

## 53 selected for Language Enabled Airman Program

(Courtesy Air Force Culture and Language Center)

MAXWELL AIR FORCE BASE, Ala. – Fifty-three Airmen were recently selected to participate in a career-long program to not only sustain, but enhance, track and use their language and cross-cultural skills, said officials from the Air Force Culture and Language Center. The Airmen are the newest members of the Language Enabled Airman Program, which provides the Service with language-enabled Airmen from across Air Force specialties.

"LEAP's end goal is to produce a language speaker who can perform their core job duties in their respective foreign language," said Mr. Jay Warwick, director of the AFCLC. "Commanders have a need for cross-culturally competent Airmen - individuals with language, cultural and regional abilities - to help accomplish the Air Force mission. LEAP is one way we help provide that."

The most recent selectees join a group of about 1,000 other LEAP Airmen. Selected candidates had proficiency in 21 different foreign languages, bringing the total number of languages represented in LEAP to 58. Among the languages represented were Spanish and French, as well as less common specialties such as Farsi, Burmese, Swahili and Urdu.

The spring 2012 board was the fourth LEAP selection board, and it differed from previous boards in a few aspects, said program officials. One important difference was that this board, made up of language experts from across the Air Force, was conducted virtually. "Although it may not be possible to have virtual boards in every instance," said Mr. Zachary Hickman, AFCLC Language Branch chief, "the cost savings were significant compared to bringing all the board members together in person."

Additionally, the target goal of selectees was smaller – only 50 – than in earlier boards.

"We knew this board would need to be smaller than those in the past because of funding constraints, so we targeted a relatively small group of Air Force units and communities and invited them to field candidates," Mr. Hickman said. Those Airmen invited to apply included members of the International Health Specialist and special operations communities, as well as others. "Due to the limited nature of the board, we wanted to target those communities who have a significant stake in building international partnerships and fulfilling other language requirements within the general purpose force."

LEAP Airmen participate in four to six-week Language Intensive Training Events every three to four years, and receive weekly online instruction with a professional language instructor. In addition, LEAP participants can reasonably expect to have at least one duty assignment that fills a language-related billet during their Air Force careers. They can also expect other shorter-term assignments that require their skills, Hickman added.

The next LEAP selection board is scheduled for fall 2012. Eligibility requirements and application requirements are scheduled to be announced mid-summer on the AFCLC website at [www.culture.af.mil/LEAP](http://www.culture.af.mil/LEAP).

General information on LEAP is also available via the website, or by calling the AFCLC at 334-953-7729. For the latest updates, follow the Center on Twitter @AFCLC, or on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/airforcecultureandlanguagecenter](http://www.facebook.com/airforcecultureandlanguagecenter).