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SECRETARY OF THE AIR FORCE**

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Nuclear, Space, Missile, Command and Control

KEY NUCLEAR BILLET (KNB) PROGRAM

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This publication implements AF Policy Directive (AFPD) 13-5, *Air Force Nuclear Enterprise*. It explains the Air Force requirement and process to identify and deliberately manage positions of vital importance to sustaining the rigor and culture necessary for safe, secure and effective nuclear deterrence operations. This publication applies to all USAF activities, to include the Air Force Reserve and Air National Guard. This publication does not incorporate other guidance, instruction, policy or regulation. This publication may be supplemented at any level. Send proposed supplements to this instruction to AF/A10-F for coordination prior to approval and publishing. Additionally, send requests for waivers or interpretations and recommendations to change, add, or delete requirements to AF/A10-F, 1488 Air Force Pentagon, Washington DC, 20330-1488 or via email to AF.A10-S@pentagon.af.mil. Recommended changes and questions will be routed through the appropriate functional's chain of command using the AF Form 847, *Recommendation for Change of Publication*.

Ensure that all records created as a result of processes prescribed in this publication are maintained in accordance with (IAW) Air Force Manual (AFMAN) 33-363, *Management of Records*, and disposed of IAW the Air Force Records Disposition Schedule (RDS) located at <https://www.my.af.mil/afirms/afirms/afirms/rims.cfm>.

1. Overview. This publication establishes guidance and procedures for determining Key Nuclear Billets (KNBs) within the AF Nuclear Enterprise (NE) as well as joint/departmental organizations. The Air Force ensures key positions of leadership and high-level responsibilities crucial to nuclear deterrence operations and nuclear surety are identified as KNBs and ensures these positions are filled by appropriately qualified nuclear personnel. Extended vacancies or inexperienced incumbents in a KNB present great risk to nuclear surety or nuclear deterrence operations.

2. Definition, Spirit and Intent and General Provisions.

2.1. **Definition.** Within the AF NE, the KNBs are select positions filled by experienced Airmen vital to the sustainment of the culture and rigor of the NE and its contributions to U.S. National Security.

2.1.1. Each KNB is a position of responsibility within the NE that requires:

2.1.1.1. A defined level of nuclear experience

2.1.1.2. The Airman to be immediately effective upon assignment

2.1.1.3. The highest assignment priority

2.1.1.4. Continuity of fill

2.1.2. KNBs will be filled with appropriately experienced Airmen to prevent unacceptable risk to mission execution and nuclear surety.

2.2. **Spirit and Intent.** All positions within the AF NE are essential and many may be singularly unique or important by virtue of their role; but, KNBs are positions of greater responsibility than the billets that comprise the nuclear mission core tasks. For example, KNB designation is generally not appropriate for 5 skill-level technician positions, Major Weapon System (MWS) crewmembers, etc. KNB designation must be judged holistically with respect to the position's responsibilities and its impact on the NE.

2.2.1. While the list below is not comprehensive, KNB designations will be reserved for the types of positions in which the incumbents are expected to:

2.2.1.1. Lead/Command a nuclear unit.

2.2.1.2. Lead teams that develop/sustain nuclear weapons or weapon systems and nuclear capable Airmen.

2.2.1.3. Exercise supervisory authority at the section-level or above to ensure personnel performing core nuclear tasks are properly trained, certified and fit for those tasks.

2.2.1.4. Affect the attitudes, motivations and/or technical/professional certification of personnel across entire units, multiple units or entire AF specialties (not to include line instructors in a MWS formal training unit).

2.2.1.5. Analyze/develop enterprise-wide nuclear policy, practices, standards and procedures or lead teams engaged in such activities.

2.2.1.6. Lead teams that inspect and/or certify units to conduct nuclear mission activities.

2.2.1.7. Develop nuclear policies that support nuclear deterrence/assurance as outlined in the National Security Strategy.

2.2.1.8. Directly advise General Officer or civilian-equivalent and above policy makers in nuclear deterrence policy, strategy, security and/or force structure.

2.3. General Provisions.

2.3.1. The selection method or process employed to fill a particular billet is not a determining factor to include or exclude a position for KNB designation consideration. Boarded or competitively selected positions are not exempt.

2.3.2. Unfunded billets will not be considered for KNB designation. The KNB program is not intended to facilitate a change in billet funding. Billets that are programmed and will be funded within the same fiscal year may be nominated.

2.3.3. KNBs will be filled IAW current personnel assignment policies.

2.3.4. Assignments resulting from KNB designation apply to active-duty officer, enlisted and civilian positions. Guard and Reserve may designate KNBs IAW this instruction; however, those positions will not be filled by the active duty assignment system. Guard and Reserve units should submit KNB-designated positions to AF/A10-F through the National Guard Bureau (NGB) or Air Force Reserve Command (AFRC). AF/A10-F will maintain awareness of these positions. The AF/A10 Reserve Advisor will be the liaison for the Total Force Initiatives with regard to Guard and Reserve KNBs.

2.3.5. KNB designation is only added or removed through the collaborative KNB validation process.

2.3.6. KNB designation does not limit a hiring authority's prerogative for competitively-selected billets. KNB designation highlights the billet's criticality to the NE and the need for active management of the billet.

2.3.7. All KNB validation process partners must ensure billet nominations strictly meet the KNB definition. Misapplication of the designation dilutes the KNB purpose. The assignment priority afforded the KNB designation impacts the assignment system directly and each career field's limited resources, uniquely. In the aggregate, these resource limitations and effects across the entire AF are considered by the Headquarters AF (HAF) in the validation process.

3. Roles and Responsibilities.

3.1. **The Assistant Chief of Staff (ACS), Strategic Deterrence and Nuclear Integration (AF/A10)**, is the functional authority for management of human capital in the AF NE and is the validation, adjudication, and final approval authority for KNBs.

3.2. **AF/A10-F, Functional Authority Division**, is designated as the Headquarters, Department of the Air Force Functional Manager for NE human capital within AF/A10 and is the Air Force KNB program manager. AF/A10-F will:

3.2.1. Act as the Headquarters Air Force subject matter expert on KNB policy, guidance and program management.

3.2.2. Maintain and distribute the official record of the validated KNB list.

3.2.3. Ensure periodic validation of KNBs.

3.2.4. Establish frequency and timing of periodic and out-of-cycle KNB validation efforts.

3.2.5. Oversee KNB validation coordination activities with KNB representatives and process partners.

3.2.6. Provide adjudicated nomination list to AF/A10 for approval.

3.3. **AF/A1, Manpower, Personnel and Services Directorate** will designate an OPR to provide manpower policy guidance and technical expertise to facilitate the manpower-associated KNB validation activities to include:

3.3.1. Coordinating KNB validation activities with MAJCOM/MAJCOM-equivalent A1 offices.

3.3.2. Establishing source data baseline for KNB nominations.

3.3.3. Developing and disseminating standardized format for KNB nominations, and receiving and merging KNB nominations into a single, standardized format.

3.3.4. Providing KNB validation recommendations consistent with the KNB definition and current manpower policies and practices.

3.3.5. Providing guidance to MAJCOM/A1 offices for coding AF/A10-approved KNB positions in the appropriate manpower database to enhance program management and ensure accurate billet identification.

3.4. **Career Field Managers (CFM)** provide career field-specific subject matter expertise and KNB designation recommendations consistent with the KNB definition. CFMs will provide headquarters AF perspective guidance on the:

3.4.1. Billet's impact on the NE.

3.4.2. Breadth and depth of nuclear experience required for billets within their career field(s).

3.4.3. Degree to which the required responsibility/leadership level impacts the AF-wide NE rigor/culture and development of subordinate nuclear-capable Airmen.

3.4.4. Risk to the career field associated with the position going unfilled or being filled by an individual without the requisite nuclear experience.

3.5. **KNB Stakeholders** are MAJCOMs, Combatant Commands, Headquarters Air Force, joint agencies, other DoD and non-DoD agencies that rely on the expertise of experienced Nuclear-Capable Airmen to fill positions that meet the KNB definition. KNB stakeholders will:

3.5.1. Designate a KNB representative as the single point of contact to speak for the KNB stakeholder in all KNB activities.

3.5.2. Nominate billets for KNB designation taking into consideration the:

3.5.2.1. KNB definition.

3.5.2.2. Billet's importance and impact to the nuclear mission.

3.5.2.3. Breadth and depth of nuclear experience required for the KNB.

3.5.2.4. Degree to which the required responsibility/leadership level impacts nuclear culture and rigor within the organization.

3.5.2.5. Risk associated with the position going unfilled or being filled by an individual without the requisite nuclear experience.

3.5.3. Update Unit Manpower documents IAW AF/A1 guidance.

3.6. **KNB Representatives** are designated at organizations throughout the AF, COCOMs, joint agencies, DoD and non-DoD agencies that nominate or play a lead role in the nomination of KNBs. These are typically O-6 or equivalent personnel representing their organization's principal or senior leader's perspective. KNB representatives:

3.6.1. Act as AF/A10F's single point of contact regarding the KNB program within the command, organization or agency.

3.6.2. Oversee the KNB stakeholder's internal KNB nomination process.

3.6.3. Ensure the KNB definition is applied consistently and IAW the general provisions and spirit and intent in **section 2**.

3.6.4. Ensure KNB nomination suspenses are met.

3.7. **Air Force Personnel Center (AFPC)** will designate an OPR for KNBs to act as AF/A10's primary assignment system focal point. This OPR will review the KNB nomination list with compiled inputs from the CFMs, Functional Managers (FM) and NE Human Capital Functional Manager (AF/A10-F) and provide program advice including:

3.7.1. Capacity to fill KNB nominations with current and projected resources.

3.7.2. Impact of competing assignment priorities.

3.7.3. Officer and Enlisted Development Team vectors.

4. Collaborative KNB Validation Process.

4.1. **Overview.** KNB stakeholders submit KNB nominations through their KNB representatives IAW internal processes. These nominations are reviewed by the MAJCOM/CV, AF two-digit or agency/organization equivalent. Nominations are processed by AF/A1M, coordinated through headquarters AF CFMs, adjudicated by AF/A10-F, and approved by AF/A10. NE organizations will assess new or realigned billets for potential KNB designation on an annual basis. AFPC assignment teams use these designators to identify a unit's critical nuclear positions before matching nuclear capable Airmen to assignments. Attachment 2 is a graphical depiction of the KNB process.

4.2. Process details.

4.2.1. AF/A10-F in partnership with the Directorate of Manpower, Organization and Resources, AF/A1M, and AFPC/CDN will determine the validation process start date, end date and milestone suspense dates. AF/A10-F will notify KNB validation process partners and KNB stakeholders through the KNB representatives.

4.2.1.1. Suspense extensions must be requested by MAJCOM/CV or HAF/Joint 2-letter or equivalent and approved by AF/A10. Milestone and suspense dates for the process and periodic review will be coordinated with assignment processes.

4.2.1.2. Out-of-cycle KNB nominations are driven by significant fact-of-life changes such as the creation of a new MAJCOM, the activation/inactivation of a unit or when a mission transfers from one unit to another. These will be determined and managed by AF/A10 on an as-needed basis. All out-of-cycle nominations must be submitted to

AF/A10-F before the Air Force Assignment System (AFAS) Field Reclama Window start date attached to each cycle.

4.2.2. Validation Cycle Kick-Off. AF/A1M will determine the appropriate baseline Unit Manning Document (UMD) validity date to use as the baseline source date and communicate this to all organizations and process partners. AF/A1M will prescribe the standardized format for all KNB nominations.

4.2.2.1. As a minimum, the standardized format will include identifiers to the lowest command echelon, a job description, position number, duty title, full Air Force Specialty Code (AFSC) to include prefixes, rank/grade requirements, justification comments as applicable and a method to distinguish three billet status categories: (1) Current KNB; (2) New KNB nomination(s); and (3) Current KNB identified for KNB designation removal.

4.2.2.2. Additional billet designations should be added to facilitate the validation process at each step (i.g. Personnel Reliability Program (PRP) identifiers, Special Experience Identifier (SEI), Nuclear Experience Identifier (NEI), assignment bucket designations).

4.2.3. Nomination. KNB stakeholders will submit a KNB list based on the most recent validation cycle incorporating and identifying newly nominated billets and billets recommended for designation removal. This list must correspond with the UMD as of the date provided by AF/A1M.

4.2.3.1. Nominated billets must meet the entire KNB definition and provisions contained in Section 2 of this publication.

4.2.3.2. Nominations will adhere to the standardized format provided by AF/A1M.

4.2.3.3. KNB stakeholders will coordinate internally as required or IAW local guidance. KNB nominations must be reviewed by the MAJCOM/CV or equivalent and forwarded to AF/A1M not later than the suspense date.

4.2.4. Nomination Review. AF/A1M will review the nomination lists for compliance with current policies, practice and funding status.

4.2.4.1. AF/A1M will identify and report to AF/A10-F any unfunded billets and those that will not be funded within the fiscal year. Previously designated KNBs are subject to KNB designation removal for changes in funding status.

4.2.4.2. AF/A1M will merge nominated billets into a single list using the prescribed format, then forward the reviewed list to the CFM for each career field represented and copy AF/A10-F.

4.2.5. Validity Coordination.

4.2.5.1. CFMs receive nominations from AF/A1M and will concur or non-concur with KNB stakeholder nominations based on the KNB definition and provisions in **section 2** of this publication.

4.2.5.1.1. CFMs will coordinate with KNB representatives and KNB stakeholder functional managers as appropriate to ensure the integrity of the KNB program and ensure proper application of the KNB definition.

4.2.5.1.2. CFMs will forward recommendations to AF/A10-F not later than the AF/A10-F established suspense date. See attachment 2 for time allotted each step of the validation process.

4.2.5.2. AF/A10-F forwards the compiled KNB nomination list to the AFPC/CDN OPR who will review the list with assignment team managers and provide advice to AF/A10-F.

4.2.5.2.1. The AFPC/CDN OPR will provide assignment system advice as it relates to filling nominated KNBs to AF/A10-F not later than the AF/A10-F established suspense date. See attachment 2 for time allotted each step of the validation process.

4.2.5.3. Recommendations or advice counter to the KNB stakeholder's nomination will include a brief justification. This justification must be sufficiently specific for the approval authority to make a final validation decision. *For example, a justification may be based on the failure to meet the criteria contained in the KNB definition. Justification must cite the portion of the definition being violated and the reason for the violation (e.g. Non-concur IAW paragraph 2.1.1.1.: Position [number]. Position does not require a defined level of nuclear experience. While this position requires extensive technical experience, success in this position is not dependent upon nuclear experience and may be filled by personnel with limited nuclear-specific experience).* The non-concurring entity will forward this information to the affected KNB representative and AF/A10-F.

4.2.5.4. All efforts to resolve non-concurs on individual billet designations should take place between the non-concurring entity and the KNB stakeholder at the lowest level of responsibility possible prior to the final adjudication and mediation phase.

4.2.6. Final Adjudication and Mediation. AF/A10-F will adjudicate recommendations IAW the definitions and provisions in **section 2** of this publication.

4.2.6.1. AF/A10-F will lead adjudication efforts of any remaining non-concur recommendations on billet nominations through collaborative coordination which includes the KNB representative and the non-concurring individual/office and others as deemed appropriate by AF/A10-F.

4.2.6.2. AF/A10-F will submit the final KNB nomination list to AF/A10 for approval. If unresolved non-concurs still exist, AF/A10-F will brief AF/A10 for final decision.

4.2.6.3. Upon AF/A10 approval the KNB designation list is final until the next KNB validation cycle. AF/A10-F will forward the list to AF/A1M, AFPC/CDN, CFMs and KNB stakeholders through the KNB representative.

4.2.7. Coding and Assignment Action. AF/A1M will direct MAJCOM/A1Ms to code billets as appropriate in the UMD with KNB designation.

4.2.8. AFPC/CDN OPR will distribute the final list to assignment teams. Assignment teams will use KNB designations to match personnel IAW established assignment procedures.

4.3. Out-of-cycle KNB validations follow the same process, timed at the discretion of AF/A10.

WILLIAM A. CHAMBERS, Maj Gen, USAF
ACS, Strategic Deterrence and Nuclear Integration

Attachment 1

GLOSSARY OF REFERENCES AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

References

AFPD 13-5, *Air Force Nuclear Enterprise*, 06 July 2011

AFMAN 33-363, *Management of Records*, 01 March 2008

Nuclear Enterprise Functional Authority Concept of Operations, 22 April 2011

Adopted Forms

AF Form 847, Recommendation for Change of Publication

Abbreviations and Acronyms

ACS—Assistant Chief of Staff

AF—Air Force

AFI—Air Force Instruction

AFMAN—Air Force Manual

AFPC—Air Force Personnel Center

AFPD—Air Force Policy Directive

AFRC—Air Force Reserve Command

CFM—Career Field Manager

COCOM—Combatant Command

EO—Executive Order

FA—Functional Authority

FM—Functional Manager

HAF—Headquarters, Department of the Air Force

IAW—In Accordance With

KNB—Key Nuclear Billet

MAJCOM—Major Command

MWS—Major Weapon System

NE—Nuclear Enterprise

NEI—Nuclear Experience Identifier

NGB—National Guard Bureau

OPR—Office of Primary Responsibility

PRP—Personnel Reliability Program

SEI—Special Experience Identifier

UMD—Unit Manning Document

U.S.C.—United States Code

VML— Vulnerable Movers List

Terms

Key Nuclear Billet—Within the AF NE, KNBs are select positions filled by experienced Airmen vital to the sustainment of the culture and rigor of the NE and its contributions to U.S. National Security. Each KNB is a position of responsibility within the NE that requires: a defined level of nuclear experience; the Airman to be immediately effective upon assignment; the highest assignment priority; and continuity of fill. KNBs will be filled with appropriately experienced Airmen to prevent unacceptable risk to mission execution and nuclear surety.

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KNB Representative— Designated individuals at organizations throughout the AF, COCOMs, joint agencies, DoD and non-DoD agencies and who nominate or play a role in the validation of KNBs. These are typically O-6 or equivalent personnel representing their organization's principal or senior leader's perspective.

Nuclear—Capable Airman—Military and civilian personnel performing nuclear duties who have successfully completed the requisite training necessary to earn an AFSC in any of the nuclear AFSCs listed in section 3 of the Nuclear Enterprise Functional Authority Concept of Operations dated 22 April 2011 or civilian-equivalent education and experience that qualifies the individual to perform such duties

Attachment 2

FIGURE 1 COLLABORATIVE KNB VALIDATION AND APPROVAL PROCESS

