

AIR WAR COLLEGE

AIR UNIVERSITY

REBALANCING THE AIR FORCE

A COMPREHENSIVE SOLUTION

By

Bruce K Johnson, Lt Col USAF

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Biography

Lt Col Bruce K. Johnson (MSIR, Troy University Alabama and BS, University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee) is currently attending in-residence Air War College Maxwell AFB Alabama as student in the newly created *Grand Strategy Program*. Previous staff assignments include Air Force Reserve chief of strategic communication plans, Air Force Reserve chief of strategic assessment and future concepts as well as chief of combat forces, Pentagon, Washington, DC. A master navigator with more than 3,000 hours in both the F-111F and C-130H aircraft, he served in a variety of operational capacities: radar strike officer, weapon and tactics officer, operational planner, information warfare/tactical deception officer, current operations officer, chief navigator, assistant operations officer, combined air operation center's senior offensive duty officer, and deployed mission commander. While serving in these capacities, he took part in a wide range of global operations, including Desert Shield, Desert Storm, Coronet Oak, Nomad Vigil, Shining Hope, and Iraqi Freedom. Colonel Johnson completed Squadron Officer School, Air Command and Staff College and Air War College by correspondence.

Purpose

In the following pages, the author offers a comprehensive solution to the ongoing Air Force capabilities rebalancing effort by arguing for the adoption of military judgment criteria to inform and standardize the process. Additionally, the author argues for the adoption of a conceptual model meant to enable senior leaders to visualize the complex interplay of variables relevant to the rebalancing process. Armed with the model and a set of standardized military judgment criteria—senior leaders will be in a better position to make fully informed force structure decisions—theoretically improving the Air Force’s ability to meet sustained operational requirements at a lower cost with minimum risk. Much of what is contained here is applicable to the Army, Navy and Marines, all of which have reserve components.

Introduction

The Department of Defense is under pressure to find a solution to a dilemma. On one hand, it must do more to defend America against the full spectrum of threats posed by non-state and state actors alike; on the other hand, it must do it with less resources. In a recent statement Secretary of Defense Robert Gates said, “the country faces a soaring federal deficit, out-of-control government spending, and mandates from the American electorate to reduce spending, cut the deficit, and balance the budget.”¹ In addition to the budget cuts, the 2010 Quadrennial Defense Review directed the Services to rebalance their capabilities to ensure that the US prevails in contemporary wars, while building the capabilities needed to deal with future threats.² To rein in the “out-of-control government spending,” Gates tasked the Services to find \$100 billion in savings over the next five years to reinvest in their own high priority programs.³ The Army, Navy and Air Force responded with a \$150 billion dollars in savings by reducing

overhead costs, improving business practices and culling excess or troubled programs.⁴ Going a step further, the Office of Management and Budget ordered DoD to cut an additional \$78 billion from the Future Years Defense Plan leaving the Services scrambling to find the money.⁵

Background

Solving the “Do More With Less Dilemma”—Total Force Integration

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the subsequent end of the Cold War, the American taxpayers expected a “peace dividend,” yet subsequent Presidents continued to make national security commitments that increase the demands on the military. By the mid 1990’s, the RegAF reduced its ranks by 39% while picking up long-term commitments in the Balkans and the Middle East.⁶ These opposing trends gave rise to the “do more with less” dilemma, which Secretary Gates clearly points out continues today. In response, the Air Force pursued two courses of action meant to ensure combatant commanders had the capabilities they needed to fulfill peacekeeping in the Balkans and no-fly operations over Iraq. First, the Air Force developed the Air Expeditionary Force to provide a predictable process for rotating forces. Second, it increased its dependence on the Guard and Reserve to perform operational missions on a vastly larger scale than it had in the past.

The Army followed a similar approach. It implemented the ARFORGEN (Army Force Generation) rotational model to make more efficient and effective use of the National Guard and Reserve to support operational requirements in Iraq and Afghanistan. According to the 2010 Army Posture Statement, “the overarching purpose of ARFORGEN is to provide combatant commanders and civil authorities with a steady supply of trained and ready units that are task organized in modular expeditionary force packages and tailored to joint mission requirements.

These operational requirements focus the prioritization and synchronization of institutional functions to recruit, organize, man, equip, train, sustain, mobilize, and deploy units on a cyclic basis. ARFORGEN's adaptability addresses both emerging and enduring requirements. Simultaneously, Army institutional adaptations to ARFORGEN maximize potential efficiencies while ensuring effective capabilities are built to support operational requirements.”⁷

Starting in March of 1968, the RegAF began tapping the Guard and Reserve to perform Military Airlift Command operational missions through the Reserve Associate Program—commonly referred to today as Total Force Integration (TFI).⁸ The integration concept is quite simple. Reserve crews fly operational missions with RegAF aircraft that otherwise would remain inactive between RegAF missions. The initial associate concept increased the operational capacity of the Air Force and helped lay the foundation for further component integration 37 years later. In 2005, following the latest Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) round, the Air Force aggressively pursued Total Force Integration. It undertook 142 new initiatives in 39 states and 2 territories supporting 11 of 12 Air Force core functions.⁹

Total Force Integration—A Dual Edged Sword

Given the increasing degree of component interdependence, the Air Force can no longer treat RegAF, Guard and Reserve force-structure decisions separately, particularly if it seeks both efficiency and effectiveness from a shrinking pool of manpower and equipment. Component integration, while providing a cost-effective solution to shrinking resources, can also be a dual-edged sword for the Air Force. It transfers not only the strengths but also the weaknesses of the RegAF, Guard and Reserve to the aggregate whole. Integration provides increased operational capacity and cost effectiveness, but it also can increase risk of mission failure if not done

properly. Doing it properly requires that military leaders apply their judgment to address the qualitative variables involved. Qualitative variables like Total Force education, community connections, civilian skills and employer support are no longer a unique concern of the Reserve and Guard—they are now a RegAF concern too. Likewise, RegAF operational tempo is no longer solely a RegAF concern. It is now a Reserve and Guard concern also. When the RegAF operation tempo falls below the 1:2 deploy-to-dwell threshold it triggers Guard and Reserve mobilization. Repeated mobilizations saps civilian employer and family support that Reservists, Guardsmen and RegAF rely upon. Volunteerism helps relieve RegAF stress in high demand career fields by reducing RegAF mission requirements. Bu at the same time, volunteerism transfers RegAF stress to the families and employers of Guardsmen and Reservists.

In the author's estimation, not all of the BRAC driven integration efforts help solve this dilemma. Many are the result of political considerations that lack the analytical basis needed to produce efficient and effective fighting units. Recognizing these shortcomings, the Air Force is taking steps to provide an analytical foundation for future initiatives through the Total Force Enterprise (TFE) effort. The upshot of the TFE effort will enable the Air Force to argue for rebalancing initiatives based on a rigorous analytical process to mitigate the effects of politically motivated initiatives that tend to be less resource efficient and mission effective. Managing TFI's dual edged sword is the key to solving the "do-more-with-less" dilemma.

Current Rebalancing Approach

The current RegAF and Reserve approach to rebalancing capabilities focuses on readily measurable quantitative variables like mission requirements, manpower, weapon system inventory and costs. The Air Force Reserve pioneered analytically based rebalancing with its

Associate Business Case Analysis (ABACUS) model. This model allows decision makers to compare and contrast various unit constructs with respect to capability and cost.¹⁰ Similarly, the Regular component is developing a model called the “Total Force Enterprise (TFE) Analytic Framework.” Like ABACUS, the TFE analytical framework is quantitative in nature. Its purpose is to provide Air Force senior leader’s with a decision-making tool to aid force-structure decisions affecting the RegAF, Reserve and Guard. While both efforts represent a major step forward, they fail to include the hard to measure qualitative variables in the modeling process. Variables such as, Total Force education, leadership, community connections, civilian employer and family support are critical to the long-term health and viability of the Air Force. These variables are placed in the ill-defined category of military judgment--making it unclear how military judgment will influence rebalancing process.

Analysis

Identifying Relevant Variables

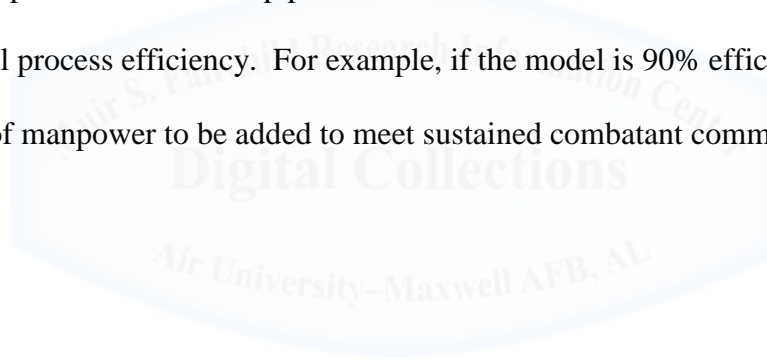
To identify the variables relevant to the rebalancing process, eight strategic documents were analyzed from organizations internal and external to the Air Force. The documents include: The Office of Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs “Managing the Reserve Components like an Operational Force,”¹¹ RAND’s “Principles for Determining the Active/Reserve Mix,”¹² The Air Force Reserve Associate Business Case Analysis (ABACUS)¹³, The Air Force Reserve Total Force Policy 21 White Paper¹⁴, The Chief of Air Force Reserve 2010 Posture Statement¹⁵; The (Draft) Total Force Enterprise (TFE) Analytic Framework: The 2010 Base Case Inputs¹⁶; The 2011 National Guard Posture Statement “Adding Value to America”¹⁷ and Air National

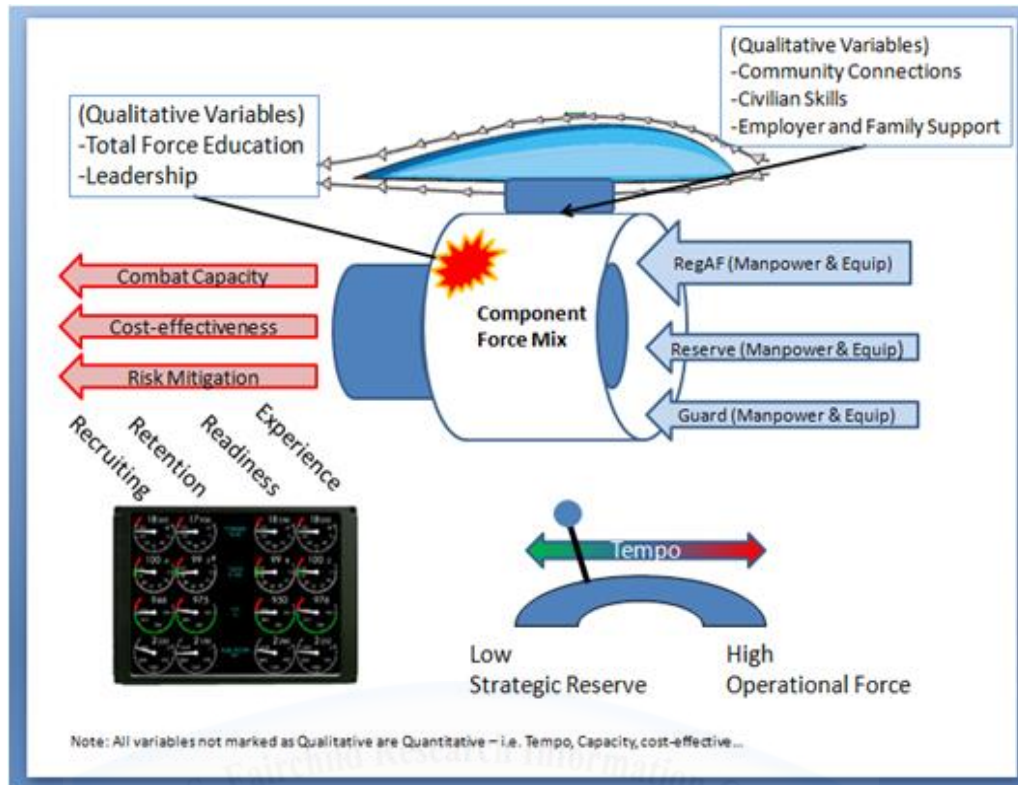
and employer support are important to the long-term sustainability of the three-component Air Force. Today, many civilian corporations use business models that include both quantitative (sales results) and qualitative (customer satisfaction) to ascertain overall company performance. Sufficiently factoring qualitative variables into a rebalancing model presents many challenges since they do not readily lend themselves to scientific analysis (the preferred method of fact-based decision-making). To address this shortfall, two sets of assumptions bring all the relevant variables together into a rebalancing process.

Assumptions

The first set of assumptions concerns the environment in which the rebalancing process model takes place. These assumptions cover law, policy and resources needed to sustain the Guard and Reserve's ability to function as operational and surge forces. The second set concerns the model itself. These assumptions cover all relevant variables used to construct the rebalancing process model. Environmental assumptions are made to ensure Guardsmen and Reservists continue contributing to the aggregate combat capacity of the Air Force beyond their organize, train and equip responsibilities. First and foremost—the Guard and Reserve must remain a part-time, community based force—thus, making mission location and recruiting population critical to mission success. Well-populated areas provide the human capital and civilian job opportunities needed for Guardsmen and Reservists to support their families, enabling them to participate militarily. Further, the Air Force enjoys the added benefits of civilian acquired skills that Guardsmen and Reservists bring to the fight. Current laws, policies and resources intended to operationalize the Reserve and Guard must remain unchanged. Additionally, parity in military pay, benefits and promotion opportunities with the RegAF must remain unchanged to ensure healthy recruiting and retention levels. Congress made great strides

in providing the Guard and Reserve with parity of benefits with the RegAF over the past ten--
underwritten by a supportive American public. Moreover, there must be no change in
mobilization authorities. Loss of mobilization authority will end the assured access to Guard and
Reserve forces, eliminating the predictability on which the operational force generation model
rests. The SECDEF's mobilization policy regarding deploy-to-dwell ratios must remain
unchanged to protect the Reserve and Guard from burnout. Lastly, the Reserve and Guard must
continue to receive the resources needed to maintain the same level of readiness as the RegAF to
ensure their long-term ability to support combatant commander requirements. The "Rebalancing
Process Model" is an analogy and not the literal representation of cause and effect (Fig. 2). Nor
does the model represent a closed loop process. The model assumes that manpower is reusable
relative to overall process efficiency. For example, if the model is 90% efficient it requires an
additional 10% of manpower to be added to meet sustained combatant commander requirements.





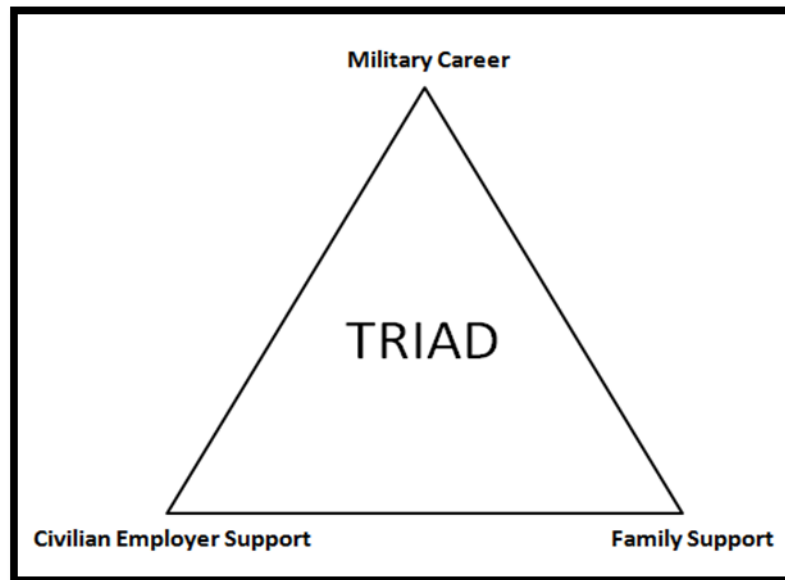
Visual Rebalancing Process Model (Figure 2)

The Rebalancing Process Model

For the rebalancing process model, a jet engine attached to the wing of an aircraft provides the analogy. This analogy helps depict the complex interplay between the relevant variables (Fig 2). In an aircraft, thrust increases when the pilot pushes the engine throttles up and decreases when he pulls them back. Overall, throttle movement is the key driver that affects all variables relevant to flight. Similarly, for the model, tempo is the key driver that affects all variables relevant to the rebalancing process. Aircraft engine fuel and airflow increases or decreases in response to changes in throttle movement. Likewise, the demand for RegAF, Guard and Reserve manpower and equipment increases or decreases in response to changes in operations tempo. In an aircraft, the pilot monitors engine instruments to check that the engine is

running correctly at a given throttle setting. Comparably, for a given tempo, senior leaders can use the model to monitor the health of the Air Force by paying close attention to recruiting and retention, experience and readiness levels. In an aircraft engine, fuel and air ignite with a spark creating engine thrust. Similarly, for the model, Total Force education and leadership provide the spark needed to get the most out of Air Force manpower and equipment. A more efficient and effective Air Force requires fewer resources. In an aircraft, when the pilot pushes the throttles up, the engine to wing connections experience stress. Similarly, when operation tempo is increased, community connections; civilian employer and family support are feeling greater stress. If not properly managed, the strength of these connections and sources of support can become a weakness for the aggregate whole. By design, community connections are central to the All-Volunteer Force. Reservists and Guardsmen represent a large cross-section of society. They live and work within thousands of communities across America and its Territories. The connections provide a critical link between the military and the American public—one that was missing during the Vietnam War. It is said that when the Reserve and Guard go to war, America goes too. From these vital connections, the government can gain support for military action or face an obstacle when its actions prove to be unpopular. Over the past ten years of conflict, the tension between these polar opposites has been abundantly clear.

Guardsmen and Reservists strive to balance the Triad of military career, family and civilian employer support (Fig. 3). They need time to invest in civilian careers, take care of their families and allot sufficient time to pursue a military career. When out of balance, the Triad can become a source of weakness. Consequently, it is critical to the success of any rebalancing effort that military judgment be sensitive to the impact of high operations tempo on community connections, civilian employer and family support.

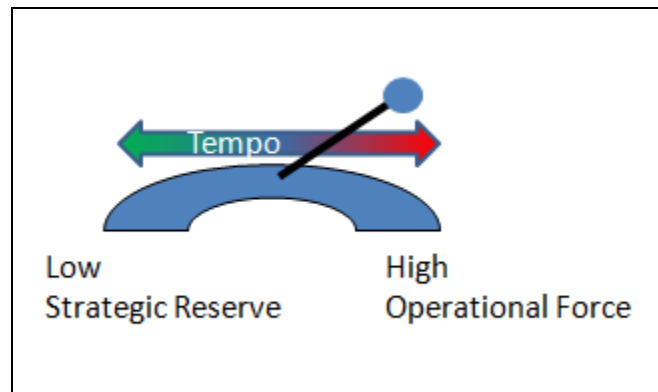


The Triad (Figure 3)

When and Why Qualitative Variables Matter

Qualitative variables are critical to Air Force mission success under conditions of increased operations tempo. If properly managed, these variables can get the most out of the component force mix and help keep the three-component Air Force structurally sound. Referring to the rebalancing process model, one can see how changes in tempo affect these variables. Tempo dictates the conditions under which the Reserve and Guard must operate. Conditions vary from the low-demand strategic reserve to the high-demand operational force. When the tempo throttle is at idle, there is little need for Reserve and Guard to perform daily operations. Under this condition, the RegAF is assumed to have the manpower and equipment needed to meet its daily operational requirements. This leaves the Guard and Reserve to organize, train and equip for surge operations only. Consequently, RegAF leadership requires minimum knowledge of the Guard and Reserve to achieve its daily operational requirements making little need for an in-depth Total Force education for Airmen. Under the low-demand of the strategic

reserve, a balanced Triad is of little consequence to the success of RegAF operational missions, since the Guard and Reserve have little or no role. However, when the combatant commander pushes the tempo throttle up, the consequences can be significant.



High Tempo (Figure 4)

Lt Gen Charles E. Stenner, Jr., Chief of the Air Force Reserve, stated while testifying to Congress that “the Air Force is aggressively examining all Air Force core functions for integration opportunities” [to meet operational demands].¹⁹ While the Air Force is doing this, the General observed, “it is critical that all Airmen look beyond fiscal efficiency and fully grasp the magnitude of our undertaking—these are aggressive force structure changes. If we associate solely for fiscal efficiency, we risk compromising the inherent component attributes from which we seek to benefit.”²⁰ General Stenner’s guidance compels us to protect and enhance “inherent component attributes” needed to get the most out of integrated units without compromising them.

Getting the Most out of Integrated Units: Total Force Education

Increasing Total Force education is one way to get the most out of integrated units without compromising the inherent attributes of those involved. According to the Center for a New American Strategy, “education is the most effective way to overcome the lingering active-

reserve component cultural divide. When active duty personnel study reserve component policy during their PME or sit next to Guardsmen and Reservists during their classes, misperceptions and bias[es] (sic) are broken down on both sides. This can lead to greater cross-component respect, trust and cohesiveness – effects that translate into *enhanced* fighting power.”²¹ Consider that in 2005, the Chief of Staff of the Air Force approved 69 integrated units. Each initiative requires two commanders --one for each component involved. To be effective, commanders must understand the cultural strengths and weakness of the men and women that make up their units, whether they come from the RegAF, Guard or the Reserve.

The question to ask is whether we are fully preparing officers to lead integrated units. In the author’s opinion, the answer is no. To date, too little emphasis is placed upon educating future leaders of integrated units. This is evident by the lack of adequate Total Force subject matter in PME curriculums at the various schools. If we assume that each new commander of an integrated unit has not previously commanded an integrated unit and that we assume 25% of the command positions typically turn over a year, then approximately 35 new commanders need to be trained annually. Currently, Air War College does not fully support this requirement. Each school year, one elective is dedicated to educating Regular, Reserve, Guard and Title V civilians about the Total Force. The class size for AY11 is 12 students. It contains two Title V civilians and three military members from the Army and Navy. That leaves seven Airmen who could potentially command integrated Air Force units after graduation. The shortfall in leadership training is significant. Arguably, there is a need for at least a five-fold increase in class slots to meet the demand for Total Force educated officers. According to Nagel and Sharp, “while many of the service and joint colleges do incorporate [a modicum of] reserve component material into

their curricula, the depth and breadth vary and few of the institutions offer a course exclusively devoted to the Guard and Reserves.”²²

Lacking a dedicated Total Force education program similar to the one offered by AWC, the new commander of an integrated unit has only the *Commanders Integration Guide*²³ to provide a basic level of information. To address this issue, the Office of Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs is putting forward an initiative to make Reserve Component education part of the core curriculum for JPME. Increasing Total force education will better prepare officers to lead Total Force units, which in turn will increase the efficiency and effectiveness of these units.

Keeping the Air Force Structurally Secure: Triad and Community Connections

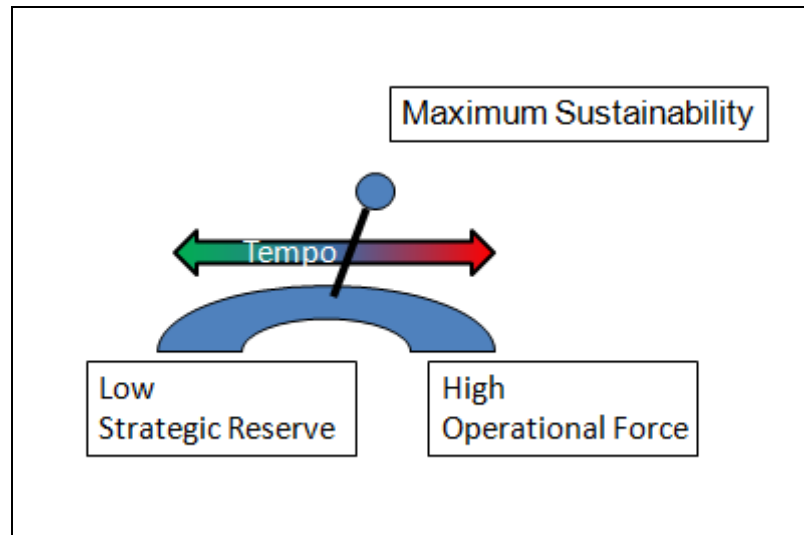
When the operations tempo increases, it strains community connections and the Triad. In terms of the model, these variables are responsible for keeping the engine securely attached to the wing. The Triad is the most important support aspect of three-component force structure. If it is in balance, the structure is secure. If it is out of balance, the structure is at risk of failure. Since the terror attacks on 9/11, over 770,000 Guardsman and Reservists across all the services have been activated.²⁴ Each mobilization takes a Reservist or Guardsman out of his or her community and away from a civilian job and family. If left unchecked, repeat mobilization put the mission at risk by undermining small businesses that employ thousands of Guardsmen and Reservists.

A recent study conducted for the Small Business Administration found that the mobilization of Reservists negatively impacts sales revenues of small businesses 15 times more than big businesses.²⁵ “The authors also find that the length of activation has a small but significant negative effect on the firm’s revenues. The econometric model found a 1.9

percentage point decrease in sales for small firms relative to larger firms for those with reservist employees activated 30 days or more and a 3.0 percentage point decrease in sales for those with employees activated 180 days or more.”²⁶ “The costs of job absence also impact the activated employee; absences may adversely affect career progression [..].”²⁷ Civilian employment is significant for three reasons. First, seventy-five percent of Reservists work for pay in the civilian labor force.²⁸ Second, in order for the Air Force to benefit from the unique civilian skills and experience provided at no cost to the Air Force, the Reservists or Guardsmen must have a viable civilian career. Third, the Total Force concept was built on the idea of creating community connections to help build support for military actions during times of war. Without the civilian career, the Reservist or Guardsman does not have the envisioned connections with the community, thus undermining the Total Force concept.

Repeat mobilizations and lack of access to family support resources can also put the mission at risk. According to Castaneda and Harrell, as part of the social compact that recognizes the tremendous sacrifice of military families, DOD is committed to ensuring and promoting general family well-being. Furthermore, DOD considers family readiness critical to mission success; it regards quality-of-life issues as inseparable from overall combat readiness.²⁹ While RegAF members also have family considerations, Guard and Reserve families face many challenges that Regular component do not. In many cases, Reserve and Guard families live far from the bases where their spouse performs military service making it difficult to benefit from the various family readiness programs offered on a typical RegAF installation. It is simply more difficult for Reserve and Guard families to utilize the resources provided to assist active component military families.

Recommendations



Maximum Sustainable Tempo (Figure 5)

For the Services to achieve maximum sustainable operations tempo that supports long-term combatant commander requirements at a lower cost with minimum risk, it must standardize military judgment criteria and adopt the rebalancing process model. Adding these two things to the current quantitative modeling effort will increase the comprehensiveness of the force mix decisions. Recommendations for military judgment criteria aim to keep the Triad in balance; strengthen community connections; cultivate civilian skills, increase Total Force education and improve leadership effectiveness. These variables are critical to the long-term health and viability of the three-component Air Force. By adopting the visual rebalancing model at Fig. 2, senior leaders gain a common way to visualize the interplay of relevant force mix variables.

There are a number of arguments for leaving qualitative variables out of the rebalancing process. Primarily, the components cannot agree on what qualitative variables should be included nor do can they agree on how to measure them. Others may argue that one cannot plan

and program human factors into the Future Year Defense Plan. Some may argue that the active and Reserve components support the same missions; train to the same readiness levels and standards therefore, Guard and Reserve considerations do not apply to the rebalancing process. Ignoring these considerations is akin to expecting a baseball team to win the World Series for the simple fact that the team members train to the same proficiency level and are ready to play on game day. Coaches know there is more behind a winning team than the visible. They know the strengths and weakness of their players. They know what is going on in their player's lives. They know how to motivate a diverse group of individuals to work as a cohesive team and win. Similarly, senior leaders must understand the particular human factors that affect all Airmen whether RegAF, Reserve or Guard.

Sustainable Operations Tempo: Balanced Triad, Strengthened Community Connections,

Cultivated Civilian Skills

Maintaining a sustainable operations tempo is the key to keeping the Triad of civilian employer support, family support and military career in balance. It also helps strengthen community connections and cultivate civilian skills that benefit all the Services. To ensure a sustainable operations tempo, the Air Force must rebalance its Guard and Reserve capabilities to maintain maximum sustainable deploy-to-dwell rates at 1:4 for Iraq and Afghanistan and 1:8 after operations in these countries cease. These rates strike a balance between an operations tempo that will lead to burnout and one that will lead to irrelevance. If it is not feasible to maintain these rates, the RegAF must then buy force structure to mitigate the long-term risk of mission failure due to burnout. Some may argue that robbing the RegAF makes little sense, as it is fiscally unrealistic in today's budget constrained environment. By law, the purpose of the Guard and Reserve is to augment the RegAF not to replace it. Furthermore, by planning for a

maximum sustainable tempo, readiness, recruiting, retention and experience levels will all benefit. Senior leaders should crosscheck the recruiting and retention data along with experience trends using the visual model to find the optimum tempo setting for long-term sustainability of the force.

The Air Force benefits from the community connections needed to support the long-term wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Repeat deployments and ever-increasing tour lengths strain this support. Reducing tour lengths back down to 120 days will mitigate the disproportionately negative effect on small businesses and will help strengthen civilian employer support for their Guardsmen and Reservist workers. Moreover, to benefit from Reserve and Guard civilian skills, the Air Force must strive to maintain an environment conducive with enabling Reservists and Guardsmen to balance their civilian career, military career and family. One way to do this is for the Air Force to take greater advantage of the Guard and Reserves ability to perform Phase 0 shaping and Phase 4 stabilization and reconstruction missions.³⁰ According to Joint Publication 3-0, “[Joint Force Commanders] are able to take actions before committing forces to assist in determining the shape and character of potential future operations. In many cases, these actions enhance bonds between future coalition partners, increase understanding of the region, help ensure access when required, strengthen future multinational operations and prevent crises from developing.” In these phases, Guardsmen and Reservists can best leverage their civilian acquired skills to benefit national security at no additional cost to the country. They have a wealth of untapped experience as members of local police fire departments, city planners and administrators, utility technicians, linguists, farmers and many other fields unavailable anywhere else in Department of Defense of the United States government. In addition, the Air Force must select mission locations that have adequate recruiting population and provide employment

opportunities to enable a Reservist or Guardsmen to gain and sustain a civilian career. By taking these steps, the Air Force will continue to benefit from the civilian skills acquired over a lifetime of civilian employment and the military will continue to benefit from the support from the American people. Ultimately, these actions will preserve the strengths and minimize the weakness of Total Force Integration allowing the Air Force to meet its commitments to national security.

Total Force Education and Leadership: Achieving More With Less

The Air Force must increase Total Force education starting with Officer Training School and continuing all the way through Senior Service schools to ensure that officers are best prepared to lead integrated units when called upon. Moreover, the Services must lead a concerted effort to increase Total Force education throughout all levels of JPME --starting with a multi-fold increase of class slots at our Senior Developmental Education military colleges (for example, a proposed 5x increase at Air War College). It is mission essential that Total Force units have leaders who understand the strengths and weaknesses of the Regular, Reserve, Air National Guard. By increasing the focus on Total Force education at all levels, we will help ensure that each Service will be able to achieve the maximum sustainable operational support with fewer resources for the combatant commanders.

Conclusion

Secretary Gates challenged the Services to rebalance their warfighting capabilities across the spectrum of military operations while simultaneously delivering \$100 billion in savings over the next five years. The Services tackled the “do-more-with-less” dilemma by exceeding SECDEF’s savings target and are now pursuing a complex rebalancing effort involving many

variables and unknowns. This paper demonstrates that the Air Force along with fellow Services must manage the “dual edged sword” nature of the active and reserve component relationship.

This requires having a shared conceptual model and a uniform set of military judgment criteria to guide the rebalancing process. This will ensure that the Air Force reaps the most benefit from its active and reserve components at a lower cost with minimum risk of mission failure.

Specifically, the Air Force is developing the Total Force Enterprise analytical framework to provide senior leaders with a decision making tool that will help them make more efficient and effective use of its integrated units. As outlined in this paper, standardizing military judgment criteria is critical to establishing comprehensive rebalancing process. Arguably, the qualitative factors will make or break the Air Force’s ability to meet combatant commander requirements over the long haul. Properly addressing leadership, education, employer and family support, community connections and civilian skills will serve to strengthen the foundation of the RegAF, Guard and Reserve. This will enable the three components to make their maximum sustained contribution to America’s national security at a lower cost and with minimum risk.

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