

Case Study: Misuse of Government Aircraft

Description:	RADM (NFO) uses Replacement Air Group (RAG) tactical aircraft (F 14) for cross-country flights. O-6 RAG CO endorses.
Background:	Flights reported through the Commander Naval Air Forces (CNAF) Hotline and an informal investigation ensued. Initial findings indicate marginal training value for flights, they were repeated to the same airfield and they occurred during a moratorium on cross-country flying as the result of tight budgets.

Findings:

1. Commander Naval Air Forces (CNAF) had disseminated concerns about the limited value of cross-country flights. While CNAF was aware of the popularity of such flights, he felt the training value did not compete with sorties in the Naval Aviation Enterprise (NAE) matrix and had issued a moratorium on them.
2. RADM was aware of the CNAF moratorium.
3. The RADM had commanded a fighter squadron, a deep draft, and an aircraft carrier, and was now in command of a training group. He was fully NATOPS qualified and all certifications were up to date. There were no tactical aviation assets in his command, but his command did conduct evaluations of tactical aviation assets.
4. RADM said the primary purpose for the flights was to allow junior officer pilots to take cross-country flights and experience their value. He said that he felt having a Flag in the cockpit trumped the moratorium as he would ensure the experience was meaningful. He said a secondary but invaluable purpose for the flights was to allow him, as a senior naval aviator, to remain familiar with the aviation environment. He said he felt it was a positive morale issue for juniors to see Admirals flying rather than just being “desk jockeys.” He said junior aviators regularly approached him during the Friday happy hours at the club and that his flight suit was a symbol of their enduring culture.
5. The RADM stated he felt morale in the ready rooms and within the

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- fighter community at large was quite poor. Most loved to fly occasional cross-country flights, and thus felt micro-managed and short-changed by the leadership. He stated that cross-country flying helped build camaraderie and a bond between squadron aviators. Young and inexperienced aviators on cross-country flights could learn a great deal about servicing their aircraft, working with different air controllers, flying new approaches, operating at new airfields, etc.
6. The RADM said he sought permission from the RAG CO to fly a cross-country to an Air Force base in CONUS.
 7. The CO of the RAG said he approved the request, despite the moratorium, because he thought it would be a single event, and besides, it was an Admiral's request. He said he assigned an instructor pilot to fly the RADM to the AFB for the weekend.
 8. The 04 RAG Operations Officer said that he approached the CO about the flight because he had disapproved it. He asked if the moratorium had been lifted and the CO had said that it had not. The Ops Officer reported that several instructors had complained about the double standard but the CO said, "They'll get over it."
 9. The cross-country flight took place without incident. The RADM admitted that his friend was very, very impressed with the F-14 and him for that matter. He said he felt like his feelings of pride made the rigors of a Navy career "all worth it."
 10. Three weeks later, the RADM submitted a second request for another cross-country to the same AFB.
 11. The Ops officer hand carried the request to the CO and asked, "What do you want to do about this?" He said the CO replied, "Let's do it one more time." The Ops officer then asked another instructor pilot to fly the RADM. He said some of the complaining had stopped because the instructors felt it could be a good deal for them.
 12. The following month the RADM requested his third cross-country.
 13. The Ops officer said he approved it because he would just be over-ruled.
 14. The CO said he knew he should have stood up to the RADM before but he had been intimidated. He said he told the RADM that this would be the final cross-country he would be able to approve as his operational flight funding was being closely scrutinized by CNAF.
 15. The third cross-country to same AFB took place uneventfully.
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16. An un-identified person reported these series of events to CNAF through the hotline available for such perceived indiscretions.

17. CNAF opened up an informal investigation around these incidents. The decisions, the motives, and the events were all reviewed by the assigned CNAF JAG.

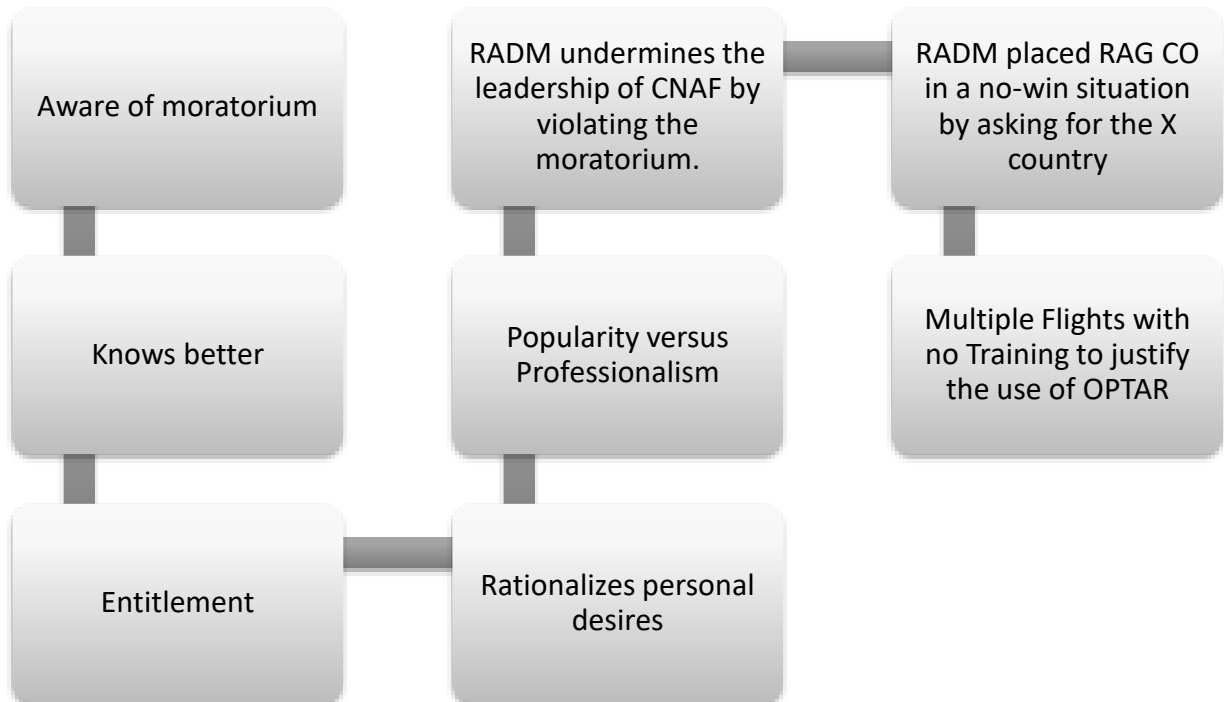
18. The investigation revealed the RADM was dating a woman who lived in close proximity to the AFB. He was recently divorced from a bitter marriage.

19. After the facts were in, CNAF had a closed-door conversation with the RADM (no mast, no letters of admonition or censure were prepared).

20. The RADM retired from active duty in March of the following year (no formal charges were made).

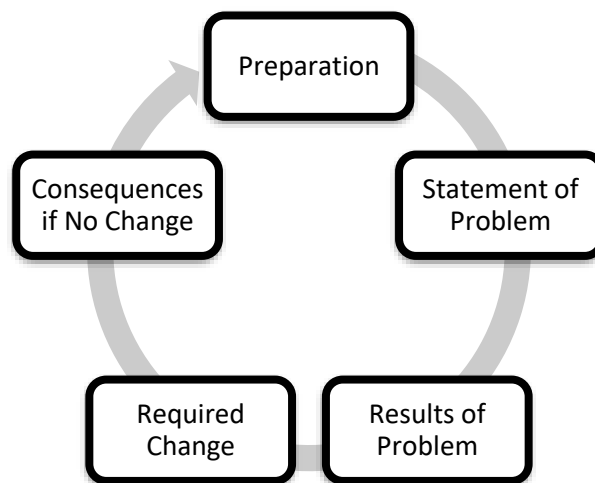
Facilitation Questions:

1. Diagram the thought-to-action chain.
 - a. Entitlement, aware of moratorium, knows better, rationalizes personal desires, popularity versus professionalism, undermines leadership, solicits others to undermine, conducts multiple flights to visit female.
2. Why didn't he just use commercial aircraft?
3. Have you ever observed a similar situation whereby a senior undermines policy? Is this due to a sense of entitlement or a desire for popularity?
4. Discuss the RADM's rationale in Findings bullets 4 and 5. Is the RADM at least partially correct?
5. Discuss the RAG CO's challenge. Have you ever faced a similar situation or observed one? What are some ways the RAG CO might have handled it?
6. Discuss the Ops Officer's challenge. How might he have handled it?
7. If the story were different and the RADM had been flying to various places without the girlfriend fact pattern would you view his actions differently? Why?



Social Constructive Confrontation Discussion:

1. The first opportunity for constructive confrontation is internal. In this case, the O-8 and O-6 officers would benefit from a constructive confrontation with themselves. The O-8 needs to do some self-analysis of exactly what he is doing and the likely effects on others, etc. He needs to project how this will all end. The O-6 needs to figure out why he is breaking known policy and the problems within his command that this will cause.
2. A next opportunity for confrontation might come from a friend or colleague. These “on-lookers” often know about or strongly suspect affairs, extramarital romances, and other instances of misbehavior. Have you ever been in such a situation? Approaching a friend or co-worker in such a situation would be very difficult and you would have to be sure that real, negative consequences were likely. Using the case study, your own observations, or a hypothetical example, how would you realistically handle such a confrontation? Look at the wheel below for a template.



Preparation:

1. Put yourself in the position of the squadron operations officer. How would you prepare to confront the skipper? Where would you have the discussion? What facts would you use?
2. Now put yourself in the position of the skipper. How would you prepare to constructively confront the O-8?

Statement of Problem:

1. How would you state the problem in terms of what it is for you or for the unit?
2. What would you be listening for and how might you refute that?

Results of Problem:

1. How would you state the likely results or negative outcomes from the problem?
2. What would you be listening for and how might you refute that?

Required Change:

1. What change in behavior do you want to see?
2. Listen.

Consequences if No Change:

1. Hopefully, by this point in the confrontation, you are having a discussion and not a shouting match. The understanding of consequences would be something that both of you agree to, vice you listing them

Case Conclusions:

1. What main points did you take from this case study?
2. What are your concerns as a facilitator with this case study?