

Maryland's USAFE Conundrum

1978-83

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In 1978, the year I transferred from the home campus to the European Division, University of Maryland University College (UMUC) was fighting to maintain its degree programs on U.S. Air Force bases in Europe. By 1983, however, the problems with USAFE had been resolved in our favor and UMUC had again resumed its role as the primary institution providing degree programs for the U.S. military overseas. Over the next three decades, the university would maintain this leadership position, handily overcoming challenges from other institutions at the end of each contract cycle.

This memoir describes UMUC European Division's and my own experiences over five years during which a dangerous situation was turned around, enabling the university to regain its footing in Europe. During those years, I had the good fortune to witness and participate in a struggle so intense and important that in March 1981 it would become front-page news in *The Stars and Stripes*. Had the U.S. Air Forces, Europe (USAFE) replaced Maryland with other institutions, as seemed very possible, the ramifications would have threatened UMUC's entire worldwide program.

In December 1978 I arrived in Germany to start a new job, "Librarian and Publications Coordinator." The military charter from McGuire AFB landed in Frankfurt on a Friday evening and ED Director, Dr. Mason G. "Bob" Daly met me at the airport. It was an anxious time. I had just left my family behind in Maryland until they would rejoin me in June 1979. During that time Evelyn would fulfill her teaching contract at Largo Senior High School and our children, Ellen and Peter, would finish their year at the Greenbelt Center School. For me, the move was a lonely and risky plunge into the unknown.

At the UMUC home campus in Maryland, where I had been a faculty and staff member for the past seven years, we were aware that our European Division was having difficulties with the United States Air Forces in Europe (USAFE). By the time of my transfer to Europe, the difficult relations had become threateningly severe. At the center of the story on behalf of USAFE was a senior Air Force civilian, Dr. K. Douglas Beakes. He had arrived on the scene in 1964, fifteen years after the University of Maryland had introduced undergraduate programs to the U.S. armed services in Europe. With offices located in U.S. Air Force's headquarters at Lindsey Air Station in Wiesbaden, he was the USAFE's Chief of Education Services.

If it were true that the problems started with the arrival of Dr. Beakes, what was the USAFE education program like when he got there? What changes was he trying to make and why?

1949-64: An Era of Good Relations

From what I've been able to understand, what Dr Beakes did not find in 1964 – oddly, when considering his actions – was a program that was having problems or in disarray. In fact, it was a program that was operating smoothly and enjoying a comfortable 15-year honeymoon. There seemed to be three important reasons for this positive state of affairs.

First, it was a time when the military was contracting with major universities. This started with the University of Maryland at the undergraduate level in 1949 and later the University of Southern California at the graduate level. Second, it was a time when the military readily accepted the reality that American universities were and, to preserve their unique qualities should be, self-governing. And third, so long as military leaders found that these institutions were operating successfully, they saw no reason to bring other schools to Europe.

Contracting with major universities like Maryland and Southern California made high-quality opportunities available to service members. Both were well-known, nationally recognized institutions for whom program quality, traditional academic values and reputation were important priorities. While UM and USC had designed programs to meet the specific needs of military, adult, part-time student life, their graduation requirements were challenging, and degrees respected.

Second, in this era the military did not have a problem with the fact that the best universities set the standards by which they developed curriculum, determined degree requirements, hired faculty, admitted students and evaluated performance. It was accepted that government did not interfere in academic or personnel decisions or mandate how schools should be run. During the first 15 years that the Maryland program operated in Europe, the military and the universities both “stayed in their own lanes.” The Army and Air Force education commands and the Education Services Officers (ESOs) dealt with monitoring host-country relations, arranging for classroom and office spaces, counseling students, working with the schools on scheduling classes, helping register students, etc. And over in the academic lane, the universities took care of the things that universities do to function productively.

And third, so long as it was clear that these institutions were meeting the needs of service members, the Army and Air Force saw no reason to bring other colleges and universities to Europe. The military worked closely with these two academic institutions and rewarded good performance with renewed contracts. For 15 years, sticking with the predictability and stability of successful programs was judged to be a better idea than taking the risk of inviting unknown, untried schools to operate “across the pond,” thousands of miles from their home campuses.

1964-81: USAFE’s Higher-Education “Revolving Door”

While it is not possible to know what was in the mind of Dr. Beakes in 1964, his actions have made several things clear. Where the universities and the military leaders would argue that they were enjoying agreeable relations, Dr. Beakes must have believed that he saw complacency and missed opportunities for growth. He must not have believed, for example, that the military should contract only with a few nationally ranked schools.

Second, to build the program he envisioned, he obviously did not think it inappropriate for him to interfere with higher education institutions by pressing for less stringent requirements if doing so could meet his need to increase the number of graduates. He did that regularly. And third, he not only looked beyond the Universities of Maryland and Southern California to invite additional colleges and universities to Europe but also encouraged education officers at various installations to do the same thing.

By late 1978, employing these new standards, Beakes and the ESOs who agreed with him had thoroughly dismantled the principles of the “era of good relations” at Air Force bases throughout Europe. Working together, they had undertaken this so heavily that the University of Southern California decided to withdraw its program from Europe and the University of Maryland found itself under the gun.

As the newest member of the senior staff in Heidelberg, I had a less-than-complete understanding of what was going on. I knew that Beakes had been inviting colleges and universities to Air Force locations in Europe and that a few were even offering some of the same courses and programs as Maryland. And I had heard that several Education Services Officers (ESOs) had been curtailing the courses Maryland could schedule at their bases while others had prohibited Maryland from teaching at all. And finally I had been told that Dr. Beakes was pressuring Maryland to ease academic requirements and make other operational changes.

I don't believe I discussed these matters with Dr. Daly during that first car ride to Heidelberg but do remember his mentioning that there would be a Faculty Advisory Committee (FAC) meeting the next morning. He suggested that if I could overcome my jetlag sufficiently to attend, it might be a good first-hand introduction to the ED.

Of course, I went to the Faculty Advisory Committee meeting on that Saturday morning and once there began to wonder whether I had made a terrible mistake by transferring to Europe. The many examples that the faculty representatives gave regarding the USAFE situation and how it was affecting them personally was eye-opening. In addition to the personal problems faculty representatives reported such as a cutback in classes, they voiced broader concerns. Would Maryland have even more courses cancelled, they asked Dr. Daly. What was “Troy State University” and why this relatively obscure institution taking over an increasing number of programs? Was this the beginning of the end for UMUC in Europe? Before getting on that airplane, I had known there was a “USAFE problem” but didn't realize the full breadth of its impact.

Some Personal Background

A major reason I had transferred to the European Division was to work for Dr. Daly. Three years before, in 1975, while he was at the home campus as UMUC's worldwide Dean, Dr. Daly and his assistant, Dr. Julian Jones, hired me for a new position, “Special Faculty Liaison.” It was an exciting job as the link between faculty members and the Dean's Office. Drs. Daly and Jones wanted the UMUC stateside program to emulate the faculty-development initiatives that Dr. T. Benjamin Massey, Director of the European Division, had introduced there.

From the founding of UMUC in 1947 as a continuing education college in the University of Maryland College Park (UMCP), the support of faculty had been the job of the UMCP academic departments. As years moved on, and especially after UMUC became a separate campus in 1970, these academic departments became less concerned with day-to-day UMUC faculty matters. In Europe, Dr. Massey had made significant progress introducing programs to monitor and support teaching excellence. Stateside, however, little was being done and instructors were on their own. The new position of Special Faculty Liaison was created by Drs. Daly and Jones to help fill that void.

I thoroughly enjoyed the challenges and responsibilities of my new job. At the same time, I found Dean Daly to be an outstanding academic leader with a compelling vision for what UMUC needed to become, an open-enrollment institution that actively promoted excellent teaching and maintained high academic standards. Dr. Daly was an excellent supervisor who placed trust in his staff while still making it clear that he was in charge. He stepped back and gave us the latitude to do our jobs as creatively as we could, was always available with critical counsel and worked hard to make UMUC as strong as possible.

In spring 1976, the position of UMUC's Vice Chancellor was posted and Dr. Jones and I, positive that the best and most likely candidate was Dr. Daly, were pleased that he was about to get the recognition and promotion he deserved. As the weeks rolled by, however, we became increasingly concerned that there were no signs he had applied for the job. On the last day applications were due, Dr. Jones and I, who were both at a workshop at Kansas State University, crammed ourselves into a payphone booth with a cache of quarters, dimes and nickels to make a desperate, long-distance call to Dr. Daly and plead with him to apply. In a short, emotional conversation, he thanked us, told us that that was not going to happen, and he would explain once we returned from Kansas.

Our private lunch with Dr. Daly was solemn and revealing as he described what was about to take place. In the months ahead, he would resign as Dean and return overseas to become the director of the European Division. There he would replace Dr. Massey who was coming to College Park as UMUC's new Vice Chancellor. Though this was by then a fait accompli, it still made little sense and would be a loss for UMUC. As we saw things, he had established an outstanding record as Dean, should move up to the vice chancellorship but instead was returning to a position that he currently supervised and, moreover, to a job he had resigned a decade earlier.

Dr. Daly candidly shared the reasons for his actions, letting us know that his contributions that we found so successful were not appreciated and even being ridiculed by the new UMUC Chancellor, Dr. Stanley J. Drazek. In a nutshell, he had not applied for the vice chancellorship because his ideas for what UMUC should achieve with regard to stateside faculty were not shared by Chancellor Drazek. The Chancellor, who had been with UMUC from its founding days, was still of the opinion that faculty issues should remain the concern of the "main campus," University of Maryland College Park (UMCP), academic departments. With Dean Daly's prime issue nowhere to be found on the Chancellor's radar screen, even holding faculty meetings had become a matter of disagreement. Under these circumstances, Dr. Daly could not see himself becoming Dr. Drazek's vice chancellor.

A New Dean's Office. With Dr. Daly gone to Europe, Dr. Jones and I were now members of a Dean's Office that had become much different, especially when its new Dean, Dr. Milton A. Grodsky, assumed the position in early 1977. A brilliant but complicated man, Dr. Grodsky was hired primarily to take UMUC from being solely an undergraduate institution to also having a graduate school. His specific task was to develop a master's degree program in management for which it was believed there was high demand in the Washington-Baltimore corridor.

Dr. Grodsky's deanship was stormy from the start. Sensitive about being the "new guy" and one of the few senior administrators who had not climbed the UMUC ranks to his position,

he seemed to find it difficult to come to grips with this very nontraditional university. He complained constantly that much he had been told about UMUC's readiness to take on graduate degrees had been misrepresented. First, he had been assured that UMUC had a strong undergraduate program. Soon after arrival, however, he learned that UMUC's program was still under the academic control of the nearby "main campus," University of Maryland College Park (UMCP). Second, he found that UMUC's European and Far East Divisions seemed like large quasi-independent programs over which, even though he was UMUC's senior academic officer, he had little-to-no authority.

Time to Go. Dr. Grodsky's concerns quickly impacted our jobs and especially the responsibilities I had enjoyed working with faculty. That along with the cynical sarcasm that characterized his treatment of staff made for a difficult work environment. I sought Vice Chancellor Massey's assistance, saying that I hoped to remain with UMUC but in a different office. A few weeks later serendipity intervened. Ms. Julie Porosky asked me why I had not applied for the job she had just vacated in the European Division, "Librarian and Publications Coordinator." And this chain of events, ultimately, is what brought me to Europe, face-to-face with the USAFE problem.

My Disappointing Start in Europe

My first up-close experience with Maryland's USAFE problem took place at Ramstein Air Base and shocked me with the reality of how complicated our situation was. This occurred just after I arrived in Germany as I attempted to make the best of a coincidence.

A decade earlier – in the 1960s – while I was a junior officer and instructor at the U.S. Naval Academy, I had become friends with Professor John W. "Jack" Huston. Professor Huston, a colleague in the very close-knit Department of English, History and Government, was a military historian who had earned his doctorate at the University of Pittsburgh and someone who would soon become department chair.

As luck had it, Dr. Huston was also a very senior colonel in the U.S. Air Force Reserve. Now, ten years after I had left the Navy and begun working with UMUC, the Air Force was searching for a professional historian to head its Office of Air Force History and asked Jack to take the job. As reward and lure for accepting the position of Chief of Air Force History, Professor Huston was recalled to active duty and promoted to the rank of major general. It seemed to me, quite suddenly, that this old friend had now become someone in a powerful position who could assist Maryland with our USAFE problem. And even more coincidentally, Major General Huston was scheduled to visit Ramstein Air Force Base in January 1979, shortly after I would be arriving in Europe.

Over confidence and ego rarely make good partners but both took charge of me as I proposed a plan to Dr. Daly who, perhaps too quickly, approved. He and I would meet with General Huston at Ramstein and request his assistance. I knew that Dr. Daly had in his possession incriminating letters that showed evidence of corruption at the heart of why Beakes was causing problems for the University of Maryland. Our hope was that upon seeing this evidence the now powerful General Huston, who even had once taught for UMUC, would want to intervene on our behalf.

One letter was written by Dr. Beakes himself in 1968, suggesting that Maryland grant him an honorary doctorate. In his role as the senior government education official for USAFE,

requesting such a favor was a clear conflict of interest. And it was well known that Beakes was upset with UMUC's refusal to honor his request.

Two other letters, that someone had shared with Dr. Daly, both from the president of the Troy State University Board of Regents, were equally damning. The first letter made it clear that Troy State officials had a financial relationship with Beakes and were helping him with stock investments. The second explicitly confirmed that Troy State's goal was to work with Beakes to replace the University of Maryland throughout Europe.

On the morning Dr. Daly and I were to drive to Ramstein I arrived at the offices to find Mrs. Vida Bandis, the ED's Director of Administration, waiting for me and no one else in sight. Mrs. Bandis explained that Dr. Daly was feeling unwell, and she would be going in his place. She assured me that she had copies of the documents and that Dr. Daly approved our sharing with General Huston. Our drive to Ramstein took just over an hour.

After greeting General Huston, who was accompanied by the head of the Ramstein History Office, Mrs. Bandis and I summarized Maryland's USAFE problems and spread the documents on the table. General Huston's response after reading the letters, was to take a very deep breath and be very quiet. Then, perhaps gauging the enormity of what was on the table before him, he asked his colleague to serve as his witness: "Remember the advice I am going to give," he ordered his subordinate.

Without apologizing for not responding supportively, he explained that these matters were serious but definitely not within his scope of responsibility. General Huston continued with a boiler-plate response by suggesting that we bring this issue to the local Air Force Inspector General and file a formal complaint. At the end of his remarks, General Huston requested that we be sure to retrieve all the copies of the letters and take them with us. Clearly, "Jack" was not going to intervene and did not want evidence left behind. Along with a few pleasantries, that was the extent of the meeting.

I was embarrassed. Having naively promised more than my friendship with Jack Huston could deliver was a major disappointment. Mrs. Bandis, who understood the situation better than I and who was not expecting much, took the General's response more calmly. Later that day, when we gave Dr. Daly our briefing and returned the letters, he thanked us for trying but echoed Mrs. Bandis' lack of surprise. This was the last time I would see or think much about those letters until two years later when they suddenly reappeared in the pages of *The Stars and Stripes*.

The USAFE-Maryland Stand Off

For the next two years, January 1979 through December 1980, tension between UMUC's European Division and USAFE Education Services continued to build. In addition to USAFE ESOs taking courses and programs away from Maryland and giving them to other academic institutions, Dr. Beakes continuously pressured Maryland to water down our academic requirements and make major changes to our operational structure. If Maryland did not do these things, he repeatedly threatened, we could find ourselves out of compliance with the requirements that USAFE wanted for institutions teaching at Air Force bases. While obviously there were personal reasons that Dr. Beakes would single out the University of Maryland for repeated attack, there was much more to the story.

From the things he said and did it was clear that Dr. Beakes saw himself as more than a public servant who contracted with schools to run their own programs for USAFE. The role he sought was to be the central figure managing education in USAFE, perhaps even in the entire European Command. I don't recall the term "education czar" being used but it would have been a fitting description. Under his plan, a large number of colleges and universities would be invited to Europe with the stated purpose of meeting every conceivable service-member need. He would monitor these schools and ensure that they had flexible, cooperative degree requirements so that students could transfer credits seamlessly from one to another and have multiple barrier-free options for completing a degree from whichever school they wished.

To operationalize this working together, schools that contracted with USAFE would automatically be members of a government-mandated "consortium," a term Beakes frequently used to describe the ever-changing cohort of schools with USAFE contracts. It was further Dr. Beakes' plan that consortium institutions locate their central administrative offices in Wiesbaden, close to his USAFE HQ office. That would enhance the possibility of meeting regularly with each other and with the head of the consortium, Dr. Beakes, to facilitate their cooperative agreements.

Idealistic as this now sounds, it was not simply a dream, but an action plan that Beakes put into operation shortly after arriving in Wiesbaden by inviting a wide variety of post-secondary institutions to USAFE. At the same time he began approaching the universities already there, Maryland and Southern California, to bring them into the "consortium" mindset by modifying academic and administrative practices that found to be complicating cooperation.

It was clear to both UM and USC that making the changes Beakes was requesting would compromise academic standards and surrender administrative independence. USC, whose program was small, simply withdrew from Europe and returned to the United States. The University of Maryland, on the other hand, whose program was large and significant, dug in and became a persistent roadblock to what Beakes was trying to achieve.

Residency Requirement. The Maryland academic requirement that Beakes targeted most often was our residency requirement, then commonly called the "final-30" rule. To earn a University of Maryland bachelor's degree, students had to complete 120 semester hours (s.h.) of course work. Of that 120 s.h. total, however, UMUC accepted up to 90 s.h. of transfer credit from other accredited colleges and universities, so long as students *took their "final 30" s.h. in residence with UMUC.*

Instead of a "final-30" requirement for residency, Beakes wanted Maryland to have a residency requirement that could be satisfied when a student took "any-30" credits with Maryland. This would be true even if those 30 Maryland credits were lower-level electives taken many years before. This potentially meant that Maryland could be awarding degrees to students who took their major, their minor and other required course work elsewhere.

Beakes, who for several years had been inviting a large number of colleges and universities to teach on USAFE bases and wanted to make it possible for as many of these institutions in his "consortium" to award as many degrees as possible. The Maryland "final 30" residency requirement seemed like one more hurdle in his way.

For UMUC, however, the “final-30” rule, which most major universities required, was an important academic control that balanced willingness to accept so many (90) transfer credits. It not only followed the tradition that a graduate earned the degree from the last institution at which he or she did substantial course work but also enabled students to complete their majors at the institution awarding their degree. With a final-30 rule the university was able to assure accrediting agencies and graduates that the UMUC degree had significance and worth. Maryland, not only in its European Division but around the world, steadfastly refused to change this requirement.

With Beakes and Maryland leadership’s inflexible positions on the “final 30” rule, working together became complicated. Unfortunately, students who took their course work on USAFE installations could be caught in the middle. This was especially true at bases where USAFE ESOs (Educational Services Officers) had either restricted which courses Maryland could offer or, in a few places, had banished the Maryland program completely. A student at one of those locations who needed a Maryland course to complete their last 30 credits and earn a degree sometimes found there was no Maryland course they could take.

I recall instances when our harried Student Services Director, Dr. John Brazda, would dash into Dr. Daly’s office. “I just got off the phone with an upset student at Torrejon. He needs only one more course to graduate,” Brazda would plead. “We are not offering that course, but Troy State University is. Can we please make an exception and let him take the course with Troy?” Dr. Daly’s annoyed reply was always the same: “No!” followed by the reminder that, “Maryland should be teaching that course! But the Torrejon ESO won’t let us!”

Average Class Size. With additional colleges showing up on USAFE bases to serve limited pools of students, classes started to get smaller. An operational change that Beakes pressed was for Maryland to reduce the class-size average used to determine which scheduled classes would take place and which would be cancelled.

In the 1970s, Maryland strove for a Europe-wide enrollment average of 20 students per class. Every academic term, Area Directors faced a difficult decision; keep on the schedule the classes that had attracted enough students and cancel those that had not. By the time registration was over, every geographic area had to have an average class size of 20 students.

With an average class of 20 students, Maryland could generate sufficient income to hire full-time faculty with advanced degrees while also charging reasonable tuition. In the 1970s traditional American universities still looked upon off-campus “extension” programs as second rate. In this regard, the University of Maryland was an exception. Its respected emphasis on undergraduate quality, even when offering courses thousands of miles from the main campuses, was well known.

Dr. Beakes was not reluctant to point out that institutions he had recently invited to USAFE locations did not have a problem teaching classes with fewer students and cited this as an example of our inflexibility. The reason other schools, including several community colleges, could offer classes with fewer students was that they were hiring faculty without advanced degrees and paying “by the head.” When teaching a class with 10 students, for example, their instructors might be paid half as much as for a class with 20. This, in turn,

inspired some of these instructors to lower requirements to attract more students and increase their pay for the course.

Location, Location . . . Yet another operational change that Beakes harped on whenever meeting with Dr. Daly was that Maryland should move its office from Heidelberg to Wiesbaden to be closer to USAFE headquarters. “There are times when I have to call a quick meeting,” Beakes would implore Dr. Daly. “It’s important you can get here quickly!” Dr. Daly, who gave us dramatic summaries of his Beakes interactions, retold his reply many times: “Doug, it only takes me an hour to drive to Wiesbaden. We are not moving our staff out of Heidelberg!”

We knew that there were ulterior motives. First, having all USAFE-contracted schools in Wiesbaden gathered around Beakes’ office would be symbolic evidence of the “consortium” so central to his plan. In addition, he knew that Maryland had just built a new administrative office, had a multi-year lease with a German landlord and could not comply for financial reasons. This opened the way for Beakes to “ding” us repeatedly for not being “team players” and undercutting the consortium.

Stalemate. The word “stalemate” may best describe UMUC-USAFE relations throughout 1979 and 1980. Air Force ESO’s who supported Dr. Beakes continued to keep the European Division from offering courses on their bases while Beakes himself continued to pressure Dr. Daly to soften academic requirements, reduce class size and move to Wiesbaden. In spring 1979, however, there was a glimmer of hope that Air Force leaders in Washington might be concerned about the situation.

That May, we received official word that an inspection team would be visiting Europe to review the USAFE voluntary education program. Along with the notification was a requirement that every institution prepare and submit a report as a part of the process. The government distributed a detailed outline specifying the information needed. I did get to work with Dr. Daly on the European Division’s response, but he was in charge and wrote most of it himself.

The information requested was similar to that which universities provide to accreditation teams, such as enrollments, number and type of courses, graduation rates, etc. There were no questions about USAFE’s policies with regard to Maryland, but Dr. Daly made sure to refer to the situation wherever he could squeeze it in. If, for example, a large base had just a few Maryland enrollments, he did not hesitate to explain that this was because the ESO had arbitrarily limited Maryland course offerings and pointed out the problem that was causing for students.

I still recall with amusement and satisfaction that at the inspection team’s oral debriefing these comments so irritated Dr. Beakes that every time they were mentioned, he would angrily and loudly mumble, “That information wasn’t asked for!!”

Changes in the Wind

At the end of the academic year in 1979, Evelyn, Ellen and Peter joined me for a rocky start to our new lives as an American family in Germany. Our children, who had been expecting a summer vacation, got the biggest surprise. German public schools were still in session, so

we immediately enrolled them in an elementary school in our little town of Plankstadt. Our hope was that this deep-immersion language-learning experience would be beneficial.

Evelyn, who had resigned her tenured faculty job in Maryland's Prince George's County public schools, looked forward to teaching German with the European Division and was bitterly disappointed when a promised lecturer position suddenly evaporated. We were finding the move more difficult than expected as I continued to learn my new job and Evelyn tried to find one for herself with the Army. Suddenly everyone missed the town-house we had purchased and renovated in Greenbelt, MD five years before. Only Evelyn and Dr. Daly knew how close I came to resigning from the European Division and returning us all to the States.

The person who rescued us from this fate in 1979 was our colleague and good friend, Dr. Larry Hepinstall. In those days, Dr. Hepinstall was the Area Director for Central Germany, which included the Maryland program in Heidelberg. He selected Evelyn as a part-time Field Registrar at the local U.S. Army Hospital, a position she loved from the start. She would have continued doing that happily were it not for the coincidence of being tapped for a job with the Compensation Management Board, a Department of Defense agency that monitored the employment of German citizens working for the U.S. Army. The new position not only made it possible for Evelyn to use her German language skills, which was one of the main reasons she agreed to move to Germany, but also had the added benefit of sponsoring our children to attend the Department of Defense Dependent Schools (DODDS), free of charge. The decision to remain in Germany had been a close call and these final turning points allowed us to make our lives there for the next 30+ years. It was, put simply, life changing.

As important as these developments were for me personally, they were not the most earth-shaking for Maryland. That occurred a year later on a bleak winter Friday in January 1981, shortly after everyone in the European Division had returned from the holiday break.

For some unexplained reason, Dr. Daly had taken the day off, something he rarely did. Early in the afternoon, a very nervous Director's Office secretary hurriedly walked from office to office and placed a one-page memorandum on every desk in the building. The memo, personally written, typed and signed by Dr. Daly, announced his retirement, effective 1 February 1981, to be replaced by Dr. Joseph J. Arden, then Director of the Far East Division. Everyone's shock was summarized by the reaction of Mrs. Bandis. As I walked past her doorway, she threw up her hands and said, "Well I don't know about you but I'm going home for the rest of the day," locked her office and quietly left. No one in Europe had previously been informed of Dr. Daly's decision.

It did not take long for that shock to wear off, however, and bring into focus figurative handwriting on the wall we had been ignoring for some time. Much of it tied back to Maryland's USAFE problem. How much could the man endure? From the day he arrived in summer 1976 until the day he would leave, Dr. Daly, to use an infantry expression, "walked point" in the battle that Beakes and USAFE were relentlessly waging against the University of Maryland. In that 4½-year span there not only had been no Maryland victories but the confrontation had become increasingly personal.

In addition to the USAFE burden, other things had to have been weighing on his decision. Dr. Daly had put in the requisite years with Maryland, starting in the 1950s, to qualify for full retirement so for that reason, it was “time.” And second, after remarkably successful UMUC service in the United Kingdom, Asia, College Park and Europe, his last decade had to have included some amount of personal disappointment. The facts were that he had taken a demotion to come to Europe and was now reporting to Dr. T. Benjamin Massey, someone he admired but nonetheless had once hired and supervised. Dr. Daly had likely had enough of both UMUC and Beakes. For many of us, it was bitter-sweet. But the more we thought about it, the more his decision made sense and we bid him farewell with the most hilarious and memorable staff party I have ever attended.

A New Era

With Dr. Daly’s retirement and Dr. Arden’s transfer from the directorship of the Far East Division to European Division leadership, change was in the wind, though not yet clear what it might involve. Yes, the man I had come to Europe to work for was gone and a new director with fundamentally different ideas and approach was taking the reins. But the people in the division who had worked with Dr. Arden in the past, especially faculty, were pleased and found it an extremely positive sign. Personally, it was a wait-and-see situation.

In the meantime, the next surprise was another one that I did not see coming, a withering investigative report by the military newspaper *The Stars & Stripes (S&S)* against the USAFE Chief of Education Services, Dr. K. Douglas Beakes, and officials who sided with him.

Just the thought of *Stars & Stripes* as a paper that indulged in hard-hitting attack journalism was breath-taking enough. In the “Publications Coordinator” portion of my job I frequently worked with *Stars & Stripes* to advertise our program and assist reporters when they covered events such as the university’s annual commencement. Even with many close acquaintances working there, I never saw the paper as more than a middle-of-the-road, government-funded publication primarily for military member information and morale. The idea that they would take sides on behalf of an educational contractor against the U.S. Air Force seemed impossible.

But it happened. They did it.

***The Stars and Stripes* Series: “Education for the Military” Announced**

It all began on Monday, March 2, 1981, with a front-page article announcing an upcoming series. The headline asked, “How good is military education?” *Stripes* was to take a hard, eight-part look at the European Command education landscape, from technical training and high-school refresher programs through graduate degrees offered by major universities. It was promised that this was not going to be a superficial whitewash

“To get answers to the many questions raised about military education,” Bob Hoyer, the Projects Editor explained, “a team of three Stars and Stripes reporters gathered data from U.S. and European sources; their research included more than 200 interviews.” (S&S, 3/2/81, p. 28)

Our reaction to the announcement at UMUC European headquarters was surprise mixed with hope. Surprise for me, for sure. Even though I regularly visited the *Stars and Stripes* offices in Darmstadt, Germany where UMUC was a steady purchaser of advertising space,

no one there had told me anything of the series. And even though the *Stars and Stripes Bookstores* reaped a handsome profit selling textbooks to Maryland students and the manager of our Textbook Office had many close contacts at the paper, there were no leaks from that quarter either.

Upon learning of the forthcoming series, our hope was that it would shine a bright light on the European Division's USAFE problem and serve as a basis for resolving it in our favor. And it looked like that might be possible when we read what some of the articles would address.

How good are the college and graduate programs available in Europe?

How are colleges and universities selected for these programs? Who monitors and controls them? Is favoritism shown in dealing with schools

Do education programs offered by the military focus on needs? Or are they frosting on the educational turf, designed to make the bureaucrats who run them look good? (S&S, 3/2/81, p. 28)

The series, which vividly and thoroughly exposed the problems that Maryland was having with USAFE, Beakes and his Education Services Officer allies, is discussed in some detail below.

“Education for the Military” Series: Parts 1 and 2

When Part 1 appeared the next day (March 3, 1981) and Part 2 the day after (March 4), we were still waiting because both dealt with issues unrelated to Maryland's program and focused on Army rather than Air Force. Nevertheless, we were impressed by how revealing, well researched and written these first two reports were.

Part 1 discussed the importance of BSEP (Basic Skills Education Program) while Part 2 sought to answer the question, “Why can't GIs read the manuals?” As the source of new Army enlisted personnel, volunteers had been replacing draftees since the early 1970s, with the educational standards for recruits severely declining. For far too many the knowledge they were bringing to the Army fell well below the high school level. At the same time, the weapons and machines these soldiers had to deploy, maintain and repair were becoming more “high tech” and complicated.

The Stars and Stripes reporters took a no-holds-barred approach as they uncovered the challenges the Army had to face to bring low-performing soldiers up to speed with intensive training programs. Our hope that the University of Maryland's situation would be discussed soon and as honestly was buoyed by the quality of the writing and equally by the very last words of Part 2. **“Tomorrow: Army and Air Force contracting with schools and universities in Europe.”** (S&S, 3/3/81, pp. 1 & 8. S&S, 3/4/81, pp. 1, 8 & 9.)

“Education for the Military” Series: Part 3

On March 5, 1981, as the crude saying goes, it “hit the fan” and must have been a hard day for USAFE Chief of Education Services, Dr. K. Douglas Beakes. That was when *Stars and Stripes* hit the newsstands with Part 3 of the “education-for-the-military” series with three articles. The lead article (“*Contract-schools’ ‘revolving door’ has USAFE in spin*”) criticized the educational plan Beakes had conceived and been promoting for more than a decade

while another (*“USAFE education official solicited honorary degree: Not illegal but not condoned.”*) questioned his integrity. And if that were not enough, a third article (*“Abrupt dropping of degree program by Ball State left students out in cold”*) presented a case study of how shoddily USAFE students were being treated.

Revolving Door. The opening sentences of the lead article summarized what the *Stars and Stripes* investigation had found:

During the past decade, so many colleges and universities, contracting with the Air Force in Europe have come and gone that some critics refer to this turnover as the “revolving door” approach to education.

At least 10 schools have picked up and gone home during that time.

By comparison, the Army program has been a model of stability. Not a single school returned to the States since it began its higher education program in 1949.

The first school to break with USAFE was the University of Southern California in 1970 after seven years in the overseas graduate field. And George Peabody College for Teachers will return to the States this year.

Other schools are taking a hard look at continuing with USAFE because of destructive competition and increasing costs.

USAFE’s Dr. K. Douglas Beakes, chief of the education services division, contends that bringing new schools to Europe is necessary to meet the varied needs of Air Force students.

But schools unable to make it are forced to go home. And this has left countless students with unfinished and altered educational goals.

All the schools contracting with the Army have remained economically healthy. (S&S, 3/5/81, p. 1)

Following the introduction, the article detailed the origins of the “revolving door,” identified the schools that had come and gone and presented professional opinions about what was taking place. They blamed Dr. Beakes as the person responsible for opening the revolving door and he did not disagree.

The USAFE program changed markedly when Beakes took over in 1964. At that time USAFE had Maryland’s undergraduate and USC’s graduate programs.

But when Beakes came on the scene new schools began arriving. The University of Utah came in 1966. Wayne State University followed three years later. Then in succession came many others.

Beakes refers to this expansion as “this great feat that occurred” and points out that it increased the diversity of the program.

But while new schools were arriving, others were leaving. And frustrated and perplexed students often were left hanging. Attempts to get transcripts became a nightmare. (S&S, 3/5/81, p. 9)

When reporters spoke with Edwin Neff, who then headed the Army's education program in Europe, his response was blunt.

"If a school left, the staff and I would not be doing our jobs," he said. "The worst service we can perform is to let programs start and then die on the vine. If I start going through this rotation thing (with schools) I'm never going to provide the soldier with a program he can complete here on an assignment." (S&S, 3/5/81, p. 1)

Dr. T. Benjamin Massey, UMUC's Chancellor, was equally candid in explaining why Beakes had opened the door in the first place.

"In the late '60s and early '70s the Air Force began to be disenchanted with programs that were of high quality and sought to bring in institutions that would put the maximum people through to get a degree." (S&S, 3/5/81, p. 9)

In response to Dr. Massey, USAFE officials pointed out that it was not their job to judge quality as the major factor in evaluating which colleges and universities to invite to Europe. Their only concern on that score was whether the institution was accredited even though there is a wide range of differences among accredited institutions. The Air Force officer in charge of all of USAFE procurement, Major Heinz Bertram, admitted, "When USAFE looks for a new school, cost is the primary consideration. He said the school that meets requirements with the lowest cost will be chosen." (S&S, 3/5/81, p. 10)

Soliciting Honorary Degree. No one will ever know what K. Douglas Beakes was thinking when he solicited honorary degrees from the Universities of Southern California and Maryland, neither of which granted him the honor. But *Stars and Stripes* reporting made clear why it was not a good idea:

Beakes counterpart with the Army in Europe, Edwin Neff, said, when asked if he would request an honorary degree, "You've got to be out of your tree!" Neff said also that he didn't think there would be a conflict of interest involved. But he added, "I think it would be perceived as such." (S&S, 3/5/81, p. 10)

The reason that Beakes request was perceived as conflict of interest was basic. He was the most important government official with legal authority over the contracts that universities had with USAFE. In that context such a solicitation had the earmarks of a payoff request with an academic anointing.

In Maryland's case it was believed that an important reason Beakes was working so hard against the university was his disappointment and anger at not being awarded the honorary degree. Maryland's former European Division director responded carefully when *Stars and Stripes* asked him about this:

Dr. Mason G. Daly, who retired Feb. 1 as director of the Maryland program in Europe, said of Beakes' request: "It wasn't appropriate to ask for and wasn't appropriate to give it."

Does Maryland feel that the turndown has caused them problems in dealing with USAFE?

"We cannot answer such a question with a categorical yes or no," Daly said. "Of course it has occurred to us that the honorary degree matter might have been a factor

in some of the difficulties we have subsequently experienced in dealing with USAFE, difficulties we have not had in dealing with other European commands or with Pacific Air Force."

Daly said Maryland programs have been taken away at many USAFE bases in the past several years and given to other schools. Beakes said that where this has happened it has been done to keep all the schools operating at the base economically healthy. (S&S, 3/5/81, p. 10)

Ball State University Example. When researching its education-for-the-military series, *Stars and Stripes* found that what happened when Ball State abruptly discontinued its special-education graduate program, revealing the major problem with the plan that Dr. Beakes touted as a great feat: "When a university drops a program, students get hurt. Just ask any of the 82 students who were left hanging when Ball State University abruptly dropped its special education program last year." The article continued:

"I've spent more than \$2,000 so far working toward this degree," said Mary Downham, math teacher at Wiesbaden Middle School. "Now I don't know if I'll be able to finish."

The plight of Downham and those like her points to what critics say is a flaw in the USAFE education program.

Students in USAFE programs, unlike those in Army programs, have no contractual assurance that they'll have a chance to complete their degrees. (S&S, 3/5/81, p. 9)

After highlighting what had happened with this individual, the article went on to discuss other students caught by Ball State's sudden departure and USAFE's unwillingness to assure them that they can finish the programs they start.

"Institutions have a right to pull out," he (Beakes) said.

Beakes, as chief contracting officer for USAFE education, said it would be unreasonable to expect an institution to assure that students be given a chance to graduate if a program is dropped.

He said such an agreement could commit an institution to operating at a loss during a phase-out period. (S&S, 3/5/81, p. 9)

In this part of its series, *The Stars and Stripes* strove to provide as balanced a report as it could. USAFE military leaders and the highest-ranking education personnel were interviewed and given ample opportunity to explain and defend the Air Force's program. At the same time the newspaper interviewed college and university officials involved. And the paper spoke with perhaps the most important players in the program, the students.

As the saying goes, the "facts spoke for themselves." They made it very clear to the reader that under the leadership of Dr. Beakes, the USAFE education program was not doing the best job it could. Throughout both organizations, USAFE and the University of Maryland, there must have been anxiety and curiosity, as we and they wondered what else would be revealed in the five parts of the series yet to appear in the daily newspaper.

“Education for the Military” Series: Part 4

On March 6, 1981, *Stars and Stripes* switched the focus from USAFE with two in-depth articles about learning problems and challenges that enlisted personnel faced. The lead article on this day (“*Learning was smothered by violence*”) quoted from interviews of soldiers who had joined the Army after learning very little in American high schools, often dropping out before completing their diplomas. (S&S, 3/6/81, pp. 1 & 8)

The other Part 4 article (“*Does the rise in popularity of TV have big role in decline of educational skills?*”) dealt with how service members in Europe seem to be spending most of their free time and its impact on their interest in and ability to learn. The paper found this to be particularly a problem for military personnel serving in Europe because of the low quality of the limited amount of American TV available through the Armed Forces Network (AFN). Among the several academicians interviewed, one Marylander offered his critique:

Dr. Robert Speckhard, English coordinator for the University of Maryland in Europe, designed prep courses for first-year English students because of the decline in language skills.

“TV surely had something to do with this decline,” Speckhard said. “It seems that there is a weakness in American culture that has produced a disdain for detail.” (S&S, 3/6/81, p. 8)

“Education for the Military” Series: Part 5

On March 10, 1981, *Stars and Stripes* focused on the USAFE actions to replace the University of Maryland with educational institutions Beakes had invited to Europe and with which he seemed to have a special relationship. Once again, three articles appeared on the same day. The first (“*Maryland feels squeeze*”) investigated the problem from a Europe-wide perspective. The second (“*The ax falls: Torrejon AB education officer chops away until Maryland program is nearly non-existent*”) detailed the efforts the Education Services Officer (ESO) at a base near Madrid, Spain to attack the Maryland program. The third article (“*Torrejon’s Americans ask: What’s going on?*”) quoted one of many letters that the newspaper received from students harmed by the demise of the Maryland program at their USAFE installation.

Maryland Feels Squeeze. The front-page article opened with an overview of Maryland’s problem:

The University of Maryland the oldest school in overseas military education is being squeezed out of its dominant educational role at several Air Force installations in Europe.

In the past four years, many Maryland courses have been dropped and its enrollment has been cut as rivals replace the school that for more than 30 years has provided off-duty education for Army, Air Force and Navy students.

Interviews with education officers show that the move to cut into Maryland’s program is much stronger at certain bases than at others. But a few USAFE officers

have resisted the move against Maryland and remain strong in their support of its program. (S&S, 3/10/81, pp. 1 & 8)

After explaining that the institution benefiting most from cuts to the Maryland program was Troy State University, *The Stars and Stripes* rebutted USAFE denials that Troy was being accorded suspiciously preferential treatment with the following evidence:

Maryland's problems in the command began to grow in 1976 after Wallace D. Malone, Jr., former president of Troy's board of regents, stated in a letter that it was Troy's goal to achieve the largest enrollments in Europe.

"We don't want everything in Europe. We just want everything that Maryland has," Malone wrote in April 1976 to Dr. James D. Robinson, then director of Troy's two-year-old program in Europe.

Since then, Robinson, a retired Air Force colonel, has moved to Troy's home campus as executive vice president.

In another letter to Robinson in April of that year, Malone, president of Southern Bancorporation in Birmingham, referred to investment literature sent to Beakes who has been director of USAFE's education services for 16 years.

"Fortunately, we have a very large trust department and I can send him (Beakes) a lot of good material on the stock market as well as various companies," Malone wrote.

"Speaking of Doug (Beakes), I might comment that I think your (Troy's) opportunity for growth is going to be enormous," his letter continued. "My guess is that you are going to be limited not by the courses he allows you to offer, but rather by your ability to expand at a very fast rate." (S&S, 3/10/81, p. 8)

The remainder of the article presented various reasons given for replacing Maryland but once again let the weight of evidence show that USAFE had no satisfactory explanations for favoring Troy State University over the University of Maryland. For example, in response to the claim that the Maryland program was "out of date," the paper quoted students who preferred the well-rounded Maryland degree. After Beakes argued that the overall average of 20-students-per-class was too large, the reporter noted the current Maryland enrollments at smaller locations, such as Bentwaters, which at the time of the interview had an average of 15 students per class.

The Ax Falls. Of the bases *Stars and Stripes* could have selected for a close-up of how USAFE was causing problems for students and academia, Torrejón Air Force Base near Madrid, Spain was in a class by itself. Its Education Services Officer (ESO), G. R. Owens, was as known for his dislike of Maryland as he was for his colorful language and bombastic assertions. Once again, the paper captured the scene:

The University of Maryland's program at Torrejon Air Base has been hacked away steadily during the past three years and now is near its last gasp.

Wielding the ax is education officer G. R. "Fireball" Owens, a former World War II bomber pilot.

Owens would tell you quickly and emphatically that the approach he has taken has been a boon to students. But the conditions have spurred an inspector general investigation, inquiries from congressmen and scrutiny by Air Force educators in Europe.

Owens pointed out that undergraduate enrollments have jumped 71 percent since he arrived in 1977 and that there is a greater selection of course offerings and degrees now than ever before.

"I'll tell you and every education officer will tell you the same thing — I'm the best education service officer in the world," Owens said. Then he added for emphasis, "I'm the best." (S&S, 3/10/81, p. 9)

The reporter made it clear that Owens' presented a skewed picture. After assuring students that they could continue taking Maryland courses to complete their degrees, he cut the university's schedule from 16 courses and 350 students per term to one course with six students per term. And over the same period of time his scheduling was responsible for nearly tripling Troy State to 250 enrollments.

Perhaps the opinion with which Owens was most identified was his view that academic quality did not matter. Upon receiving student complaints that Troy's courses were of lower quality than Maryland's, he angrily replied, "I think they were fed a bunch of slop on standards," he said. "I don't know what the hell they mean by standards. They're all fully accredited schools." (S&S, 3/10/81, p. 9)

Owens' treatment of Maryland was so out of line with USAFE policy, according to the article, that even Beakes found it necessary to counsel him.

"I've talked to Owens a hundred times about this one subject," Beakes said. He said the consortium should in no way be used to eliminate a university.

"Maryland should be a part of Owens' consortium," he said. "There is no doubt about that in my mind. I'm not sure what's in his mind. I can't pull that out." (S&S, 3/10/81, p. 9)

What Beakes was leaving unsaid was that the anti-Maryland atmosphere his own education policies were the basis for what was happening at Torrejon and numerous other USAFE installations. If, as was the case with Owens, an ESO could convince a base commanding officer that Maryland ought to be curtailed or eliminated, that was the Genie that the Beakes had let out of the bottle. And he was powerless to put it back.

What's Going On? Even before its series began *Stars and Stripes* was receiving so many letters from unhappy students at Torrejon Air Base that the editors were aware the damage being done. For that reason, the series reprinted a recent letter along with the official Air Force response. The students asked a simple question:

Why does the Education Center here at Torrejon offer only one college course from the University of Maryland each term? Even our smaller bases in the Mediterranean Region offer eight courses on the average. (I counted them in the recent S&S special insert.)

Like many other military communities in Europe we have many of our recent high school graduates remain in the area and take courses at the local education center.

With only one Maryland course at Torrejon it would take a student about 30 years to get a degree.

Who is responsible for this situation? The University of Maryland headquarters at Heidelberg of the Torrejon Education Center? Or both?

Please withhold our names.

The Air Force reply, from Dr. Robert Gregg, Beakes' supervisor in the personnel command, was bureaucratic and unhelpful. It clarified that Owens was responsible for the schedule with only one Maryland course but said nothing about why such a harsh decision had been made. Once again, *Stars and Stripes* presented Owens and USAFE in a harshly negative light.

“Education for the Military” Series: Part 6

On March 11, 1981, Part 6 gave USAFE more important advice: “Low tuition is no bargain.” Citing multiple examples, the research showed that the cheap programs that USAFE brought to Europe cut costs by hiring faculty who not only lacked advanced degrees but, in several instances, lacked even bachelor's degrees. The introductory sentences presented the findings, including an admission that USAFE considered cost, not quality, when awarding contracts to colleges

If price is the major consideration when the military selects college programs, service members in Europe will be stuck with shoddy courses leading to second-rate degrees.

That's the view of dozens of educators interviewed by The Stars and Stripes.

“It's very dangerous for programs to be brought in based on price and convenience,” said Dr. Mason Daly, former director of the University of Maryland's European program.

“It's costly to have quality programs. If competition is based mainly on price, the programs of lesser quality will win the market.”

But the men in charge of deciding which colleges and universities operating at USAFE bases said they rely on competitive bidding when bringing in new programs.

It's difficult to consider intangibles such as relative quality of institutions when awarding education contracts, said Major Heinz Bertram, USAFE procurement officer. (S&S, 3/11/81, pp. 1, 8)

Once again, *Stars and Stripes* interviewed Edwin Neff, the European head of the Army Continuation System (ACES), who made it clear why the Army program was so much stronger than USAFE's.

“The price of tuition would be one of the things we would look at,” Neff said. But it wouldn't be the major consideration. Our major consideration would be getting a high-quality program that meets the needs of our students.” (S&S, 3/11/81, p. 8)

And finally, to make sure that the reader understood what a bad job the Beakes plan and USAFE was doing for students, the reporter extensively quoted Professor, Stephen K. Bailey, widely recognized as one of America's leading experts on military education.

Bailey of Harvard (University) said he found many military education managers who took the position that "as long as an institution is accredited, we're satisfied."

"Unfortunately, the more systematic and elaborate the quality-control system, the more expensive it is for the institution to maintain off-campus programs," Bailey said.

If the competition between schools is based largely on price, he said, those institutions with the least concern for maintaining quality will win the military market. (S&S, 3/11/81, p. 8)

By the time the reader reached the end of Part 6, the only conclusion to be drawn was that the educational plan that Beakes and his allied ESOs had put into place for Air Force members deployed to Europe was of low academic quality. Certainly much lower than the programs being made available to Army students in Europe. The reason this happened related to USAFE's purposeful dismissal of the idea that educational quality should be considered in selecting schools combined with an emphasis of doing it "on the cheap."

"Education for the Military" Series: Part 7

Switching the focus back to the soldiers who had quit school before enlisting in the U.S. Army, Part 7 returned to the topic of "GIs finishing high school." Success story after success story demonstrated the need for and effectiveness of the Big Bend Community College and Temple University high-school-completion programs.

Many teachers and educators dealing with second-chance students in the two programs – Big Bend's high school completion and Temple University's basic skills education program (BSEP) – have been pleased and surprised by the results.

"These students may have rejected school in the past, but with maturity they realize what a handicap the lack of basic skills can be, and many of them put out quite an effort," said Dr. Robert Walker, director of the Temple program. (S&S, 3/12/81, p. 9)

Unlike articles in the series that dealt with Dr. Beakes and USAFE, the tone this time was extremely positive and laudatory.

Though one could easily imagine that Dr. Beakes was happy to take a day off from being the subject of the investigative series, the stark contrast between the negative publicity he was receiving, and the praise being heaped on his Army counterparts must have been obvious to him and everyone else.

“Education for the Military” Series: Part 8

Friday the 13th, when Part 8 of *The Stars and Stripes* series appeared on page 1, proved to be another hard day for Beakes and USAFE education program. The lead article, entitled, “Numbers game’ in — quality out”, was the final indictment.

College officials on base education programs in Europe often are pressured by education services officers (ESOs) to increase enrollments at the expense of academic standards, college directors have told The Stars and Stripes.

And those pressures are compounded college directors said, by the demand for easy courses for students – especially officers who themselves are under pressure from the military to get degrees.

The number of enrollments at a base plays an important role in the ratings of Air Force ESOs, according to Joe De Guelle, ESO at Lindsey Air Station in Wiesbaden

This has created a situation at USAFE bases in which ESOs often are more interested in high enrollments than quality education, college directors said.

“Many of these ESOs play the numbers game,” said the European director of one of the schools under contract to USAFE.

“They want to increase their enrollments to up their GS ratings and could care less whether these enrollments were in good schools or bad ones.

Another university director said he has received pressure from ESOs to hire their friends as professors and to offer more “life experience” credits and weekend seminars. (S&S, 3/13/81, pp. 1, 8)

Those who had been following the series closely, which likely included DOD education leaders in Europe and CONUS, thousands of faculty members, college staffs, students, commanding officers and education center personnel in Europe, would find recurrent names and themes. Army’s Edwin Neff was again the example of how to do it right:

Army education services officers aren’t rated by the number of enrollments at their caserns.

“I don’t want any of my ESOs selling programs just to keep classrooms filled,” Neff said. (S&S, 3/13/81, p. 8)

University of Maryland chancellor, T. Benjamin Massey compared the difference between the Army and Air Force.

“The Army has tried to go for quality programs,” Massey said. “The Air Force has looked for programs that would graduate the maximum number of people. That doesn’t always mean quality.” (S&S, 3/13/81, p. 8)

And in Spain, USAFE ESO “Fireball” Owens would try to explain why he was pressuring the University of Oklahoma to lower admission standards for its “very high-quality” graduate degree program.

But the education service officer said Oklahoma has “some real crappy admission rules which we fight all the time.”

He was referring to the university's requirement that entering students have at least a "B" average on the last 60 semester hours of undergraduate work — a common graduate admission standard. (S&S, 3/13/81, p. 8)

The Stars and Stripes Investigative Series: Did it Make a Difference?

Reality Hits Home. Day after day, as several of us in Heidelberg followed the *Stars and Stripes* series, the mood was one of joyous schadenfreude. We thrilled to the exoneration of our Maryland program and cheered the revelations of Dr. Beakes and USAFE's incompetence and corruption. More than half the articles hammered home how badly Beakes and USAFE were running college programs on Air Force installations. And it bolstered these accusations with expert observations from some of America's leading educators.

For those who believed freedom of the press would guarantee that truth and right triumphed over evil, it appeared that we were about to win the day. Clearly, such exposure should cause perpetrators to lose jobs, Maryland to have courses and programs returned to USAFE installations and regulations promulgated to ensure that such actions never happen again.

But it was not that simple. Dr. Beakes did not lose his job because of the articles nor did the ESOs who joined with him to put restrictions on Maryland. Not only did USAFE personnel stay in place during the months that followed but so also did their policies. Yes, reports of misfeasance and malfeasance had been there for everyone to read, but not as part of an official investigation. Though *The Stars and Stripes* is a Department of Defense entity, this was, for all intents and purposes, trial by newspaper. And that newspaper had no legal authority over anyone.

A New Approach. The University of Maryland official who predicted this to be the likely outcome and acted quickly was the new European Division director, Dr. Joseph Arden. As soon as the articles appeared, Dr. Arden, who had just the month before transferred from Tokyo to Heidelberg, was on the phone to assure Dr. Beakes that he was not only brand new to the job and surprised by the series, but he himself had not been interviewed. Furthermore, he promised that under his leadership, Maryland would work constructively with USAFE to resolve any differences.

In short, Dr. Arden's focus was to make sure that Maryland continued serving Air Force personnel in Europe as well as possible and not to make sure that Beakes or "Fireball" lost their jobs.

Dr. Arden recognized another fact that many of us overlooked; the articles were sure to make Beakes very angry and suspicious. He had to know that much of the information came from us. Furthermore, the series was conveniently released after the departure of the two former Maryland European directors, Dr. Massey to a new job in 1976 and, just a month before the series began, the retirement of Dr. Daly. Both men were interviewed exhaustively and their comments about USAFE were anything but laudatory. These events could not be brushed off as coincidences. It did not take long for Dr. Arden to convince us that we had our work cut out for us.

Trial Run: Maryland's First USAFE Proposal

That we had a tough road ahead became even more apparent to me in 1982 when I worked with Dr. Arden on our first response to a USAFE Request for Proposal (RFP), for a graduate program in counseling.

Ball State University, which previously discontinued its special-education master's (as cited in Part 3 of the *Stars and Stripes* series), was about to also end its graduate program in counseling and withdraw from Europe. The University of Maryland had a nationally recognized graduate counseling program and experience offering it in Okinawa, Japan, making the decision to bid to replace Ball State an easy one. And we were not dissuaded by the fact that we were aware that the school bidding against us would be Boston University.

Indeed, if graduate counseling were to be awarded on merit, we believed that Maryland was in a very strong position. This was not only because of the reputation of the program we would be offering but because we also had some knowledge about how Boston ran its graduate programs in Europe and believed we did a better job. One important advantage was that Maryland provided more class-room contact hours than Boston and that was a qualitative factor that USAFE had stressed as important. In addition, our proposal would emphasize our successful overseas experience and the excellent qualifications of the Maryland faculty.

Given recent USAFE-Maryland relations, however, along with what USAFE surely perceived as our complicity in the *Stars and Stripes* series, this was not a level playing field. Thus, we were disappointed but not extremely surprised when it was announced that USAFE had awarded the graduate counseling contract to Boston rather than Maryland.

Post-Award Debriefing. An important feature of the Request for Proposal (RFP) process is that each bidder not selected can have a meeting with the government to find out the reasons for the decision. While these debriefings are officially characterized as learning opportunities to help bidders prepare more responsive proposals in the future, the reality is that they can also be the initial step to a challenge and/or legal action seeking a reversal of the decision. As such, these can be tense confrontations with both sides bringing legal and financial experts.

Upon receiving the news that Maryland had not been selected and the contract was awarded to Boston University, Dr. Arden invoked Maryland's right to a post-award debriefing and a date for the meeting was set. A few days later, he asked me to accompany him and said that the two of us would be attending for Maryland.

I don't recall discussing our strategy until we were in the car, heading towards Wiesbaden. And I believe our entire conversation at that time was Dr. Arden suggesting that if it was all right with me, he would carry the ball and do all of the talking. It was not only all right, but I was greatly relieved and very pleased to know that that would be the strategy.

When Dr. Arden and I entered the meeting room at USAFE headquarters, we were surprised that Dr. Beakes was not there and would not be participating. The government was to be represented by his young assistant, Dr. Jeff Cropsey, and two individuals from USAFE Contracting, neither of whom we had met previously or ever saw again. I assumed that all had been on the USAFE evaluation team.

Following introductions and pleasantries, Dr. Arden asked a sequence of detailed questions based on our proposal and focused on the likely qualitative differences from that submitted by Boston. Dr. Cropsey did nearly all of the responding and explaining for the government. As question after question was followed by hesitant answer after hesitant answer, I began thinking, “Joe has them in a corner. I wonder if we are going to sue for a reversal?”

After Dr. Arden asked his last question and Dr. Cropsey tried to answer it, there was a brief but tense pause. I’m sure what went through my mind – that this was the moment Arden moves in for the kill – was also in the minds of the USAFE team. But in that confrontational atmosphere, Dr. Arden’s very next words, as best I remember, were:

I think you have made a very good choice selecting Boston University. It is an excellent school with a strong program, and I have no doubt will serve USAFE extremely well. Thank you for your time and explaining how you reached the decision. This has been very helpful.

Following handshakes with three relieved USAFE representatives, we quickly headed for the car and the drive back to Heidelberg. Dr. Arden must have sensed my disappointment and quietly explained that we had bigger fish to fry than the counseling contract. Now was not the time nor was this an issue upon which Maryland should take a stand. Resistance had been Maryland’s strategy for responding to Beakes for several years and clearly that had not succeeded. If working with USAFE in the future was to be our goal, confrontation was not going to be our approach.

Dr. Arden Discusses a Promising Development

At roughly the same time the counseling RFP process was underway, Dr. Arden informed the ED senior staff of what he termed a promising development. In response to recent criticism of military education programs, such as in *Stars and Stripes*, DOD officials were considering the introduction of competitive bidding to select undergraduate programs for USAFE.

The way this would work is that after evaluating bids and making awards, the resulting contracts would cover all Air Force bases and be effective for a fixed number of years. Furthermore, while a school might bid for and win one or more of the requested programs, the contracts would eliminate the practice of multiple schools teaching courses in the same discipline. Only the university that won the program that included the business curriculum would be allowed to offer business courses, only the university that won the program that included liberal-arts could offer English courses, etc.

One obvious reason why these plans seemed promising was that if this did come to pass the Chief of Education Services would no longer be able to unilaterally invite institutions to Europe. Misuse of the existing power to invite schools was what had led to the “revolving door” and made such a mess of USAFE education. Similarly, at the individual installation level, ESOs would no longer be able play schools off against one another to decide which one would teach a particular course. This is what *Stars and Stripes* found happening at Torrejon Air Base, making it impossible for students to finish their Maryland degrees.

In response to the comment that such a competitive bidding process would run the risk of losing altogether, as had happened with graduate counseling, Dr. Arden explained that it

was still preferable to how the system was now operating. Under current conditions, with competing schools offering the same disciplines on several installations, Area Directors and Academic Coordinators were spending inordinate amounts of time having to convince USAFE ESOs to schedule Maryland courses rather than that of another institution. And sometimes, if an ESO had two schools schedule the same course (e.g., ENGL 101), the Maryland course would cancel because the other version had easier requirements.

Dr. Arden went to great lengths to make sure we understood how important and positive this would be for the University of Maryland. It was important that when anyone on the senior staff interacted with the field, especially with Air Force officials, we be supportive of this idea.

Competitive Bidding for USAFE Education Announced

Sometime in mid to late 1982, is my best recollection, the government announced that it would soon be turning to the competitive bidding process to acquire education programs for the U.S. Air Forces in Europe. With Dr. Arden's disclosing that such a possibility had been under consideration, the news was not surprising. Nonetheless, confirmation that it was definitely going to happen hit like a thunder bolt.

The University of Maryland University College (UMUC) programs for the United States Air Forces, Europe (USAFE) would now officially be on the line. If we lost, thousands of students would transfer to other colleges and universities, hundreds of faculty and staff members would lose jobs and UMUC's leadership of overseas programs for the military would be in serious jeopardy.

If we won, there were still significant risks and dangers. We knew enough to anticipate that the government might slice and dice programs into academic disciplines and levels, with competitive bids requested for each. If we won too few of these slices, our "market share" might be reduced and unsustainable. And then there was the issue of whether the government would include requirements that Dr. Beakes had been requesting and we had been resisting for years.

And finally, of course there was the biggest fear of all. How level was the playing field now that the stakes were so much larger? We were about to be in a contest for our very lives and it was only than a year and a half since USAFE's *Stars and Stripes* debacle. Who would be in the judge's chair, reading proposals and making decisions? As we awaited the issuance of the request-for-proposal (RFP) documents, these were some of the thoughts on our minds.

The RFP

The 1983 USAFE education request for proposal (RFP) that finally appeared was a document we had to read and reread with great care. For the short term, such as the months until our proposal submission deadline, preparing that proposal would be the all-consuming task that we had to get exactly right. In the longer term, the RFP was a potential road map to the programs that the European Division would be offering to the Air Force – and likely to the Army and Navy as well – for the next five years. As we digested the RFP, a number of realities emerged. Some boded not well for Maryland while others seemed more promising.

Bad for Maryland. From the bad-for-Maryland perspective, the text confirmed that Dr. Beakes must have been the RFP author who decided which programs to request and the conditions for delivering them. Most significantly, he included stipulations that would enable USAFE to contract with several institutions simultaneously, in an apparent effort to keep his multi-school “consortium” idea alive. In a recent memoir, Joe Arden has described this oddly constructed approach.

The RFP did not call for the undergraduate curriculum to be divided into freshman-sophomore courses, which would have allowed two-year institutions to bid on that element of a four-year baccalaureate degree. Nor was there an element of the RFP requesting bids on junior-senior level courses. Rather, the undergraduate academic element of the RFP divided all courses – freshman through senior – into three disciplines: business management, computer related, and the traditional liberal arts. Institutions could bid on one of these distinct disciplines or any combination of them.

...

*USAFE’s structuring the undergraduate RFP that forced schools to bid for programs by individual discipline was – from an academic perspective – absurd. And, Maryland believed, it was also intentional. The result could have been one institution offering all business courses, a second institution offering all computer courses, and a third institution offering all courses in the liberal arts. (Joe Arden. *Dangerous Decades: The 70s to the 90s*. Feb. 2021, p. 13.)*

Other sections of the RFP also aligned with what Dr. Beakes had been pressing Maryland and other schools to do. For example, the minimum average class size could no longer be 20 students but had to be reduced to 16. Furthermore, acceptance of transfer credit applicable to a degree had to be liberalized and the “final-30” rule no longer allowed. Students who earned any 30 credits from a USAFE-contracted school would fulfill the residency requirement for a bachelor’s degree. If Maryland did not accept these conditions, we would eliminate ourselves from the bidding process. But if we did accept, that might signal sudden and difficult-to-explain-convincingly capitulation to Beakes’ threats and demands.

Good for Maryland. From the good-for-Maryland viewpoint, though, it was apparent that other RFP authors were heeding the recent criticisms of the USAFE program. Perhaps the most critical was the provision that cost would not be the most important factor in choosing the winning institution(s). The lowest bidder would not automatically be awarded the contract, reversing an approach that USAFE had been using and defending for some time.

Also in the good-for-Maryland vein, the RFP required bidders to explain in their proposals three new features never before considered by Dr. Beakes when inviting schools to USAFE. The proposals had to include chapters that detailed the bidder’s (1) prior experience delivering comparable education programs, (2) quality control plan and (3) library support plans.

We were pleased to see these requirements included in the RFP. At the undergraduate level, no American college or university had Maryland’s long experience offering overseas programs for the U.S. military. Similarly, “quality control” was already one of Maryland’s

acknowledged strengths among institutions working with USAFE. And finally, Maryland was the only undergraduate university that had its own library in Europe and had for years been interacting productively with the USAFE library system.

Maryland Proposal Strategy

Regardless of what we found bad or good in the text of the RFP, our assumption was that this contest was not going to take place on a level playing field. Merely submitting the best proposal would not guarantee a win. USAFE had confirmed that observation when we bid for the graduate counseling program and lost to Boston University.

Going Big. Given how Dr. Beakes divided the undergraduate curriculum in the RFP, it was clear to Drs. Arden and Massey, the two leaders most responsible for developing our strategy, that Maryland would have to submit and win not just one bid for the undergraduate program but three bids, one for each discipline. What was already going to be an enormous amount of work was effectively tripled.

Concurrently, we had to make an impregnable case for the government awarding all of the undergraduate programs to Maryland. We had to present in a vivid, clear and convincing way the educational, managerial, qualitative and fiscal benefits for doing exactly what Dr. Beakes had structured the RFP to prevent.

In the most literal sense, the Maryland proposal had to “go big or go home.” The differences between the Maryland proposal and the next best submitted by any other institution had to be so substantial that our proposal would leave the government no choice but to pick Maryland. The “go-big” rule of thumb applied not just to the overall proposals but to each individual section of each proposal, with the possible exception of cost. With cost now a secondary factor, we could afford, within reason, to expand academic programs, institute the most thorough quality controls imaginable, and provide more library support than anyone could anticipate.

Thoroughness and Detail. A strategic key to a winning proposal was for Maryland to overwhelm the judges with so much clearly explained and detailed information about our programs and operational processes that there would be no room left for any other college or university to provide a reasonable alternative. We were pleased to find that in this RFP the government placed no word or page limits. Our hope was that such a detailed proposal would leave the government less flexibility and room to maneuver in favor of a proposal from a rival institution.

Furthermore, we also had to instill in the minds of the government officials responsible for picking the final winner a feeling of anxiety about what would happen if Maryland did lose and mounted a legal challenge to the decision. Under those circumstances, when a neutral adjudicator reviews a decision, it is more likely that the most thorough and detailed proposal will prevail.

Prior Experience and Quality Control: Perhaps the most vivid example of the Maryland proposal approach can be seen in how we treated the information about our faculty.

Of all the advantages Maryland possessed, the most important was the strength of our faculty. We were the only undergraduate institution in Europe whose faculty met the standards of a major state university, the only to have a full-time salaried faculty

component and the only to require its senior academic staff to hold the doctorate and have significant teaching experience. These attributes had been fundamental to the Maryland program since its start in 1949, not part of a scheme hastily contrived to beef up the proposal.

When writing the “prior experience” chapter of the proposal we presented a profile of our current and recent-past faculty that summarized degrees, experience, expertise and teaching-evaluation statistics that no other bidder could match. Moreover, these were not faculty members we were promising to bring to Europe if we won the contracts but a faculty that was already on the job and ready to go. And we presented this information in the three separate proposals, with the information that was appropriate for each discipline

For the “quality control” chapter, we featured the faculty again. To guarantee to students and the government that they would always have detailed information about our faculty members, UMUC pledged in its proposals to distribute to every education center updated biographies for each faculty member scheduled to teach there in the upcoming term. By doing that, students, counselors and ESOs would know at the time of registration not only which courses were on the Maryland schedule but who would be teaching the courses along with information about each instructor’s expertise, qualifications and experience.

But quality control did not end there. The proposals went on to explain how, throughout each term, qualified academic administrators would systematically and regularly conduct class visits to ensure on a continuous basis that Maryland instruction was meeting the high standards we required. From the visits, feedback would be provided to instructors on how well they were doing and, whenever necessary, what steps they could take to improve their courses and instructional effectiveness.

Finally, near the end of each term, students would be given the opportunity, by means of required course evaluations, to provide feedback about the courses, faculty and teaching they had just experienced. These course evaluations, which were required, not optional, became part of every faculty member’s personnel record. The information was first shared with the faculty members, who were required to review, summarize the data and then forward it to the European Division headquarters where it would be analyzed and filed.

Maryland Wins in USAFE and Much More

In March 1984, in a wonderful but shockingly unexpected announcement, USAFE awarded the entire undergraduate program to UMUC. We won all three academic programs: liberal arts, computers and business.

Such decisions are made by government officials acting confidentially and we have never found out with certainty how we won. But I often recall a story Dr. Ernest Hankamer shared soon after the decision. Dr. Hankamer was our United Kingdom Area Director and had developed extremely close contacts with many Air Force ESOs at USAFE bases there. On one occasion, perhaps a social occasion over drinks, one of those ESOs revealed to Dr. Hankamer, “You know, it was not supposed to turn out this way. Maryland was not supposed to win.”

That simple statement confirmed what I and many others have always believed. For some combination of factors – perhaps the embarrassment of *The Stars and Stripes* series,

perhaps the quality of our proposals, perhaps the extremely positive relationships Dr. Arden so painstakingly forged with USAFE leaders – someone senior to Dr. Beakes overruled what he had planned to happen and probably voted to happen.

If it had been left to Dr. Beakes alone, Maryland would have been awarded none of the undergraduate programs or, at most, only the liberal arts program. There was simply too much history and too much “bad water under the bridge.” By 1983, Maryland did not fit anywhere in the Beakes scheme other than maybe, and only “maybe,” being the consortium member that offered the liberal-arts courses.

But it was not left to Dr. Beakes alone and that was perhaps the most important change that the adoption of the Federal Government’s competitive bidding process brought to USAFE. It put an end to Dr. Beakes and ESOs having the power simply to pick up a telephone, dial up any number of colleges or universities in the United States and unilaterally invite them to bring their programs to United States Air Forces, Europe. That power came to an end in 1983.

The other unintended consequence for Maryland of USAFE’s adopting the Federal Government’s competitive bidding process, and perhaps the most significant of all, is that it consolidated UMUC’s position as the preeminent academic institution in overseas military education for the next 30 years. And that preeminence was not limited to Air Force or limited to Europe but extended to all of the U.S. military service branches in all of the overseas theaters around the world.

Contract cycles came and went over the next three decades as did the various programs, rules and requirements that the government would include in RFP after RFP. The formulae and guides for how Maryland would respond had deep roots that extended back to those that were developed under duress in the 1983 USAFE proposal. That was the prototype, template and trial by fire in which we earned our stripes and learned what we had to do to keep from losing them. Having worked on the European Division versions of all of those proposals, I can attest that the strategy, the values and often even the wording was remarkably similar, whether it was a proposal we wrote in the 1980s, 1990s or 2000s. And throughout that time, those proposals won all of the major contracts.

Postscript: *Other OMA Memoirs Project authors have contributed important insights to Maryland’s USAFE situation, competitive bidding, RFPs and proposal preparation. For additional perspectives on these critical issues, I strongly recommend reading **Dangerous Decades: The 70’s to the 90’s** by Joe Arden and **Responding to Government RFPs** by Gina Schmidt-Phillips. jcg*