

**BY ORDER OF THE COMMANDER
AIR FORCE GLOBAL STRIKE COMMAND**

**AIR FORCE GLOBAL STRIKE COMMAND
INSTRUCTION 36-284**



Effective 1 DECEMBER 2009
Certified Current 22 November 2011
Personnel

TOP HAND PROGRAM

COMPLIANCE WITH THIS PUBLICATION IS MANDATORY

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OPR: HQ AFGSC/A3IT

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Pages: 3

This instruction implements AFDD 1-1, *Leadership and Force Development* and AFGPD 36-22, *Air Force Military Training*, to establish the policy and guidance for TOP HAND eligibility criteria, program selection, training, professional development objectives, program completion, wear of the TOP HAND patch, experience identifier and follow-on assignment considerations. Officers must know the requirements of this instruction and allied publications that pertain to their responsibilities. It applies to the 576th Flight Test Squadron (FLTS). It does not apply to the Air Force Reserve Command or Air National Guard units.

Refer recommended changes and questions about this publication to the Office of Primary Responsibility (OPR). Ensure that all records created as a result of processes prescribed in this publication are maintained in accordance with Air Force Manual (AFMAN) 33-363, *Management of Records*, and disposed of in accordance with Air Force Records Information Management System (AFRIMS) Records Disposition Schedule (RDS) located at <https://www.my.af.mil/gcss-af61a/afirms/afirms/>.

1. Background. The TOP HAND program was established by Headquarters Strategic Air Command (HQ SAC) in 1972 to select the command's best missileers to conduct the Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM) Follow-On Test and Evaluation (FOT&E) Mission and to prepare these board-selected officers for follow-on assignments to HQ SAC. Through the program TOP HAND officers were provided in-depth exposure to all ICBM weapon systems and provided a number of unique professional and staff officer development opportunities. Over the last 30 years, the program itself has remained relatively unchanged, despite a number of organizational changes including transition of the program to Air Combat Command and later to Air Force Space Command (AFSPC). With the creation of a space test capability, AFSPC expanded the TOP HAND program to include the best space and missile operators from 2001 to

2009. This instruction establishes the TOP HAND program for selected professionals conducting the Operational Test and Evaluation (OT&E) mission for ICBMs within AFGSC.

2. Definition. TOP HAND is an AFGSC sponsored program that selects, trains and develops officer personnel with exceptional job performance and proven leadership skills necessary to execute critical ICBM systems testing. The dynamic and challenging nature of testing demands top performers to evaluate, validate, and improve our war fighting capabilities. TOP HAND personnel complete a rigorous program designed to develop comprehensive weapon system and OT&E expertise beyond the scope of their current Air Force specialty code (AFSC). Additionally, TOP HAND provides opportunities and experiences designed to promote professional development consistent with Air Force Leadership and Force Development Doctrine. The TOP HAND program builds skills associated with the tactical and operational levels of leadership, as well as acquisition, resource and program management, staffing, critical thinking and communication. TOP HAND personnel complete the program with increased leadership ability, as well as depth & breadth of ICBM system expertise.

3. Selection. TOP HAND is a selectively-manned program. TOP HAND positions are board-selected, providing personnel to the 576 FLTS to conduct testing vital to the command's warfighting mission. The 576 FLTS/CC will identify TOP HAND billets within the squadron.

3.1. Eligibility Criteria.

3.1.1. Demonstrated leadership skills, proven technical expertise, strong communication skills.

3.1.2. Instructor or evaluator experience highly desired (HD).

3.1.3. Completion of Professional Military Education appropriate to rank HD.

3.1.4. Officer Criteria.

3.1.4.1. 1Lt or Capt with completed initial missile combat crew tour (13S) or operational maintenance tour (21M) and minimum three (3) years core AFSC experience.

3.1.4.2. Emergency War Order or Senior Crew experience HD.

3.2. Selection Board Process.

3.2.1. HQ AFGSC/A3IT announces upcoming TOP HAND selection boards, providing deadlines and application procedures. Boards are normally held in April and October.

3.2.2. HQ AFGSC/A3 chairs the TOP HAND selection board. Board members include HQ AFGSC/A3I, 20 AF/A3 and 576 FLTS/CC. The board selects only the most talented, highly qualified and motivated individuals with demonstrated superior leadership.

3.2.3. The board assigns TOP HAND selectees to the 576 FLTS based on the needs of the squadron.

3.2.4. HQ AFGSC/A3IT announces board results approved for release by HQ AFGSC/A3.

3.2.5. Missile wings agree to release selectees within the time period specified in the board results announcement.

4. Training. To produce experts qualified in OT&E, the 576 FLTS at a minimum provides training in: test planning, execution, analysis, acquisition and program management. The program utilizes existing AF courses when possible. The 576 FLTS conducts initial unit training followed by a dynamic advanced ICBM training program.

5. Program Completion. The 576 FLTS establishes the completion criteria for a specific measurable professional development program. The 576 FLTS/CC certifies individuals who complete the TOP HAND program.
6. TOP HAND Patch. Personnel are authorized to wear the TOP HAND patch while assigned to TOP HAND. Once certified, personnel are authorized to continue wearing the TOP HAND patch after their initial TOP HAND tour.
7. Experience Identifiers. Upon certification, TOP HAND personnel are identified with the Space Professional Experience Codes for Acquisitions and Test & Evaluation.
8. Post Assignment. Certified TOP HAND personnel should expect to be assigned to the Air Staff, MAJCOM or NAF as follow on assignments. Commanders requiring personnel with TOP HAND experience will identify billets with the requisition statement “*TOP HAND experience Mandatory or Highly Desired.*” Emphasis should be placed on those billets requiring T&E, acquisition and advanced ICBM knowledge.
9. Waiver Authority. Waiver authority for deviations to this instruction is HQ AFGSC/A3I. Requests will be submitted to HQ AFGSC/A3IT for staffing.

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Director of Operations