



(U//FOUO) New Hire Story: What Is a Loadmaster?

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(U//FOUO) *Note from SIGINT Communications: in a [recent story](#) we issued a call for interesting anecdotes showing how new hires can be taken by surprise by the specialized jargon of their new workplace. Today's article was submitted in response:*

(U) My story goes back even before my civilian hiring process to my Air Force basic training, during which I took a battery of tests that would be used to steer me into the appropriate career field and follow-on training. I had, apparently, already passed some number of tests that resulted in my being held at Lackland AFB in "casual status" waiting for orders to a school. The daily routine was much less traumatic than basic training-- I didn't have to wake up until it was actually daylight and I spent the work day doing whatever odd jobs needed doing around the base: mess check, grass cutting, painting, etc.

(U) Meanwhile, some of my fellow airmen had orders to train as traffic analysts. I was quite surprised to learn that the Air Force was involved in helping to solve traffic congestion problems in cities. Finally, I had a note in the orderly room to report to the assignments section to get "the word". The word turned out to be a choice: the tests said I was qualified to train as a linguist or a loadmaster. My cynical side said, "The assignments section was working on jobs beginning with the letter L."

(U) I didn't know anything about either career field and no one would tell me anything, except that I had to make a decision by the next morning. That evening I was going through the chow line behind a senior (two-striper) airman who had numerous bandages and a cast on his left leg. As luck would have it, we sat at the same table and the conversation turned to "what happened to you?" He said he routinely flew as a crew member on cargo aircraft into Viet Nam. While waiting for return cargo, he was assigned as a spotter on a C-47 gunship (known to many as "Puff the Magic Dragon"). On his last mission, ground fire wounded three of the crew. I asked him what his career field was and he said, "Loadmaster." Thirty-eight years later, I still consider this one of my better "HUMINT collection efforts".

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(hired as a language intern after 4 years in the U.S. Air Force Security Service)

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