

CHAPTER 20:

The Official Biography

This chapter covers:

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- Getting Started
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No matter your status (officer, enlisted or civilian) or how long you have served, you have accomplished many things to get you to your current duty location. Capturing and maintaining your accomplishments in a standard biography format is a powerful tool for making personal and professional connections—just as powerful as any modern social media application—and it can help build cohesion at the unit level. When unit members read the biographies of their leaders, they see more than an official Air Force photograph and a list of facts—they see the service that shaped their leaders and the excellence they obtained.

The Official Biography: Fundamentals

Did you know the Air Force maintains the official biographies for all Air Force senior leaders, past and present, for use by anyone with access to the Internet? This fact alone challenges us all in at least two ways. First, all official Air Force biographies should have the same corporate Air Force look—the public expects the military to be standardized. Second, the need to disclose personal accomplishments and facts must be balanced with the need to protect private and sensitive information. The guidance of this chapter compiles information provided by the experts in the Air Force Production (AFPRO) office at the Defense Media Activity (DMA) who publish the official biographies for Air Force senior leaders. The guidance here follows the same protocols used by AFPRO to help all Air Force personnel create a biography with the same corporate Air Force look while also protecting personal or sensitive information.

Getting Started

The official biography is unique among all the written products discussed in *The Tongue and Quill*—the official biography is a public affairs communication tool similar to a news release. As such, it follows the style guidance for a news release developed by the Associated Press (AP) and adopted by the Air Force (see below). The official biography has multiple sections—some are required while a few are optional. For some, the requirement depends on your status (officer, enlisted or civilian), flight rating, and joint experience. Special considerations are annotated where applicable. In addition, the following general guidance applies:

- Format: use [Arial font, size 9] for all text and entries; bold the headings (e.g., **EDUCATION**); use [**Arial font, size 13.5 BOLD**] for the identification line; all line spacing is 1.15.
- Length: Final drafts should be no more than two pages in length when printed.
- Use a *single* space after a period or punctuation mark in the narrative.

NOTE: The official biographies available on the Air Force Portal may be different from the standards presented in this chapter—customs and standards have changed over time. Check with your chain of command for command-specific guidance in preparing an official biography.

Associated Press (AP) Style Guidance for Official Biographies

- Acronyms: Spell out acronyms on first use; minimize the use of military jargon.
- Adjectives: For brevity, minimize the use of adjectives (e.g., “*successfully* led...”).
- Months and Dates:
 - Jan., Feb., Aug., Sept., Oct., Nov., and Dec. *are abbreviated when used with a day (e.g. Jan. 1, 2015), and spelled out when used only with year (e.g. January 2015)*
 - March, April, May, June, and July *are always spelled out.*
 - Use commas to separate the day from the year in the “Month Day, Year” format (March 3, 2014) but not when the day is omitted (March 2014).
 - If frocked, say only “Frocked” and do not include a date of promotion.
- Rank: Follows Air Force journalistic style.
 - Spelled out fully in the identification line using all capital letters.
 - Abbreviated rank is used in the narrative with the name of the member.
 - Generic rank (e.g., “the colonel” or “the general”) is used when the name is omitted.
- State names
 - All states are spelled out completely when they stand alone without a city.
 - Alaska, Hawaii, Idaho, Iowa, Maine, Ohio, Texas, and Utah *are always spelled out.*
 - Ala., Ariz., Ark., Calif., Colo., Conn., Del., Fla., Ga., Ill., Ind., Kan., Ky., La., Md., Mass., Mich., Minn., Miss., Mo., Mont., Neb., Nev., N.H., N.J., N.M., N.Y., N.C., N.D., Okla., Ore., Pa., R.I., S.C., S.D., Tenn., Vt., Va., Wash., W.Va., Wis., and Wyo. *may be abbreviated when used **with** a city.*

Official Biography Elements

The guidance below is presented to help all Air Force personnel draft their own biography using the standards for an official biography used by the AFPRO. All personnel must balance the need for disclosure with the need to protect personal or sensitive information in preparing a biography.

- The preparation of an official biography is covered by the Privacy Act; however, the finished product is public domain and must be in agreement with official records.
- **Follow Public Affairs’ guidance for the disclosure of contingency operations locations.** In general, forward operating bases are not normally used on an official biography while some main operating bases, such as Manas Air Base, Kyrgyzstan; Joint Base Balad, Iraq; or Joint Base Bagram, Afghanistan, may be used. If in doubt, use a general term (e.g., Southwest Asia) for the location of a contingency operation.
- **Do not include the names of family members anywhere on the biography.**

Identification Line (“**FULL RANK FIRST M. LAST**” or “**FIRST M. LAST**”)

- Officer and enlisted. Spell out the full rank and signature block name using bold font and all capital letters (e.g., “**FULL RANK FIRST M. LAST**”).
- Civilian. Spell out the signature block name using bold font and all capital letters (e.g., “**FIRST M. LAST**”). Rank is not used for civilian biographies.

Narrative

The narrative has both text and the official photograph. Officer and enlisted biographies typically have only two or three paragraphs; civilian biographies may have up to five or six. Spell out all office symbols, acronyms and organizational names; do not provide details that compromise unit-level operational security (e.g., numbers of people, aircraft or equipment).

- First paragraph.
 - Officer and enlisted. Begins with the abbreviated rank and full name followed by position title (from official records), organization, base and location. Next, provide a brief description of the member’s responsibilities in this position.
 - Civilian. Begins with the full name followed by position title (from official records), organization, base and location. Next, provide a brief description of the member’s responsibilities in this position. Civilian rank is not used on the official biography.
- Official photograph. The official photograph is placed in the upper right corner of the biography, below the banner, aligned with the top of the first paragraph, and flush with the right margin. The source photograph file should be of high resolution in a standard 8” x 10” or 5” x 7” format. Resize the source file to roughly 3.2” wide x 4” high using a locked aspect ratio and cropping, as required (~ 40% of an 8” x 10” original).
- Second paragraph.
 - Officer and enlisted. Briefly describe the member’s career: when the member entered the Air Force (enlisted: month and year of enlistment followed by technical training course attended and the month/year of graduation from technical training;

- officer: college attended and commissioning source), years of service (active /guard/reserve), experience (technical/leadership), assignment locations (states/countries) and a summary of the most *significant* assignments (not a “laundry list” of assignments). The final sentence of the narrative, as part of this paragraph or the third paragraph, reads, “Prior to his/her current position, the (rank) was the (position title, organization, base, and location).”
- Civilian. Briefly describe the member’s previous significant assignments (e.g., “Prior to his current position, Mrs. Smith was the *position title, organization, base, and location*”). The organization, base and location may be omitted for where the position title inherently describes the organization, base and location (e.g., “Deputy Undersecretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics” is clearly a Pentagon assignment working for the Secretary of Defense). Follow this with a brief description of the member’s responsibilities in the position(s) listed.
- Third paragraph.
 - Officer and Enlisted [*Optional*]. Provide information on the member’s other noteworthy assignments, contingency operations experience, deployments and flight information, as applicable. For guard and reserve personnel, this paragraph may include information on the member’s civilian profession; however, do not use the names of companies—be generic (e.g., “In her civilian capacity, the general is a pilot with a major airline”). If not included in the second paragraph, the third paragraph may simply be “Prior to his/her current position, the (rank) was the (position title, organization, base and location).”
 - Civilian. Provide information on the member’s significant professional experience prior to entering public service (e.g., “Before entering public service, Mrs. Smith was the Chief Executive Officer for *company name*, an industry-leading technology firm specializing in cyber security for advanced logistics systems”). Company names may be used since they are integral to the credentials of civilians.
- Fourth paragraph [*Civilian only*].
 - Describe the member’s earlier experience, both public and private, prior to the position(s) described in the third paragraph. May include military service and a summary of publications, as applicable.
 - Fifth and sixth paragraphs may be added to provide logical breaks in the narrative while tracing the member’s significant and relevant experience to the member’s entry into the workforce following the completion of formal education. Frequently, the narrative concludes with a statement of the college(s) attended and degree(s) earned.

“EDUCATION”

Use bold font and all capital letters for the heading; do not use a colon after the heading. List completed education programs chronologically (first to most recent) by year, type of degree, title of degree/program, institution, city, and state. Include all academic degrees and all professional military education (PME), professional developmental education (PDE), professional continuing education (PCE), and executive courses. For academic programs that merge the type and title of the degree (e.g., “Master of Business Administration” or “Master of Military Operational Art and

Science”), use the merged type and title for the entry. When the institution name includes the state (e.g., “University of Iowa”), do not include the state at the end of the entry. For non-degree PME, PDE, PCE, and executive courses, list only the year, course, school, location and state. For PME only, add “by correspondence”, if appropriate, as shown below.

2002 Bachelor of Science, Aeronautical Engineering, Auburn University, Auburn, Ala.

2003 Air and Space Basic Course, Maxwell Air Force Base, Ala.

[“Air Force Base” is spelled out on first use.]

2006 Master of Science, Logistics Management, Air Force Institute of Technology, Wright-Patterson AFB, Ohio

2007 Squadron Officer School, Maxwell AFB, Ala., by correspondence

2008 Squadron Officer School, Maxwell AFB, Ala.

2012 Air Command and Staff College, Maxwell AFB, Ala., by correspondence

2013 Master of Military Operational Art and Science, Air Command and Staff College, Maxwell AFB, Ala.

2017 Air War College, Maxwell AFB, Ala., by correspondence

2020 Doctor of Philosophy, Military History, University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa

Work History (“ASSIGNMENTS” or “CAREER CHRONOLOGY”)

Use bold font and all capital letters for the heading; *do not* use a colon after the heading. List the member’s work history chronologically by month and year entered to month and year departed. *Follow Public Affairs’ guidance for disclosure of contingency operations locations.*

- Officer and enlisted personnel use “**ASSIGNMENTS**” as the heading.
 - Include the official duty title, unit, base and state. (The squadron of assignment is not always necessary, such as while in student status or when the duty title and base sufficiently identify the assignment. If in doubt, include the squadron.)
 - Spell out Air Base (AB), Air Force Base (AFB) and Joint Base (JB) on first use.
 - Do not use a period at the end of an assignment entry unless needed to abbreviate a state (or Washington, D.C.).
 - Spell out the names of all months (*do not follow the AP abbreviation guidance for the names of months in this section*).
 - Capitalize all duty titles (as of October 2011 for all new official biographies).
 - Deployment/contingency experience is placed in parentheses in the same line as the assignment during which the member deployed.
- Civilian personnel use “**CAREER CHRONOLOGY**” as the heading. If previous military service is listed, include the year you left the service and the reason (e.g., retired, service in the Reserve or Guard, or civilian employment).
 - Include the official position title and the organization/company name.
 - Spell out Air Base (AB), Air Force Base (AFB) and Joint Base (JB) on first use.

- Do not use a period at the end of an assignment entry unless needed to abbreviate a state (or Washington, D.C.) or as part of a company name (e.g., “Inc.”).
- Spell out the names of all months (*do not follow the AP abbreviation guidance for the names of months in this section*).
- Capitalize all duty titles (as of October 2011 for all new official biographies).
- Deployment/contingency experience is placed in parentheses in the same line as the position during which the member deployed.
- Assignment entry format and examples
 1. Month Year–Month Year, Duty Title, Unit, Installation, State
 2. March 2005–February 2008, Duty Title, Unit, Randolph AFB, Texas
 3. February 2008–July 2010, Duty Title, Unit, Maxwell AFB, Ala. (August 2008–January 2009, Duty Title, Unit, Balad Air Base, Iraq)
 4. July 2010–June 2011, Student, Air Command and Staff College, Maxwell AFB, Ala.

“SUMMARY OF JOINT ASSIGNMENTS” [*Officer only*]

This section applies to officer personnel only; delete entire section if no joint assignments. Use bold font and all capital letters for the heading; *do not* use a colon after the heading. The format is the same as for “**ASSIGNMENTS**” with the addition of rank at the end of each entry. List all joint assignments chronologically (first to most recent) by month and year entered to month and year departed. Include the official duty title, unit, base and state. *Follow Public Affairs’ guidance for disclosure of contingency operations locations.*

- Do not use a period at the end of an assignment entry unless needed to abbreviate a state (or Washington, D.C.).
- Each entry ends with a statement of the rank held for the joint assignment (e.g., “..., as a colonel”).
- Example joint assignment entries
 1. June 2006–June 2008, Assistant Deputy Directorate for Special Operations, Operations Directorate, the Joint Staff, Washington D.C., as a colonel
 2. May 2008–May 2010, Commander, Combined Joint Special Operations Air Component, Joint Base Balad, Iraq, as a brigadier general
 3. August 2012–September 2014, Director, Command, Control, Communications and Cyber (J6), US Pacific Command, Camp H. M. Smith, Hawaii, as a major general

“FLIGHT INFORMATION” [*Officer and enlisted flight rated only*]

This section applies to flight rated personnel only; delete entire section if not flight rated. Use bold font and all capital letters for the heading; *do not* use a colon after the heading. List the member’s rating, flight hours and aircraft flown. Use a colon with two spaces after the colon for rating, flight hours and aircraft flown.

- Rating: Level (none, senior, master, command) and type (pilot, navigator, air battle manager, flight surgeon, flight nurse, astronaut, aircrew member).
- Flight hours: Total is approximate (e.g., “More than 2,100”) and may include combat time (e.g., “including more than 60 combat hours”). *Do not round up—the hours listed should be slightly less than the actual hours.*
- Aircraft flown: Listed chronologically with the most recent being listed last.
- Example flight information entries

Rating: command pilot

Flight hours: more than 2,900 (Use “more than” not “over”)

Aircraft flown: T-37, T-38, OV-10, B-52G, B-1B and B-2

“MAJOR AWARDS AND DECORATIONS”

Use bold font and all capital letters for the heading; *do not* use a colon after the heading. Capitalize (Title Case) the names of all medals and ribbons listed. Accoutrements (devices) are not capitalized (e.g., with bronze star, with two oak leaf clusters, with “V” device). Never use “one” for a single award.

- Officer and enlisted. List the member’s major military awards and decorations in descending order of precedence (highest to lowest). It is customary for officers and senior enlisted members to list only Achievement Medals and higher honors. Lower precedent honors are listed only if significant (e.g., Prisoner of War Medal, Outstanding Airman of the Year Ribbon).
- Civilian. List the member’s major civilian awards of state, regional or national interest in descending order of precedence (highest to lowest). Former military members should list their major military awards and decorations first, then list civilian awards. If military awards are listed, it is customary for officers and senior enlisted members to show only Achievement Medals and higher honors. Lower precedent honors are listed only if significant (e.g., Prisoner of War Medal, Outstanding Airman of the Year Ribbon).
- Example major awards and decorations entries
 - Distinguished Service Medal
 - Defense Superior Service Medal with two bronze stars
 - Legion of Merit with oak leaf cluster
 - Distinguished Flying Cross
 - Meritorious Service Medal with four oak leaf clusters
 - Air Medal with nine oak leaf clusters
 - Air Force Commendation Medal with oak leaf cluster

“OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS” [*Optional for all*]

Use bold font and all capital letters for the heading; *do not* use a colon after the heading. List significant other achievements chronologically (first to most recent) by year, followed by a space, and the title or brief description of the achievement.

“PUBLICATIONS” [*Optional for all*]

Use bold font and all capital letters for the heading; *do not* use a colon after the heading. List the publications chronologically (first to most recent) by title and publication data.

“PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS AND ASSOCIATIONS” [*Optional for all*]

Use bold font and all capital letters for the heading; *do not* use a colon after the heading. List current and relevant professional memberships and associations by name only.

“EFFECTIVE DATES OF PROMOTION” [*Military only*]

Use bold font and all capital letters for the heading; *do not* use a colon after the heading. List the rank and effective date of promotion using the full rank, month, day and year in AP style.

- Officer. List all ranks from commissioning to the current rank held, such as follows:

Second Lieutenant June 1, 2000

First Lieutenant June 1, 2002

Captain June 2, 2004

- Enlisted. List all ranks from enlistment to the current rank held as shown below.

Airman Basic Sept. 28, 2003

Airman March 28, 2004

Airman First Class Jan. 28, 2005

Senior Airman Sept. 28, 2006

Staff Sergeant July 1, 2008

Technical Sergeant July 1, 2011

NOTE: The custom for the official biography for the Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force is to list only the promotion to Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force with the heading changed to the singular form (“EFFECTIVE DATE OF PROMOTION”).

- Civilian. Rank is not used on civilian biographies; civilians do not use this section.

“(Current as of Month Year)”

The current as of date (month and year) are written in sentence case and enclosed in parentheses one blank line below the effective dates of promotion section. An example current as of date is as follows: **(Current as of August 2014)**