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SURGICALLY SHAPING A FINANCIAL HYDRA

REPROGRAMMING UNITED STATES AIR FORCE END STRENGTH TO THE AIR RESERVE COMPONENT

by

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Biography

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Abstract

The financial crisis in the United States constitutes an ominous threat to national security. The economic instrument of power represents the essential foundation for the pillars of diplomatic, informational, and military strength. Given the severity of the crisis, no governmental department or agency is immune from scrutiny, and comprehensive decisions are in order to get the budget under control. The Department of Defense has experienced a level of resourcing deemed essential to deal with the past decade of conflict. With operations in Iraq and Afghanistan receding, it is time to adjust national military strategy and resource at levels appropriate for managing the current situation at an acceptable level of risk. Exceedingly difficult force structure decisions regarding end strength, basing, and equipment are inevitable. Unfortunately, the financial crisis coincides with a time of exploding personnel costs for service members as well as looming recapitalization requirements for the United States Air Force.

In both civilian and military leadership realms, there is broad consensus the time has come to rebalance the force. One viable approach with potential to be a significant part of the solution is to transition active duty Air Force end strength to the more affordable Air Reserve Component. Such an adjustment mitigates risk, possibly maintains overall Air Force end strength, and leverages operational capabilities of the Air Reserve Component refined over the past several years of war and contingency operations. This approach can help meet the objectives of the 2010 Quadrennial Defense Review and national strategy policy, while producing funding offsets for recapitalization and modernization requirements. This strategy also provides substantial opportunities for active component Air Force members to continue military service in the ARC, capitalizes on training investments, and helps the Air Force manage the difficult task of downsizing the active component.

Introduction

The United States Air Force is in the midst of a financial hydra. This untimely monster has three heads, each representing a current financial dilemma. The first, and most dominant head is the budget crisis, with the national debt representing the foremost threat to national security.[1] The second head represents force structure with exploding personnel costs. Third, the Air Force has looming requirements for equipment recapitalization and modernization. Severing a head hoping the problem will disappear is not an option, so we must find ways to surgically shape and manage the monster, rather than try to kill it. Cutting too deep in an effort to meet budget restraints will undoubtedly sprout additional challenges…new hydra heads. Second or third order effects of deep cuts may or may not be predictable or manageable and may result in excessive risk. The financial crisis demands the Air Force and the Department of Defense in its entirety dramatically reduce the baseline budget. In a 5 January 2012 speech President Obama declared,

> …we have to renew our economic strength here at home, which is the foundation of our strength around the world. And that includes putting our fiscal house in order. To that end, the Budget Control Act passed by Congress last year with the support of Republicans and Democrats alike mandates reductions in federal spending, including defense spending. I've insisted that we do that responsibly. The security of our nation and the lives of our men and women in uniform depend on it. That's why I called for this comprehensive defense review to clarify our strategic interests in a fast-changing world, and to guide our defense priorities and spending over the coming decade because the size and the structure of our military and defense budgets have to be driven by a strategy, not the other way around. Moreover, we have to remember the lessons of history. We can't afford to repeat the mistakes that have been made in the past after World War II, after Vietnam when our military was left ill prepared for the future. As Commander in Chief, I will not let that happen again. Not on my watch.[2]

This paper will consider an opportunity to manage the budget situation by shaping the force structure head of this hydra through reprogramming actions that transition active component (AC) end strength to the Air Reserve Component (ARC). Such a transition would

dramatically lower total personnel costs and in turn, produce funding offsets to pay for required recapitalization and modernization. There are a few interconnected issues laced into this topic. A review of published policy, studies, and opinions will portray widespread consensus for a rebalancing effort and preservation of today's operational reserve. From there, this paper will tie the significance of reprogramming end strength to the mandate of maintaining an operational ARC. A summary of force structure elements for the Department of the Air Force as published in the 2010 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) will reveal the importance of timely Total Force Air Force (TFAF) end strength and recapitalization planning, and highlight the risk of losing ARC operational relevancy if deliberate planning is absent.[3] Next, a notional example of rebalancing end strength from the AC to the ARC will demonstrate the magnitude of potential cost savings. Finally, the paper will offer thoughts on organizational designs and missions for this restructured ARC, along with some peripheral opportunities and obstacles germane to such a transition.

Consensus of National Strategy Documents, Studies, and Senior Leaders

In recognition of the severity of the budget crisis, key senior civilian and military leaders have publicized the necessity to make prudent changes to force structure, albeit with a Total Force mindset.[4] Pessimistic interpretations of this philosophy include cuts in iron flow, support equipment, end strength, and reductions in benefits. The dire economic situation demands such measures be on the table for consideration, and as such, pessimism is understandable. Senior leaders also acknowledge the challenge of managing additional risks introduced by taking such actions.[5] The U.S. can ill afford to implement cuts that will create a hollow force, lacking the training and equipment necessary to defend the vital interests of the country.[6] Yet acceptance of some form of risk is necessary to make the force more affordable.

Current national strategy documents echo the importance of rebalancing the force. Published studies and spoken and written word of senior leaders unanimously support this common theme. Specific references are included in table 1.

Table 1 – Consensus for Rebalancing the Force

National Strategy Documents and Reports	Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense[7] 2010 National Security Strategy[8] 2011 National Military Strategy[9] 2010 Quadrennial Defense Review[10]
Published Studies	U.S. Commission on the National Guard and Reserves[11] Managing the Reserve Component as an Operational Force[12] Comprehensive Review of the Future Role of the Reserve Component[13]
Civilian Senior Leaders	Barack Obama, President of the United States[14] Robert Gates, Secretary of Defense[15] Michael Donley, Secretary of the Air Force[16] Dennis McCarthy, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs[17]
AC Military Leaders	Admiral Mike Mullen, CJCS[18] General Norton Schwartz, CSAF[19]
ARC Senior Leaders	Lt Gen Harry Wyatt, Director of the Air National Guard[20] Lt Gen Charles E. Stenner Jr., Chief of the Air Force Reserve[21]

Specificity about what rebalancing the force means remains elusive with regard to equipment and end strength levels for the three components of the TFAF. One indicator of the rebalancing effort is the Air Force repurposing 5,600 AC positions with relatively lower priority, to fill higher priority requirements.[22] This appears to be a reasonable decision based on priorities, but cannot realize a reduction in personnel costs, as AC end strength does not change. A comprehensive rebalancing effort requires meaningful programmatic and Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) style actions for strategic basing decisions, and dispassionate debates to derive appropriate end strength for each mission. A fundamental requirement for such an effort is the comprehensive integration of current and future capabilities of the operational reserve.

The Mandate for an Operational Reserve

Beginning in 2008, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates issued directives institutionalizing the Reserve Component as an operational force, a major milestone supported by Congress. With supportive national policy published and overwhelming consensus at hand, it is time to ensure perpetuity of a properly trained, equipped, and resourced ARC integrated in major wartime and contingency plans in addition to a robust domestic operations capacity.[23] As current overseas contingency operations diminish and budget strains intensify, some will undoubtedly view the operational reserve as excess force structure ripe for budgetary exploitation.[24] Inefficiencies and waste must certainly be rooted out, but considering the unprecedented experience levels and peacetime affordability of the ARC, it would be foolish to let parochialism reign, allowing a loss of momentum or squandering of investment.

> As recently as 2008, the Commission on the National Guard and Reserve (CNGR) characterized the transition to an operational reserve as "unplanned," requiring further scrutiny by the public and Congress. Nonetheless, the CNGR deemed the operational reserve a "necessity" and found "no reasonable alternative" considering "the threats that the United States faces at home and abroad, the looming fiscal challenges the nation confronts, the projected demands for forces, the unique capabilities resident in the reserve components, and their cost-effectiveness."[25]

The Commission on the National Guard and Reserve aptly recognized the value of the operational RC and the importance of executing subsequent studies to realize additional ways to capitalize, particularly in light of the budget crisis.

Notwithstanding policy mandates for an operational ARC, some legacy flying missions face conundrums due to persistent problems in acquisition or production, and unbalanced basing decisions. Examples include KC-X acquisition delays and transferring newer C-130s from the ANG to the AC.[26] Also, a fighter bathtub dilemma is of particular concern due to deep cuts in the F-22 production run and delays in the F-35 program, compounded by near term retirement of

a significant number of F-16s.[27] According to the Air Force News Service, only one ANG unit is currently on the F-35 basing candidate list.[28] The ARC is the shareholder possessing the majority of the oldest tail numbers in the Air Force inventory.[29] The operational value of the ARC will quickly atrophy if not properly considered during recapitalization and basing decisions as new weapon systems are bed-down, along with necessary service life extension and modernization programs to bridge the gaps to next generation aircraft. With national policy and the latest QDR in hand it is time to confront budget inevitabilities by rebalancing end strength and strategically pairing equipment with specific TFAF units, with a goal of maximizing integration of a durable and affordable operational reserve, properly resourced to execute assigned missions in support of the National Security Strategy.

The 2010 Quadrennial Defense Review and Implications for the ARC

The objectives of the 2010 QDR by no means ignore large conventional or nuclear threats posed by nation states, or U.S. responsibilities assumed as the hegemon of the current unipolar world. However, the notion of structuring the force to fight two major regional conflicts against state actors is no longer in vogue. The 2010 QDR supports requirements to defend national interests against a broad scope of threats at home and abroad, but somewhat departs from previous planning and resourcing for low probability high risk wars, opting instead to better prepare for a diverse array of higher probability conflicts.[30] It is therefore logical to have a diverse military force. As Citizen-Airmen, the ARC brings diversity to the fight by virtue of the skills and experiences acquired in civilian life. These skills are a force multiplier with the potential to bring broad perspective to application of hard power, as well as soft power missions for civil stability or humanitarian objectives. In addition to planning for future contingencies, rotational missions and maintenance of a forward presence remain of paramount importance to

national strategy. With deliberate planning and proper resourcing, the ARC will have the capacity to increase contributions, which will be critical if AC force structure contracts.

> The QDR analysis strongly suggested that the Department must further rebalance its policy, doctrine, and capabilities to better support the following six key missions:
>
> - Defend the United States and support civil authorities at home;
> - Succeed in counterinsurgency, stability, and counterterrorism operations;
> - Build the security capacity of partner states;
> - Deter and defeat aggression in anti-access environments;
> - Prevent proliferation and counter weapons of mass destruction; and
> - Operate effectively in cyberspace.[31]

The 2010 QDR presents opportunities to leverage existing capabilities of the ARC in each of these key missions. The importance of defending the homeland rightfully persists as the number one priority, but there is a recognizable shift in focus since the 2006 QDR. The previous rebalancing effort was a technology-based transformation with the objective of widening the capability gap between the U.S. and likely military opponents. It has shifted to rebalancing in support of defense capabilities to contend with the reality of the world we live in. An ideal world situates the U.S. with dominating capabilities where no rival will ever have the capacity to approach parity. The budget crisis and global security picture now drive a more realistic approach based on QDR priorities. Embedded in these priorities are operational and strategic competencies of the ARC. A relatively lower cost capability is already in hand with room for growth, provided appropriate force structure decisions are forthcoming.

Some elements of the USAF structure targeted for reduction according to the 2010 QDR appear in table 2. If projected new acquisitions survive budget cuts, this is a baseline representation of primary aircraft inventory (PAI) for indicated missions to bed-down across the TFAF in the near term, and will be an integral factor in any rebalancing effort. Some related challenges to address include basing decisions, determining stand-alone and association

constructs, and ultimately melding missions with end strength requirements.

> …DoD has determined that U.S. forces, for the duration of the FY 2011–15 Future Years Defense Program, will conform to the general parameters outlined below. Where ranges of force elements are provided, these reflect variations in force levels that are planned across the FYDP.[32]

Table 2 - 2010 QDR Force Structure Elements of the Air Force[33, 34]

Wing Equivalents	Primary Mission Aircraft	Potential Impact on PAI
30 – 32 airlift and aerial refueling	33 per wing equiv. (1056 a/c max.)	-150
5 long-range bomber	up to 96	-24
6 air superiority	72 per wing equiv. (432 a/c max.)	-650
10 – 11 theater strike	72 per wing equiv. (792 a/c max.)	

As column three indicates, maximum numbers of aircraft in the 2010 QDR report compared with the September 2010 TFAF primary aircraft inventory indicate significant near term reductions in tail numbers appear imminent for these missions.[35] Major reductions in end strength will be the obvious corollary with this reduced aircraft inventory, along with the distinct possibility of base closures. Without a strategic plan for allocating scarce resources to maintain ARC capabilities, the vision of organizing this smaller equipment force structure and capitalizing on the operational relevancy of the ARC is a mere hallucination.

The Operational ARC at Risk

Over two decades of sustained involvement in conflict and contingency operations consumed enormous financial resources and made the end of service life for Air Force equipment approach faster. The current budget environment has introduced unprecedented risk that may impede recapitalization requirements. If history holds true, two trends put elements of the operational ARC at great risk. The first is the historical tendency of the AC to hand down legacy aircraft to the ARC while gaining the vast majority of new iron.[36] The second concern is

the enormous cost of fifth generation fighters, along with program cost over runs becoming the norm, driving decisions for reduced and/or delayed production runs for new acquisitions. This was the case with the B-2, the end of the Cold War notwithstanding, and more recently for the F-22 as actual costs ballooned with program changes.[37] In 1988, the original cost goal per flyaway unit, adjusted to FY2009 dollars, was roughly $60M.[38] Actual cost by FY2009 exceeded $154M.[39] The stage is set for the F-35 to realize the same fate, with the Pentagon announcing the third restructuring of the program in three years, and a delay in production for over 120 aircraft.[40] If these two historical trends hold true, eventually there may not be enough iron flow to recapitalize some ARC units, placing operational relevancy and the ability to support war plan and contingency operations at risk. It also increases the likelihood of force structure reductions for ARC units as legacy aircraft are retired during a period of inventory contraction, ultimately jeopardizing cost savings ARC units provide.

Any transition of AC end strength to the ARC must include plans for complementary iron flow and recapitalization to replace or upgrade aircraft close to the end of service life. Investment options are available for bridging capability gaps. Some options include purchasing flight simulators and reducing continuation flying training currency requirements to mitigate fleet fatigue, service life extension and modernization programs for legacy platforms, or acquisition of more affordable 4.5-generation aircraft with production capability largely established such as F-15 and F-16 fighters. These are less desirable choices compared to acquisition of next generation aircraft but all options must be on the table in search of an acceptable balance of affordability, capability, and risk. Regardless of decisions made about equipment, if the ARC is to be a major part of the solution to the country's budget problems and persist as an operational force in TFAF flying missions, the selected modernization strategy must

mesh with plans to rebalance end strength.

The 2010 QDR addresses the historic uncertainty of the current security environment, and therefore considers the short term, midterm, and long term planning aspects for force structure through the next 20 years.[41] It is difficult to predict the future of acquisition plan maturation because of the budget crisis. However, it is known that personnel costs currently constitute 25% of the Air Force baseline budget, and this will increase as health care costs continue to rise.[42] Rebalancing the force by transitioning force structure from the AC to the ARC is a cost effective approach that mitigates risk compared to deep cuts in TFAF end strength. The threats presented by the contemporary global situation are too ominous to rely on building up military forces from scratch to deal with crises.

Rebalancing the Total Force Air Force – A Cost Comparison

Thus far, this paper only suggested moving AC end strength to the ARC. To be fair and consistent, the prospect of shutting down ARC units should be on the table as well, especially for multi-unit states or missions losing relevance. However, cutting ARC end strength is a self-defeating proposition if hitting budget targets and preserving capability at an acceptable level of risk is the ultimate goal. Taking down ARC flags may be appropriate as an offset to facilitate conversion to new missions or to properly resource under-resourced ARC missions in a zero growth environment. However, this will not result in a more cost effective TFAF. As previously mentioned, the AC has begun repurposing lower priority jobs. This is a zero growth re-prioritization with a cost to losing career fields. Intensifying budget pressures will eventually force a new decision point related to personnel costs. Should the Air Force sacrifice capability through a reduction in force, or substantially move force structure to the ARC to reduce personnel and operating costs and preserve capability? The AC end strength is already at the

lowest authorized level since 1947.[43] Further cuts in TFAF end strength is not a popular thought, but alternatively, what sort of savings could be realized by moving end strength to the ARC?

Table 3 represents a reasonable method to compare the average cost per uniformed individual across the TFAF.[44] Dollar figures are from the baseline MILPERS budget authority *requested* in the FY 2012 President's Budget.

Table 3 – FY2012 Baseline MILPERS Request for Pay, Allowances, and Subsistence

Branch	FY 2012 MILPERS Baseline	Authorized End Strength	FY 2012 Avg. Per Person Cost	Percentage of AC Member Cost
Active Duty* (65%)	$27,234,248,000	332,800	$81,834	
Air National Guard (21%)	$3,114,149,000	106,700	$29,186	35.67%
Air Force Reserve (14%)	$1,968,553,000	71,400	$27,571	33.69%
Totals	$32,316,950,000	510,900		
*USAFA Cadets excluded				

Table 4 is a notional estimation of an alternative baseline budget requirement with the AC reduced by 15% and the ARC comprising 50% of the TFAF. The percentages for the guard and reserve represent an arbitrary increase in both components to demonstrate potential savings, rather than a suggested division. For MILPERS alone, the reduction in cost is well over $4B for FY12.[45] With a smaller AC, one can also assume substantial reduction in Permanent Change of Station (PCS) and medical care costs.

Table 4 – Notional FY2012 Baseline MILPERS with 50% ARC Force Mix

Branch	Notional MILPERS Baseline	Notional Authorized End Strength	FY 2012 Avg. Per Person Cost	Percentage of AC Member Cost
Active Duty (50%)	$20,904,495,300	255,450	$81,834	
Air National Guard (30%)	$4,473,338,220	153,270	$29,186	35.66%
Air Force Reserve (20%)	$2,817,204,780	102,180	$27,571	33.69%
Totals	$28,195,038,300	510,900		
Actual FY12 Budget Request	$32,316,950,000			
Notional MILPERS Reduction	$4,121,911,700			

Salary costs aside, Active Guard Reservists and federal technicians are less expensive than AC

personnel because of little or no PCS requirements. This is no small issue, as the FY 2012 President's Budget includes $1,238,975,000 for AC PCS moves. These moves are an important aspect of military service for AC personnel to ensure depth and breadth of experiences for career progression, however, a smaller AC force will result in fewer people to PCS, thereby realizing a reduced PCS budget requirement.

During times of ARC mobilization, personnel costs are on par with the AC. However, it is an undeniable reality that when not mobilized, traditional ARC members are approximately one-third the cost of active duty members and those savings persist through service careers and into retirement.[46] Accurate cost savings are difficult to derive absent an in depth study of a rebalanced TFAF structure, however, this simple example demonstrates the magnitude of potential annual MILPERS expense reductions. If this concept became reality, a major follow on step would be to determine the best roles and missions to utilize the added ARC end strength.

Roles and Missions for an Expanded ARC

The cost comparison provided earlier supposes a 50/50 split between the AC and ARC, which would result in a shift of over 77,000 positions. This could translate into over 60 new ARC wings, which is more than enough to add one unit to every U.S. state and territory. This may or may not make sense depending on the recruiting base and availability of facilities and equipment to support growth. In some instances, shutting down an AC mission could provide this opportunity. More realistically, it makes good sense to begin by fixing deficiencies in under-resourced missions. In missions with room to grow, the Air Force can add equipment and personnel Unit Type Codes to give existing ARC units more expeditionary capability. This is especially tempting in airlift and aerial refueling missions where the ARC is a major operational contributor every day across the globe. A strategic decision to robust association constructs is

another excellent option to transition AC personnel to the ARC while maintaining TFAF overall end strength. This can maximize the return on investment of existing facilities and equipment, while creating significant cost saving opportunities through consolidation efforts, and deactivation of installations no longer required for TFAF basing.

Although the ARC has demonstrated excellent capability to perform all assigned roles and missions, some emerging missions appear to be a superb fit for this proposal, considering current budget circumstances and recapitalization challenges. One such success story is ISR missions with remotely piloted aircraft (RPA) assigned to the ARC. There is an insatiable appetite for near real time full motion video provided by armed ISR assets such as the MQ-1 Predator and the MQ-9 Reaper. There are already several ARC units performing this mission, with more conversions under consideration. In several ways, this mission is ideal for the ARC due to the nature of remote split operations (RSO). Under this construct, launch and recovery elements launch aircraft from a forward location. Once at altitude, aircraft control relays to an in-garrison mission crew who operate the aircraft via satellite link. ARC units have an established record of success in this mission over the past several years. Many factors have contributed to this success including concurrent and proportional bed-down of equipment, high experience levels, and task proficiency attained during years flying RSO combat missions. The 24/7/365 nature of the mission provides continuous opportunities to stay proficient and get the most use out of infrastructure and equipment. It is cost effective because there is a much smaller mobility footprint, with required support elements readily available at home station. Full time employees and guardsmen performing routine inactive duty or annual training can provide support without the need for mobilization. The active component performs this mission via RSO as well, but the supporting cast is on continuous active duty. When wartime demand subsides,

the ARC demobilizes and reverts to continuation training. For training missions, aircraft launch from centralized locations and mission crews train via satellite link, so there is no need to have RPAs and infrastructure at every unit. This means aircrew can train using airborne assets from any location equipped with a functioning ground control station. Additionally, with available infrastructure and equipment, ARC units can simultaneously perform a manned flying mission at the same Wing, supported by common Medical and Support Groups. This provides opportunities for gaining breadth and depth of experience for career progression and growth of future senior leaders. Much of the same argument is valid for intelligence exploitation and Cyberspace missions.

From a return on investment perspective, fighters and attack aircraft may be the most tempting assets to reduce or remove from ANG units. As equipment, these aircraft provide no utility to Governors for Domestic Operations, although people, vehicles, and many pieces of support equipment are valuable resources for state emergencies. The Air Force Reserve has a more compelling case to remain in, and potentially grow fighter and attack missions, as they have no state mission to perform. Political bouts aside, the prospect of ARC units substantially losing these missions is remote, as they currently operate 56% of fighter and attack aircraft in the TFAF inventory.[47] However, with a smaller fighter force on the horizon, units projected to lose equipment could provide personnel and infrastructure offsets to transition into growth missions.

Flying missions often get most of the focus but with fewer aircraft available in the future, part of the rebalancing effort could robust expeditionary combat support capabilities. Recent conflicts have underscored the importance of security and stability operations in vulnerable or failing states. Additional Security Forces Squadrons and Civil Engineering Prime Beef or Red Horse teams could be organized and put to work in areas of vital interest, protecting communities

and building schools, hospitals and infrastructure. Having the capability to conduct such deployments for training or real world contingencies directly supports objectives of the National Security Strategy. These are just a few examples out of many possibilities. Thus far, some financial prospects, major contributing factors, and mission sets have been presented. The repercussions of a decision to downsize the AC, and significantly increase the size of the ARC must also be given consideration.

Opportunities and Obstacles of an Air Force More Reliant on the ARC

There are several additional advantages to gain by rebalancing force structure from the AC to the ARC not previously mentioned. Transitioning AC members could continue to serve and work toward a military retirement, and remain prepared for opportunities to flow back to the AC. The military would continue to realize a return on the training investment, while service members become a more experienced and diverse community based force working in positions with extensive continuity.

For the duration of their time in service, AC personnel migrating from the downsized Air Force would be a great benefit to the operational ARC, injecting a pre-trained and experienced cadre. Additionally, this rebalancing effort would mitigate risk by enhancing the depth of mobilization capabilities of the strategic reserve if required in the event of major war. From a Domestic Operations perspective, Governors would have access to a larger complement of ANG personnel and equipment to respond to natural disasters and other state emergencies.

Alternatively, there is a range of obstacles to consider. Politically, even if conceptual agreement for a large transition were forthcoming, the challenges may be formidable. Senior civilian leaders and Congress must address global diplomatic and military implications of this rebalancing effort against national strategy objectives. Economically, there will be national and

local challenges as the loss of full time jobs could have devastating effect on service members and communities during a time of financial hardship and high unemployment.

From a force development perspective, the migration of large numbers of active duty positions may interrupt career progression and narrow opportunities for Airmen to realize their full potential. Looking through a task proficiency lens, traditional members of the ARC receive the same technical training as the AC, but depending on civilian skill sets, proficiency levels may not be as high for some part time service members. However, the ARC full time force will remain in place to organize, train, and equip the part time force, and is poised to ensure proper task completion under competent supervision. In addition, the Air Force writes tech data at a level to ensure even the least experienced personnel can achieve procedural accuracy, and areas such as munitions and maintenance have a two-person concept that provides a great backstop.

Another issue that may intensify involves deployed tour lengths. Because the ARC is community based and most traditional members maintain civilian jobs in addition to their military service, shorter deployments are typically preferable for both service members and employers. Shorter tour lengths create higher levels of turnover and can be a detriment to continuity of deployed missions, induces additional training workload, and increases transportation costs. As with any major force structure movement, many complicated tangents will materialize but with proper leadership, these challenges can be resolved.

Conclusion

The economic crisis in the U.S. has manifested itself at the confluence of critical budget issues facing the Air Force. Immediate tempering and long-term resolution of the budget crisis will require a radical departure from the past several years of deficit growth, driving the federal government to cut spending and produce offsets to fund Air Force personnel and recapitalization

requirements at acceptable levels. Any temptation to take across the board percentage cuts or targeting of the largest pieces of the budget pie must give way to strategic decisions that preserve capabilities. A methodical reprogramming of AC force structure to the ARC offers an opportunity to significantly reduce personnel costs over the long term and leverage ARC operational capabilities refined over the past two decades. Such a decision in conjunction with a complementary equipment bed-down plan provides an opportunity to organize the TFAF force structure consistent with key mission requirements outlined in the QDR, and could potentially produce offsets for modernization and recapitalization requirements. This paper does not recommend a specific percentage division between the three components of the TFAF. Rather, it suggests a deliberately planned transitioning of force structure to contend with the reality of the budget. This transition would introduce far less risk than drastic TFAF downsizing, and retirement of legacy aircraft with no replacement capability.

Any suggestion to harvest resources from one program to pay for another will diverge into many controversial arguments with salient points worthy of debate. This is especially true with this option, as it relates to capabilities and requirements in high operations tempo mission areas that challenge a community-based force, some aspects of combat skills proficiency of a part time force, and negative perceptions of accessibility to perform longer tours of deployed duty. With proper leadership and deliberate planning, these issues are manageable.

The shaping of the Air Force budget hydra head must begin with a corporate decision to define, plan, and execute the rebalancing of the Air Force. Reprogramming AC end strength to the ARC is a compelling approach for consideration including adding and growing guard and reserve missions and expansion of associations to maximize sharing of equipment and infrastructure. Any such effort must ensure unit constructs that preserve required operational

capabilities while substantially lowering costs. Considering the dire budget situation, exploding personnel costs, and the age of the fleet, the time to make the transition has arrived. Proper execution will help ensure a cost effective yet capable TFAF that effectively supports the U.S. National Security Strategy.

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[44] These figures do not include the cost of ARC full time personnel, nor do they consider direct and indirect costs of additional full time forces the ARC may require to support additional traditional positions or larger missions. It is logical to assume limited full time growth, as the ARC operates with an austere full time force and baseline organizational requirements are already established.

[45] This programmatic action would transition 15% of AC component positions into traditional guardsmen and reservists.

[46] Federal technician retirement compensation is less expensive and under normal circumstances, starts much later in life than the AC. ARC technicians also pay health insurance premiums out of pocket, and health plans fall outside the realm of Tricare until age 60.

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