
40. I will probably reenlist in the Air Force.	**SD**☐ **D**☐ **TD**☐ **N**☐ **TA**☐ **A**☐ **SA**☐
41. I intend to stay in the Security Forces career field for as long as I'm in the Air Force.	**SD**☐ **D**☐ **TD**☐ **N**☐ **TA**☐ **A**☐ **SA**☐
42. I intend to stay in the Air Force until I retire.	**SD**☐ **D**☐ **TD**☐ **N**☐ **TA**☐ **A**☐ **SA**☐
43. When I joined the Air Force, this was my first choice of career fields.	**SD**☐ **D**☐ **TD**☐ **N**☐ **TA**☐ **A**☐ **SA**☐
44. I'm satisfied with the amount of free time I have.	**SD**☐ **D**☐ **TD**☐ **N**☐ **TA**☐ **A**☐ **SA**☐
45. I'm satisfied with the pay and fringe benefits of the Air Force.	**SD**☐ **D**☐ **TD**☐ **N**☐ **TA**☐ **A**☐ **SA**☐
46. I'm satisfied with the security of my job.	**SD**☐ **D**☐ **TD**☐ **N**☐ **TA**☐ **A**☐ **SA**☐
47. I'm satisfied with the supervision I receive on my job.	**SD**☐ **D**☐ **TD**☐ **N**☐ **TA**☐ **A**☐ **SA**☐
48. I'm satisfied with the opportunities for promotion/advancement in my career field.	**SD**☐ **D**☐ **TD**☐ **N**☐ **TA**☐ **A**☐ **SA**☐
49. I'm satisfied with the people I work with.	**SD**☐ **D**☐ **TD**☐ **N**☐ **TA**☐ **A**☐ **SA**☐
50. I'm satisfied with the work I do on my job and the work itself.	**SD**☐ **D**☐ **TD**☐ **N**☐ **TA**☐ **A**☐ **SA**☐

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51. I'm satisfied with my career field.	**SD**☐ **D**☐ **TD**☐ **N**☐ **TA**☐ **A**☐ **SA**☐
52. I'm satisfied with the amount of leave I was able to take in the past.	**SD**☐ **D**☐ **TD**☐ **N**☐ **TA**☐ **A**☐ **SA**☐
53. I'm satisfied with the dates I was approved to take leave on in the past.	**SD**☐ **D**☐ **TD**☐ **N**☐ **TA**☐ **A**☐ **SA**☐
54. I'm satisfied with the merging of Security Police and Law Enforcement into Air Force Security Forces.	**SD**☐ **D**☐ **TD**☐ **N**☐ **TA**☐ **A**☐ **SA**☐
55. I'm proud to tell others that I belong to this career field.	**SD**☐ **D**☐ **TD**☐ **N**☐ **TA**☐ **A**☐ **SA**☐
56. My responsibilities are clearly defined.	**SD**☐ **D**☐ **TD**☐ **N**☐ **TA**☐ **A**☐ **SA**☐
57. I understand exactly what I am expected to accomplish.	**SD**☐ **D**☐ **TD**☐ **N**☐ **TA**☐ **A**☐ **SA**☐
58. Training is well defined and effective.	**SD**☐ **D**☐ **TD**☐ **N**☐ **TA**☐ **A**☐ **SA**☐
59. I have confidence in the leadership of this organization.	**SD**☐ **D**☐ **TD**☐ **N**☐ **TA**☐ **A**☐ **SA**☐
60. I am kept well informed about the things I need to know to do my job.	**SD**☐ **D**☐ **TD**☐ **N**☐ **TA**☐ **A**☐ **SA**☐
61. I feel that my work in this career field is worthwhile.	**SD**☐ **D**☐ **TD**☐ **N**☐ **TA**☐ **A**☐ **SA**☐
62. On my job I have a chance to do some things that really challenge me.	**SD**☐ **D**☐ **TD**☐ **N**☐ **TA**☐ **A**☐ **SA**☐
63. I am making satisfactory progress toward my own career goals.	**SD**☐ **D**☐ **TD**☐ **N**☐ **TA**☐ **A**☐ **SA**☐
64. I like the kind of work I do.	**SD**☐ **D**☐ **TD**☐ **N**☐ **TA**☐ **A**☐ **SA**☐
65. The demands of my job keep me from doing some things that I would like to do in my personal life.	**SD**☐ **D**☐ **TD**☐ **N**☐ **TA**☐ **A**☐ **SA**☐
66. Knowing what I know now, if I had to decide all over again whether to enter this	**SD**☐ **D**☐ **TD**☐ **N**☐ **TA**☐ **A**☐ **SA**☐

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career field I'm now in, I would decide to do it.	
67. The work I'm doing gives me a sense of accomplishment.	**SD**☐ **D**☐ **TD**☐ **N**☐ **TA**☐ **A**☐ **SA**☐
68. I like my job.	**SD**☐ **D**☐ **TD**☐ **N**☐ **TA**☐ **A**☐ **SA**☐
69. I receive periodic feedback about my individual performance.	**SD**☐ **D**☐ **TD**☐ **N**☐ **TA**☐ **A**☐ **SA**☐
70. Overall, I'm satisfied with my job.	**SD**☐ **D**☐ **TD**☐ **N**☐ **TA**☐ **A**☐ **SA**☐
71. My job tends to negatively affect my health.	**SD**☐ **D**☐ **TD**☐ **N**☐ **TA**☐ **A**☐ **SA**☐
72. I work under a great deal of tension.	**SD**☐ **D**☐ **TD**☐ **N**☐ **TA**☐ **A**☐ **SA**☐
73. I have felt fidgety and nervous as a result of my job.	**SD**☐ **D**☐ **TD**☐ **N**☐ **TA**☐ **A**☐ **SA**☐
74. If I had a different job, my health would probably improve.	**SD**☐ **D**☐ **TD**☐ **N**☐ **TA**☐ **A**☐ **SA**☐
75. Problems associated with my job have kept me awake at night.	**SD**☐ **D**☐ **TD**☐ **N**☐ **TA**☐ **A**☐ **SA**☐
76. I have felt nervous before attending meetings in my organization.	**SD**☐ **D**☐ **TD**☐ **N**☐ **TA**☐ **A**☐ **SA**☐
77. I have enough time to do my work.	**SD**☐ **D**☐ **TD**☐ **N**☐ **TA**☐ **A**☐ **SA**☐
78. At least once a week I have to work through my lunch hours and/or after hours to get things done.	**SD**☐ **D**☐ **TD**☐ **N**☐ **TA**☐ **A**☐ **SA**☐
79. It is hard for me to keep busy on my job on some days.	**SD**☐ **D**☐ **TD**☐ **N**☐ **TA**☐ **A**☐ **SA**☐
80. Too much work is a problem with my job.	**SD**☐ **D**☐ **TD**☐ **N**☐ **TA**☐ **A**☐ **SA**☐
81. My job has had harmful effects on my health.	**SD**☐ **D**☐ **TD**☐ **N**☐ **TA**☐ **A**☐ **SA**☐
82. My job ties me down and restricts my	**SD**☐ **D**☐ **TD**☐ **N**☐ **TA**☐ **A**☐ **SA**☐

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personal freedom too much.	
83. My job does not interfere with my family life.	**SD**☐ **D**☐ **TD**☐ **N**☐ **TA**☐ **A**☐ **SA**☐
84. My job prevents me from spending time in non-work activities.	**SD**☐ **D**☐ **TD**☐ **N**☐ **TA**☐ **A**☐ **SA**☐
85. All in all, the demands of my career field really have a negative effect on my personal life.	**SD**☐ **D**☐ **TD**☐ **N**☐ **TA**☐ **A**☐ **SA**☐

86. Sex: Male☐ Female☐

87. Grade: E1☐ E2☐ E3☐ E4☐ E5☐ E6☐ E7☐ E8☐ E9☐

88. How many years have you been in the Security Forces (to include S.P., L.E. and CATM), career field?
_____Years _____Months

89. How many years have you been in the Air Force?
_____Years _____Months

90. What is the highest level of education you have completed?
High School☐ Some college☐ 4-year college degree☐
Some graduate education☐ Advanced degree (MS, Ph.D., MBA, etc.)☐

91. Approximately how many weeks or days of vacation did you take during the last year? _____Weeks and/or _____Days

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VITA

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