

AIR COMMAND AND STAFF COLLEGE

AIR UNIVERSITY

**IMA RESERVISTS:  
MISSION ENHANCEMENTS OR ADMINISTRATIVE BURDENS?**

by

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## **PREFACE**

This research is designed to capitalize on existing capabilities and increase the efficiency of the Reserve Individual Mobilization Augmentee (IMA) Program. As an IMA, I have personal stake in the success of the program and have been on both sides of the Active Duty and Reserve discussion. I served over seven years on Active Duty in many different roles, in-garrison and deployed, before transferring to the Reserve IMA Program. Having once supervised IMA's, I quickly understood the opportunities for improvement and empathized with my previous subordinates' claims regarding the inadequately defined status between the Active Component and the Reserves. I have now had three assignments at three different locations as an IMA and found the effective use of the IMA Program is heavily dependent on both the IMA and the Active Duty effort. Undoubtedly, the core strength of the program is the utilization of Military Personnel Appropriation (MPA) days. Within the last two years, the Reserve Readiness and Integration Office has made tremendous strides in resolving the gaps in information, clarifying the leadership structure, standardizing processes, providing consistent training, and integrating IMAs into the Active Component as seamless as possible. As an IMA, I applaud their work and urge them to keep going...their efforts are working.

Of course, I cannot forget to mention the unwavering patience of my wife, without which this research would not have been possible. Thank you for your confidence and inspiration.

## **ABSTRACT**

The Air Force Individual Mobilization Augmentee (IMA) Program is one of four categories of Reservists who individually are assigned to and augment Active Duty units. This manpower capability provides the surge capacity and technical expertise necessary to maintain a ready reserve force to respond to Combatant Commanders' requirements in peacetime and in war. However, as with many long-standing programs, there are inefficiencies that detract from its effectiveness. Dated information systems, cumbersome processes, and a very limited requirement for augmentation inhibit the IMA Program from being a model program held in high regard by the Active Component. This research analyzed three of the information systems used to schedule IMA duty, the annual evaluation process, and the minimum length of IMA augmentation required each year. By using a Problem/Solution methodology it was determined that: 1) it is critical that the Air Force Reserve modernize the information systems used to schedule duty; 2) a streamlined annual evaluation process should be implemented to reduce administrative work on IMAs who serve the minimum requirements; and 3) converting Inactive Duty Training (IDT) days to Active Duty days allows the IMA to perform a one-month Annual Tour at the same cost as the current program. The first two solutions should be implemented immediately; however, the last solution should be implemented only on an "as needed" basis at the request of the Active Component and at a cost to the Reservist's civilian employer. In times of fiscal constraint and a military extended beyond its manpower capacity, that decision may be a necessary trade-off to consider.

## INTRODUCTION

The Air Force Individual Mobilization Augmentee (IMA) Program may require modifications to meet the current demand of our warfighting capability. Upon initial glance, the minimum annual service requirement for an IMA does not allow enough time to achieve both annual readiness and mission integration. The typical IMA works 12 intermittent training days to complete all annual medical, dental, immunizations, physical fitness, security, and ancillary training, and an additional 10 working days to augment their Active Duty unit<sup>1</sup>. With current Air Force manning reductions, 10 working days of mission augmentation provides little relief to Active Duty units manned at 88% of 2004 end-strengths<sup>2</sup>. While it is logical to assume IMA's require more time to achieve unit integration, critics claim that increasing the augmentation period may lead to a decline in IMA participation and an inadequate execution of the Reserve budget<sup>3</sup>. An inadequate execution of the budget may place future Reserve funding at risk and lead to a drawdown in Reserve capability. However, the Reserve Force Generation Center concludes that over 55% of IMA's already volunteer to activate above and beyond the minimum annual requirements<sup>4</sup>, highlighting the willingness of IMA's to augment their Active Duty counterparts. Currently the Readiness and Integration Organization (RIO) confirms only an average of 5% of IMA's fail to fulfill their participation requirements each year; a portion of which are due to year-long deployments and full-time activations<sup>5</sup>.

If 55% of IMA's are augmenting Active Components above minimum standards, 45% are simply meeting minimum requirements. This research will focus on the 45% of IMA Reservists who perform the minimum annual service requirements and how the current IMA program can be modified to make this minimum obligation more effective. Rightfully, the IMA Program was designed to be flexible and meeting minimum requirements indeed satisfies critical Reserve objectives. However, does it achieve these objectives at the expense of the Active

Duty? If 45% of the IMA workforce is performing minimum requirements, this demographic presents a substantial opportunity to make significant force improvements to benefit the Active Component.

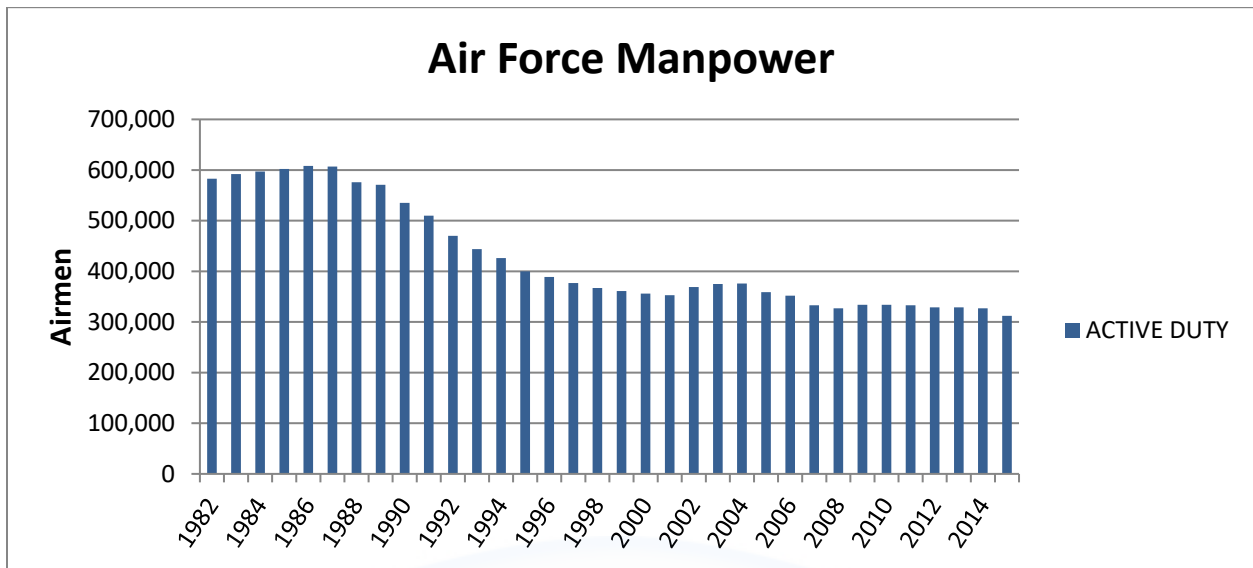
As a whole, the IMA Program provides the Reservist a flexible method to augment the Active Duty more or less depending on wartime, contingency, or peacetime. IMA's serve in a critical role to the warfighter when needed through the use of Military Personnel Appropriation (MPA) days and Reserve Personnel Appropriation (RPA) days. MPA and RPA tours represent the core strength and flexibility of the IMA Program. However, this research will analyze the basic structure of the minimum participation requirements against the mission of our IMA's and the RIO. Specifically, without using MPA or RPA tours, is the minimum 12-day Annual Tour sufficient for an IMA to integrate into the Active Duty unit, understand the organization, learn processes, and provide a tangible service to the Active Component "seamlessly" if called on? Is the IMA Program worth the administrative burden on the Active Duty unit when MPA/RPA days are not executed? Is there a way to modify the minimum annual requirement to make 45% of IMA's more effective to the Active Component?

### **Significance of U.S. Air Force Reserve Capabilities:**

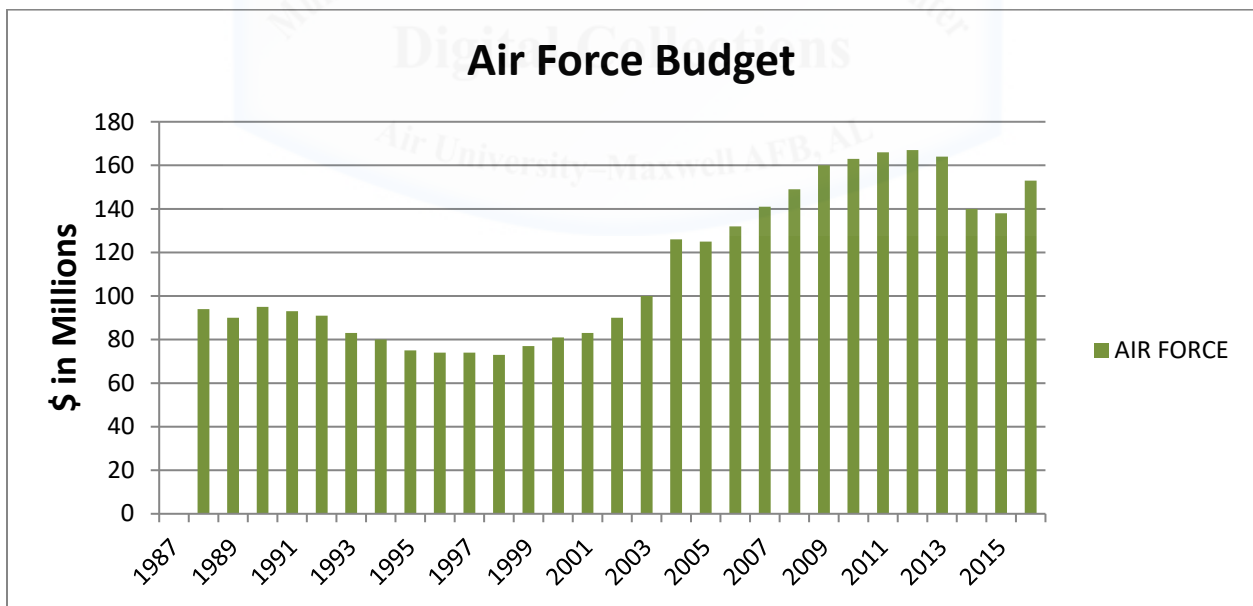
With shrinking budgets and decreasing Active Duty manpower, Air Force Reservists present a very effective method to flex or contract manpower in situations requiring critical capabilities, filling an ever-growing gap. In February 2015, Major General James Martin, Air Force Deputy Assistant Secretary for Budget, stated, "Further reductions [in the active component] would leave us with a team that has an incomplete roster, that is too small to meet a demanding schedule, and allows little time to practice and provides no down time. Our airmen deserve better than that."<sup>6</sup> Unfortunately, Air Force manpower has steadily declined since 1986<sup>7</sup>



(see Figure 1). Likewise, since 2011 the Air Force budget has also decreased to reflect the fiscal constraints of withdrawing from two long ground wars in the Middle East (see Figure 2).



**Figure 1. Plot of Air Force Active Duty Manpower from 1982 through 2015.<sup>8</sup>**



**Figure 2. Plot of Air Force Budget (in Millions of U.S. Dollars from 1987 through 2015.<sup>9</sup>**

Within the May 2015 U.S. Air Force Strategic Master Plan, General Welsh clearly states two important assumptions about the Air Force future state; “Combatant Command missions and requirements will exceed the Air Force’s capacity to meet them”, and, “We can expect reduced

funding levels, with further reductions in the near-term and no more than moderate increases in the mid- to far-term”.<sup>10</sup> This document forecasts that manning and budget constraints will be the norm for the next 20 years. Accounting for these constraints, it appears appropriate to leverage the Air Force Reserves as effectively as possible.

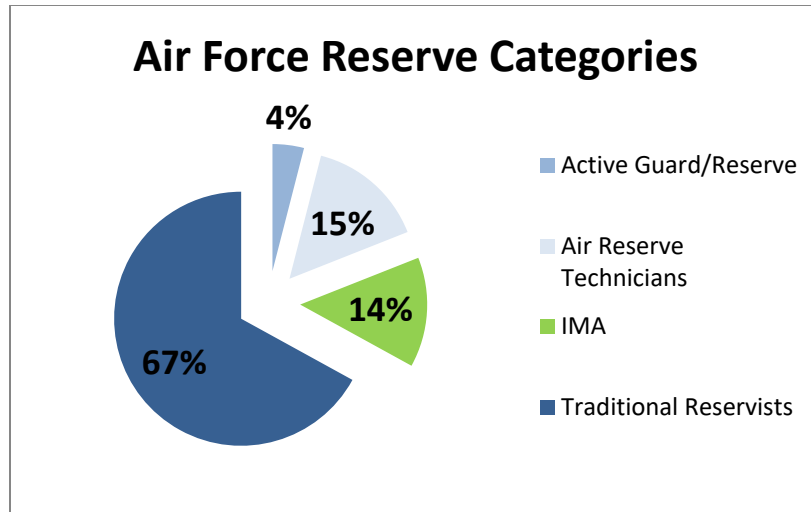
The mission of the Air Force Reserves is to “Provide combat-ready forces to Fly, Fight, and Win.” To accomplish that mission, the Reserves utilize four guiding principles. First is to provide a combat-ready, cost-effective, experienced force. Reservists often come directly from the Active Component, entering the civilian workforce upon separation but continuing their service with the Air Force in a part-time capacity. This method capitalizes on experience and brings corporate ideas into the military environment. Statistically, the average age of a Reserve officer is 41, and the average enlisted Airmen is 34 years of age.<sup>11</sup> This represents 5-6 years of experience and maturity over their active duty counterparts, and leveraging this experience in a part-time manner presents a cost-effective force. The second guiding principle is to provide a force with operational capability, strategic depth, and surge capacity. By monitoring Active Duty manpower levels the Reserves can increase their manning in strategic areas, providing depth to the Active Component. Keeping a viable and relevant force is the next guiding principle, and is accomplished by working side-by-side with their active counterparts. Finally, the Reserves last principle is to provide a sustainable, professional military force. Balancing the Reservist’s family, civilian job, and reserve job are critical to achieving this sustainability. Each of these guiding principles help provide combat-ready forces critical to meet the Air Force Reserve vision, to “Remain an integrated, flexible and combat ready force providing accessible and sustainable capabilities as an Air Force Component supporting our National Security”.<sup>12</sup>

## **BACKGROUND**

### **What is an Individual Mobilization Augmentee (IMA)?**

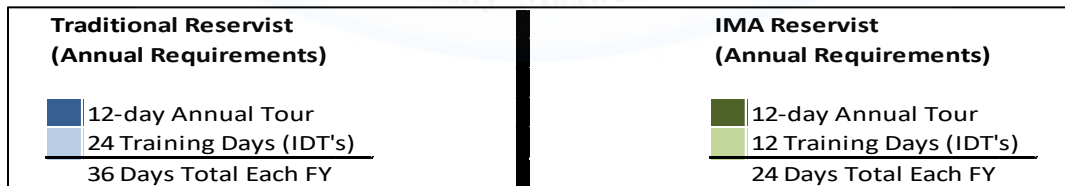
Sustaining Air Force Reserve capabilities for the Active Component requires different types of Reserve skillsets, as well as different types of surge structures. There are four separate core types of Reservist, all leveraged differently. The Air Force Individual Mobilization Augmentee (IMA) Program is one of the four categories of Air Force Reservists. Unlike the other three Reserve categories, IMA's are directly and individually assigned to augment Active Duty units and are authorized in the following circumstances: Mobilization (full-scale war), Contingency Operations (augment Air & Space Expeditionary Forces, or, backfill at home-base units), Specialized, Technical, or Scientific Skills (filling a gap in technical knowledge)<sup>13</sup>. Under this construct, IMA's are embedded in Active Duty units and directly contribute to the warfighters' mission when the situation warrants, and exactly in those positions where the Active Component find their own manpower wanting. The mission of the IMA program is to "Seamlessly integrate war-time ready Individual Reserve forces to meet Air Force and Combatant Commander requirements."<sup>14</sup> IMA's accomplish this by striving to achieve the Readiness and Integration Organization Vision, "Individual capability, leveraged worldwide".<sup>15</sup>

Most likely, an IMA is not the type of Reservist that comes to mind when discussing the Reserves. Much like our sister-Services, the most common type of Air Force Reservist is the Traditional Reservist, or the "weekend warrior" (1 weekend per month, 2 weeks per year). That is an understandable association given that IMA's account for only 14% of Reservists, and Traditional Reservists make up 67%. Air Reserve Technicians and Active Guard Reserve comprise the remaining 19%<sup>16</sup> (see Figure 3).



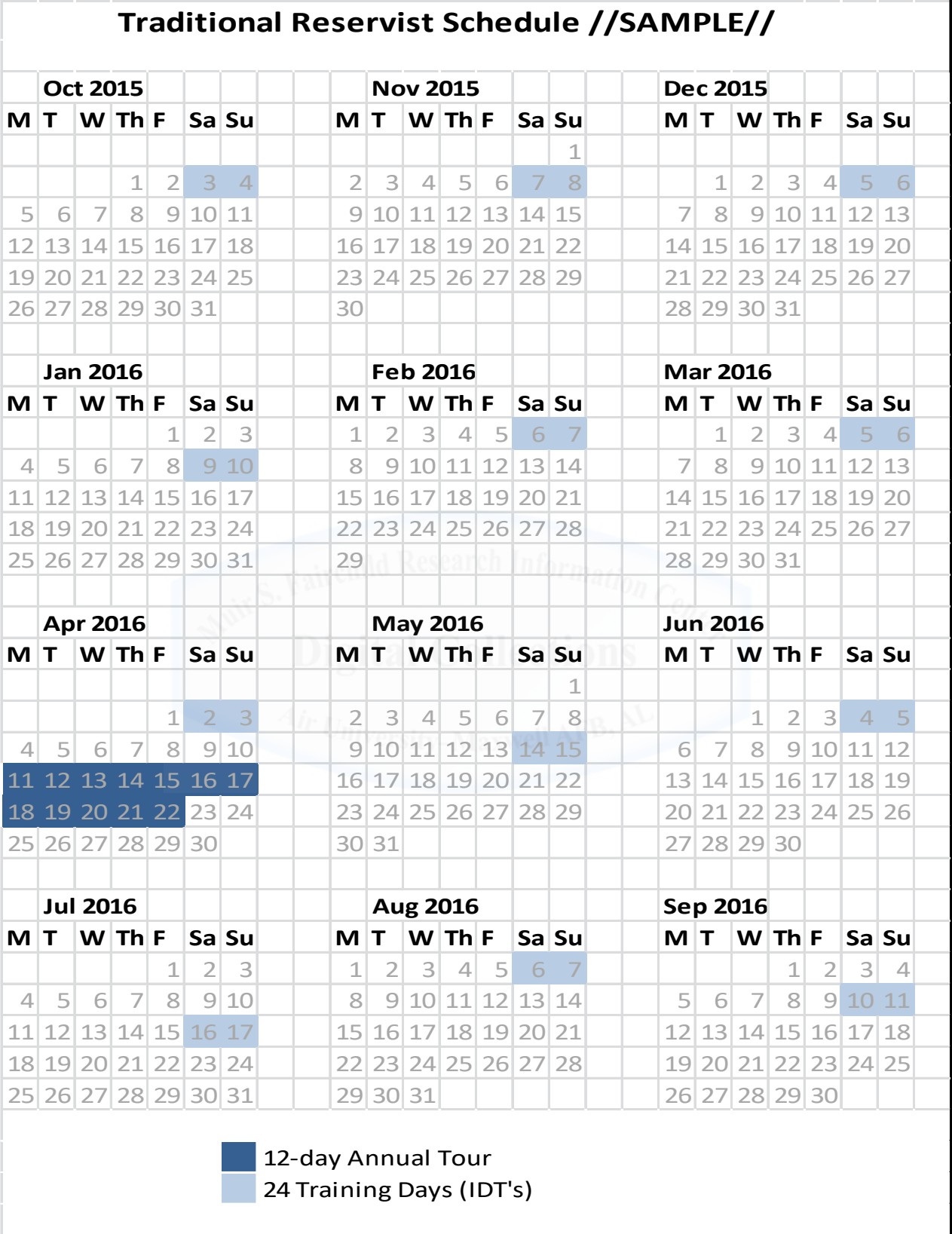
**Figure 3. Depiction of the Air Force Reserve Categories by percentage.<sup>17</sup>**

For IMA’s working in a part-time capacity, the typical minimum yearly requirement is 12 days of Inactive Duty Training (IDT) and a 12 consecutive day Annual Tour for a total of 22 business days in a given year. Respectively, a Traditional Reservist works 24 days (one weekend a month) of Training Days, and a 12 day Annual Tour, for a total of 36 days...14 more days per year than an IMA. That is a 50% increase in work days over IMA’s (see Figure 4).



**Figure 4. Annual requirements breakdown of a typical Traditional Reservist compared to a typical IMA<sup>18</sup>**

A sample annual comparison of a TR participation schedule versus an IMA’s participation schedule could look like this (see Figures 5&6):



*Figure 5. Sample data depicting the days worked in a typical calendar year for a Traditional Reservist*

IMA Schedule //SAMPLE//																																								
Oct 2015							Nov 2015							Dec 2015																										
M	T	W	Th	F	Sa	Su	M	T	W	Th	F	Sa	Su	M	T	W	Th	F	Sa	Su	M	T	W	Th	F	Sa	Su	M	T	W	Th	F	Sa	Su						
													1																											
			1	2	3	4	2	3	4	5	6	7	8		1	2	3	4	5	6																				
5	6	7	8	9	10	11	9	10	11	12	13	14	15		7	8	9	10	11	12	13																			
12	13	14	15	16	17	18	16	17	18	19	20	21	22		14	15	16	17	18	19	20																			
19	20	21	22	23	24	25	23	24	25	26	27	28	29		21	22	23	24	25	26	27																			
26	27	28	29	30	31		30								28	29	30	31																						
Jan 2016							Feb 2016							Mar 2016																										
M	T	W	Th	F	Sa	Su	M	T	W	Th	F	Sa	Su	M	T	W	Th	F	Sa	Su	M	T	W	Th	F	Sa	Su	M	T	W	Th	F	Sa	Su						
					1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5	6	7			1	2	3	4	5	6																		
					4	5	6	7	8	9	10	8	9	10	11	12	13	14		7	8	9	10	11	12	13														
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	15	16	17	18	19	20	21		14	15	16	17	18	19	20																			
18	19	20	21	22	23	24	22	23	24	25	26	27	28		21	22	23	24	25	26	27																			
25	26	27	28	29	30	31	29								28	29	30	31																						
Apr 2016							May 2016							Jun 2016																										
M	T	W	Th	F	Sa	Su	M	T	W	Th	F	Sa	Su	M	T	W	Th	F	Sa	Su	M	T	W	Th	F	Sa	Su	M	T	W	Th	F	Sa	Su						
													1																											
					1	2	3	2	3	4	5	6	7	8			1	2	3	4	5																			
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11	12	13	14	15	16	17	16	17	18	19	20	21	22		13	14	15	16	17	18	19																			
18	19	20	21	22	23	24	23	24	25	26	27	28	29		20	21	22	23	24	25	26																			
25	26	27	28	29	30		30	31							27	28	29	30																						
Jul 2016							Aug 2016							Sep 2016																										
M	T	W	Th	F	Sa	Su	M	T	W	Th	F	Sa	Su	M	T	W	Th	F	Sa	Su	M	T	W	Th	F	Sa	Su	M	T	W	Th	F	Sa	Su						
					1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5	6	7				1	2	3	4																			
					4	5	6	7	8	9	10	8	9	10	11	12	13	14		5	6	7	8	9	10	11														
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	15	16	17	18	19	20	21		12	13	14	15	16	17	18																			
18	19	20	21	22	23	24	22	23	24	25	26	27	28		19	20	21	22	23	24	25																			
25	26	27	28	29	30	31	29	30	31						26	27	28	29	30																					

12-day Annual Tour  
 12 Training Days (IDT's)

Figure 6. Sample data depicting the days worked in a typical calendar year for an IMA.

IDT's are specifically designed for the member to maintain their annual currency in medical, dental, fitness, immunizations, security clearance, and ancillary training tasks. Conversely, the 12-day Annual Tour is targeted for the integration of the IMA into the Active Duty unit operations. Understanding the rules and regulations of the IMA Program and ensuring IMAs are being used effectively is a challenging task. Recognizing this challenge, in 2014 the Air Force Reserves initiated the Readiness and Integration Organization (RIO) to facilitate IMA integration into the Active Component.

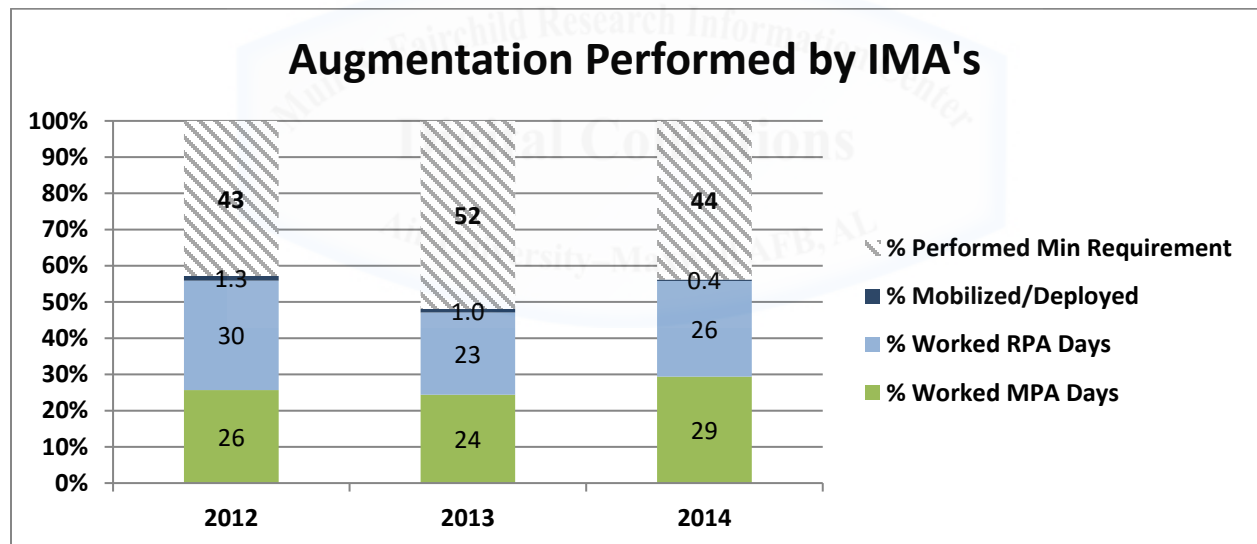
The mission of the RIO is to standardize the process for service members in the Individual Reservist program who are accountable to the Air Force Reserve Command and assigned to funded, Active Duty positions. The RIO reports to the Air Reserve Personnel Center (ARPC) and is responsible for managing IMA's and the relationship with Active Duty units to "Seamlessly integrate war-time ready Individual Reserve forces to meet Air Force and Combatant Commander requirements."<sup>19</sup> The creation of the RIO in 2014 was an integral step in improving the effectiveness of IMA's. By improving the relationship with active units, creating standardized processes, tools, and robust information sharing resources, the IMA (with help from the RIO) is now able to achieve more toward readiness in the 12 days of IDT's than under the previous construct.

The RIO reports that at any given time during the year, 70% of IMA's are in a "fully ready" state. RIO policy states that before an IMA can gain approval of their Annual Tour, the Reservist must use his or her IDT's to achieve full readiness. Readiness is defined by completing the following each year:

- Physical Health Assessment
- Dental Assessment
- Immunizations & Lab

- Fitness Assessment
- Security Clearance Readiness
- AFSC Training<sup>20</sup>

By mandating full readiness, the RIO ensures that the 2-week Annual Tour is dedicated to mission augmentation. This 2-week tour is the window of time the IMA must use to accomplish mission tasks, subsequently making them competitive for promotion boards, filling 10 impactful lines on the evaluation report, and executing award or decoration worthy work. Given the short timeframe of standard augmentation, over 50% of IMA’s volunteer or are requested by the Active Duty unit to perform over and above the minimum 2-week requirement (see Figure 7). By using MPA days, the Active Duty unit leverages an already qualified and mission ready IMA in direct support of core mission tasks.



*Figure 7. Breakdown of the type of augmentation performed each year by IMA’s<sup>21</sup>*

Another option the Active Duty can use to leverage the IMA Program is through the Air Reserve Personnel Center’s (ARPC) Volunteer Limited Period of Active Duty (VLPAD) program. This program is specifically designed to help the Air Force Personnel Center (AFPC) fill assignment gaps in the Active Duty force. IMA’s are offered the opportunity to serve a 3-

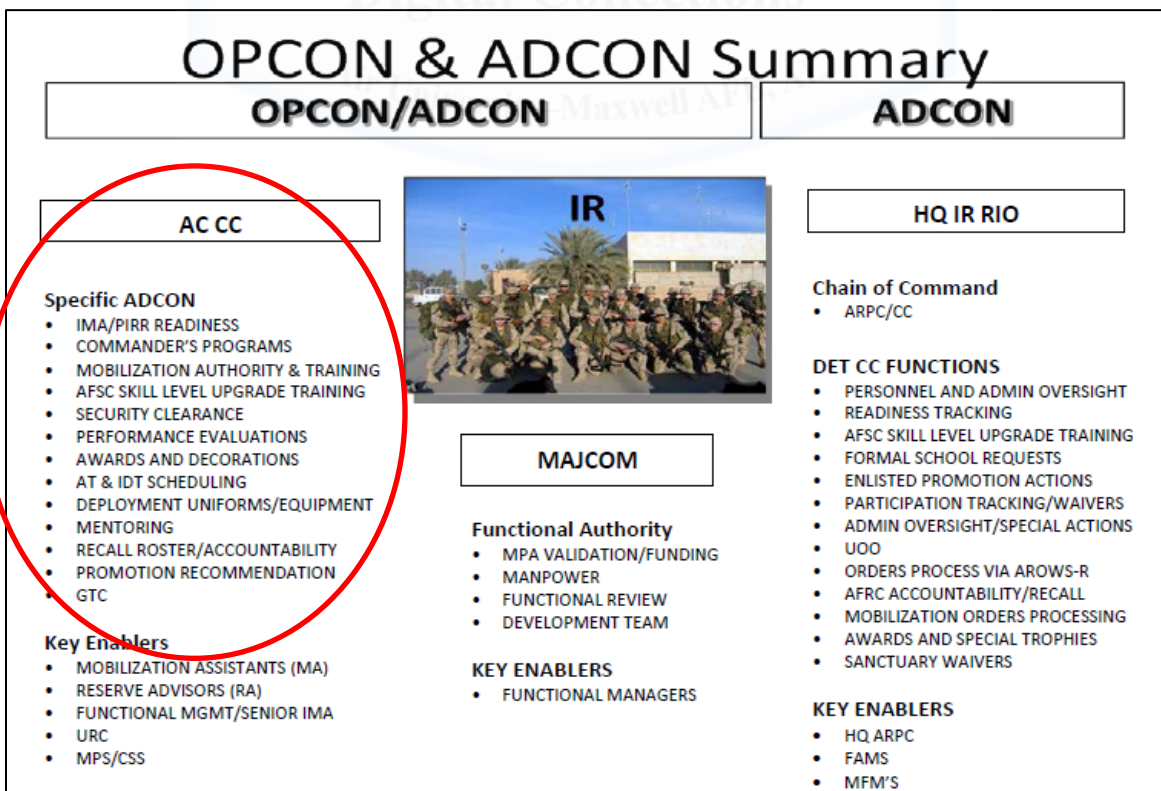


year Active Duty assignment and are placed into unfilled Active Duty positions. On completion, the IMA is transferred back into the Reserve IMA Program.

## PROBLEM ANALYSIS

### The Administrative Burden of IMA's

Active Duty units that leverage the use of MPA or RPA days view their IMA's as force multipliers. This has been validated over and over again, month after month, by the stories told by the Active Component in the Citizen Airman.<sup>22</sup> Unfortunately, interviews with the Active Component indicate that IMA's serving the bare minimum annual requirements frequently encumber their Active Duty unit. Regrettably, this perception is due to the administrative paperwork levied against the Active Component to maintain an IMA on their manning roster. Performance evaluations, mid-term feedback, scheduling and approval of IDT's, certification of orders, and tracking of training are all completed by the Active Duty unit (See Figure 8).



*Figure 8. Circled in red are those functions executed for the IMA, by the Active Duty.*<sup>23</sup>

In spite of the administrative workload, each year 45% of IMA's will work the minimum 22 business days each year. 12 of those 22 days are scheduled intermittently throughout the year. Only two weeks of the IMA's augmentation are consecutive where the Active Duty has consistent augmentation. This schedule makes it difficult to integrate the IMA into the Active Duty unit and provide mission impact. If an IMA works the minimum 12-day Annual Tour, the warfighter spends a considerable amount of time executing mandatory paperwork rather than executing mission tasks. Interviews with Active Duty supervisors confirmed the administrative burden often does not justify two weeks of work.<sup>24</sup> The administrative process consumes the IMA's augmentation time, decreases the amount of time spent on the Active Duty mission, and stresses already constrained Active Duty resources. Many Active Duty supervisors find themselves asking, "How can I effectively utilize an IMA in only two weeks?" Opportunely, there are three methods to make IMA's more effective: 1) Decrease the administrative requirements levied against the Active Duty, 2) Increase the length of the IMA augmentation to allow more time on the mission, 3) Both...streamline the readiness process and convert Training Days to Active Tour days. This research will analyze the main root cause issues that can be addressed to achieve the above requirements.

### **In-Depth Look at IMA Administrative Processes Levied Against Active Duty**

Unit Training Assembly Participation System (UTAPS-Web) allows the IMA to schedule their training days (IDT's) in coordination with their Active Duty supervisor. Typically, before creating a schedule in UTAPS, a discussion will take place between the IMA and the supervisor to align the IMA's participation with mission needs. Once agreed on, the IMA will use UTAPS to build and submit a schedule for approval by their supervisor in the web-based interface. Unfortunately, this interface is plagued with substandard coding and non-intuitive processes

requiring a substantial training guide and an 8-hour a day, 5-day a week helpdesk for assistance. As captured in interviews with IMA's, UTAPS is a large source of frustration. Not only is the IMA forced to struggle through the awkward interface, but so is the Active Duty supervisor. Quite often the IMA must teach their supervisor how to use the system, explaining the idiosyncrasies and nuances along the way as "the process". Frustrating this situation further, the supervisor must approve each 4-hour training block (IDT) to validate the IMA worked that IDT and can be paid for that training period. Inevitably, this leads to excessive back-and-forth validation between the IMA and their supervisor. This process is repeated each year, and also as the IMA works their training days. Furthermore, this system covers training days only; the 2-week Annual Tour is handled in a separate system.

Air Force Reserve Order Writing System-Reserves (AROWS-R) is the system the IMA uses to gain approval of their 2-week Annual Tour. As previously stated, this system is not linked to the training day (IDT) scheduler. Again, the IMA must pre-coordinate the Annual Tour dates with their supervisor. However, once the IMA creates their orders using AROWS-R, those orders do not route through the Active Duty unit. The Active Duty unit has no visibility into the order writing process. Furthermore, they do not have a one-stop location to gain visibility into the IMA's training and Annual Tour participation schedule combined.

Air Reserve Component Network (ARCNet) is a growing web-based tool that has the vision to build a common operating picture with actionable information, available to the Total Force.<sup>25</sup> Currently this is the only location where Active Duty units can see both the IMA's IDT schedule and Annual Tour schedule on the same calendar. Unfortunately, this system is not mandated for use, and therefore not populated with content unless the IMA proactively inputs their annual duty plan and again, teaches their supervisor how to use the system.

The IMA annual evaluation process represents one of the more frequent and significant sources of frustration for the Active Duty supervisor. First, the IMA is not part of the Active Duty personnel system that cues evaluations. IMA evaluations must be tracked separately and according to interviews go overlooked, in one case six months after the close out date. Second, IMA's use the same evaluation form that the Active Component utilizes to document performance...the AF 910, 911, 912, and 707. However, the significant difference in accomplishing this evaluation is the "real" period of supervision. As previously stated, an IMA is only required to work a 2-week annual tour during their reporting period, and 45% of IMA's fall in this category. Regardless of the actual number of days worked, a full Officer Promotion Report (OPR) or Enlisted Performance Report (EPR) must be completed and routed through the Senior Rater. Nowhere on the OPR/EPR is the true number of augmentation days worked in that period reflected, and civilian employment time is calculated into the "Number of Days Supervision" section. Consequently, the OPR/EPR still reads as though the member was present for duty for one year, making it indiscernible from an Active Duty evaluation. As an example, consider the AF 707; within that form are 10 lines to document performance under the Rater and Additional Rater sections. This form works seamlessly for those 55% of IMA's who work above the minimum and utilize MPA or RPA days. However, if an IMA only completes a 2-week tour, each day the IMA works he or she must complete an evaluation-worthy task to fill the 10 lines. As captured in an interview with an Active Duty IMA supervisor, "this defies logic".<sup>26</sup> The general theme in interviews with Active Duty supervisors reflect that in two weeks an IMA was frequently given figure-head roles or nominal tasks at best, which were not grade-appropriate.<sup>27</sup> While some of this issue falls back on the Active Duty supervisor and their preparation for IMA augmentation, it highlights the point that the Active Duty is already over-tasked and finds limited

effectiveness in the 2-week augmentation. Re-addressing the evaluation process, this environment creates a stressful situation for the Active Duty supervisor resulting in one of two scenarios. In the first scenario, the supervisor accurately captures the reality of the IMA effectiveness, possibly by leaving “white space” in the evaluation, and the IMA is left with a sub-par evaluation that will negatively impact their career. In the other scenario, the supervisor inflates the accomplishments to fill the evaluation and discredits the entire evaluation process. Balancing between the two scenarios is an art form, requiring time and effort that outweighs the benefit.<sup>28</sup> At this conclusion, it is necessary to point out that this research does not imply that an IMA serving the minimum annual requirement be deemed unacceptable behavior. Maintaining a ready IMA in a reserve status represents a key strength of the IMA Program and fulfills a critical National Security goal to maintain surge capacity in the event of full-scale war. Additionally, this method offers a flexible way for the Reserves to expand and contract in mission-critical areas within the allotted budget. If IMA augmentation is not critical in that given year, the member remains in a low-use role, saving money for critical augmentation. However, it is important to understand if an IMA performs a minimum-requirement year, it negatively levies processes against the Active Duty unit that outweigh the benefit.<sup>29</sup>

Career Field upgrade training and Professional Military Education (PME) present two more areas where the IMA relies heavily on the Active Duty unit. Core Air Force Specialty Code (AFSC) tasks must be validated by the Active Duty supervisor. Junior enlisted IMA’s present a challenge as training days and annual tour days are easily consumed by upgrade training instead of mission tasks. Additionally, if an IMA wants to attend PME in residence, it is accomplished through both the Active Duty unit and the Reserve Detachment.

Ancillary Training and Medical Readiness are primarily the responsibility of the IMA and the RIO. However, in the event these items become delinquent, both the Active Duty unit and Reserve Detachment are responsible for enforcing readiness. Spending 341 days of the year away from the Active Duty unit presents vast opportunity for an IMA's annual readiness tasks to become (and stay) delinquent. It is well understood that keeping an Active Duty unit roster deployment ready is a time-intensive task. In July 2014, the Air Force mandated the use of Air Expeditionary Forces Online (AEF Online) Personnel Deployment Preparedness Tool which tracks key readiness tasks such as medical, clearance, and Total Force Awareness training.<sup>30</sup> This system reports similar readiness items that the Reserves track in ARCNet, presenting opportunities for mismatched data to create confusion in an IMA's readiness status.

The above tasks and processes were described in detail to depict the amount of effort involved in maintaining an IMA Reservist on the manning roster. For the Active Duty unit to gain a return on investment, they must attempt to use as many MPA or RPA days as possible. When that augmentation does not occur, the effectiveness of the IMA Program at the unit-level is limited. One supervisor interviewed stated if given the choice, he would no longer hire an IMA if that individual could only perform the minimum participation requirements each year.<sup>31</sup> Since this scenario applies to 45% of IMA Reservists on an annual basis, it is in the best interest of the RIO to accelerate their planned process improvement efforts, or analyze new methods to streamline the IMA Program and avoid overburdening their Active Duty counterparts.

### **POTENTIAL AND NEW SOLUTIONS**

One efficient method in making IMA augmentation more effective is by streamlining the administrative processes by modernizing the Reserves' information systems. Understandably, this method also takes forethought and analysis and would require modifications of RIO policy

or Reserve contracts to implement. This research will analyze two areas to improve the administrative process; modernization of IMA duty scheduling systems and modifications to the IMA annual evaluation process.

### **Modernization of IMA Duty Scheduling Systems**

While interviewing multiple IMAs it became apparent the scheduling process offers large areas for improvements.<sup>32</sup> UTAPS-Web requires a new user-friendly interface. This can be accomplished using software release spirals, or an entirely new website. If accomplished using spirals, simple software modifications can be implemented to make the process more intuitive and the content more accessible. The RIO recognized the UTAPS-Web discrepancies and in June 2015 new functionality for UTAPS-Web was released to provide different calendar views to the supervisor.<sup>33</sup> The additional views allow the supervisor to see multiple IMA's on the same calendar; however, the added views do not change the awkward functionality of the scheduling process. For example, there are unclear/non-intuitive steps in the functional process of creating a schedule. Simple modifications such as changing the cursor icon when hovering over dynamic content, or highlighting mandatory fields, provide necessary feedback to the user signifying the content is click-able or editable. This is standard practice in web development, but is not implemented in UTAPS-Web and leaves the user lost as to where to click next to progress through the web-based scheduling. Also, many actions during the web-based scheduling and approval process result in the entire webpage refreshing. This is detrimental while using slow connections as the user is forced to wait for the page to reload when saving a scheduled training date. AROWS-R allows the IMA to schedule their Active Duty Annual Tour; however, it has no functionality for the Active Duty unit to approve the tour, nor certify the tour allowing the IMA to receive pay. To receive pay for an Annual Tour, the IMA must print out the orders and have

their Tour of Duty Certifying Official (typically their supervisor) wet-ink sign the form, scan, and email the orders to the Reserve Pay Office. Automating this process would reduce administrative time for the IMA and supervisor. Furthermore, the Active Duty supervisor has no method to view an IMA's Training Days on the same calendar as their Annual Tour within UTAPS-Web or AROWS-R. To authorize and approve an IMA's augmentation effectively, the supervisor should have a comprehensive schedule or dashboard that shows the IMA's full participation for the year, to include the Annual Tour and any MPA or RPA days. If that supervisor has multiple subordinate IMA's it was recommended in interviews as useful to be able to see all IMA schedules (Training Days, Annual Tour, and MPA/RPA days) at the same time allowing the supervisor to de-conflict and master plan their IMA augmentation against mission requirements. Adding functionality for the supervisor to add an IMA schedule automatically to their Microsoft Outlook calendar is another feasible solution from a web-based system. Supervisors currently add each IMA schedule manually to their calendars as reminders of IMA augmentation and to synchronize mission alignment. An automated "all-day event" invite containing the IMA's scheduled augmentation would allow the supervisor to perform this task on the click of a button, and also receive update notifications to Outlook if the IMA changes their schedule. This functionality could help increase the awareness and forethought of supervisors to more seamlessly integrate their IMA's into their battle rhythm.

Combining the UTAPS-Web and the AROWS-R calendar view should be a basic function available to the supervisor to effectively plan their resources. Whether that one-stop calendar view is implemented in UTAPS-Web, AROWS-R, or ARCNet should be determined by the RIO and the strategic objectives of those service providers. Currently, ARCNet has the capability to load these schedules manually, but it is in a view-only format. If the supervisor



wants to act on the information they must go back to the original system to make modifications. The end-state objective would be one calendar, viewable and actionable by both the IMA and the supervisor, which could be used to schedule and certify any type of augmentation days to include Training Days, Annual Tour, or MPA/RPA days. In the long-term, this solution could save contract costs by maintaining just one website, one set of software developers, and only one helpdesk for resolving issues.

### **Modifications to the IMA Annual Evaluation Process**

Another recurring source of frustration for IMA's and their supervisors is the evaluation process.<sup>34</sup> Writing an evaluation on an IMA who performed 12 Training Days and a 2-week Annual Tour should be a straightforward and simple process. Using the existing evaluation forms may seem advantageous from a policy, management, or standardization process, but it complicates the supervisor's role in accurately rating an IMA, as described earlier in this research. Potentially, a new form that reduces the number of lines required on the evaluation and more favorably weights the "whole person" concept would be more appropriate for those IMA's serving less than 30 days of Active Duty. Currently, the AF 910, 911, and 707 allow ten or more lines to describe the ratee's performance. Instead of 6-10 lines of duty performance, the duty performance space could be reduced to two lines with another two lines for "whole Airman concept" performance. The fourth line would allow the supervisor to capture his or her "push" note, and no more than one additional bullet for the Senior Rater would be necessary for a total of five lines on the evaluation. This report would look very similar to the AF 912 Chief Master Sergeant annual evaluation, which allows for a total of five lines to capture performance. To reiterate, if an IMA works more than 30 days of Active Duty they would be evaluated using the standard AF 910, 911, 912, and 707. Implementing this structure would provide an incentive to

IMA's to work above the minimum standards to obtain the full evaluation. Understandably, initiating a simplified form for IMA's performing the minimum would have implications at promotion boards. For officers, a standard Promotion Recommendation Form (PRF) is still applicable and easy to create even with the proposed simplified form. However, when a board looks at the EPR/OPR within that IMA's record they will easily be able to see the level of participation that individual performed. This is beneficial to the board, as it quickly highlights those IMA's that show dedication to their Reserve career and high levels of participation. Consistent full evaluations are significantly more distinguishable compared to five consecutive years of minimum participation evaluations. This can assist the board to more readily discern between promotable IMA's. If the promotion rate is high (e.g. 85%), there is still enough content in the streamlined evaluation to differentiate between performance levels. Admittedly, potential negative impacts do exist under this proposed construct. Some Active Duty units may not have MPA days available, or, may not have enough MPA days to extend to all of their IMA's who want to serve more than 30 days. This structure would create competition among IMA's to perform exceptionally well in order to be chosen for augmentation (not a bad thing). However, mission justification is also a factor, and the most deserving IMA may not be the Airman chosen to augment in excess of 30 days if their AFSC is not vacant or mission critical. Additionally, supervisors may be inclined to "spread" their MPA days to their IMA's to raise their participation days over the 30-day threshold. This would aid each IMA's career, but may not be best for the unit's mission. In the end, it would be up to the supervisors to effectively manage the MPA days their unit is allotted to ensure the most deserving or mission critical IMA's were given the extra duty days.

Another possible option to modify the evaluation process would be to keep the existing evaluation forms, but restrict the number of lines depending on the number of active duty days worked. This method would alleviate the Reserves from the requirement to create a new “Reserve only” evaluation form to account for those IMA’s performing the minimum participation days. In this construct, the same form would be used but the expectation to fill the entire form would be removed. For example, working less than 30 days would be evaluated with five lines describing performance. Working more than 30 Active Duty days would require filling out the full evaluation form. This method uses policy to enforce how the existing form is completed. Candidly, the AF evaluation forms declare the minimum number of lines in a given section as only one line, inferring that it is possible to leave blank lines under the duty performance section. Culturally however, Air Force supervisors view blank lines in an evaluation as negative performance, and this point is reinforced in the Headquarters ARPC OPR/EPR Writing Guide.<sup>35</sup> Unless that stigma is changed, setting a policy to restrict the number of lines will avoid sending a negative message in the evaluation. Under this policy, it would be necessary to capture the actual number of participation days an IMA performed during that evaluation period. Fortunately, in each evaluation form there is a block under the Ratee Identification Data section titled “Number of Days Supervision”. This block is based on the number of calendar days the ratee is assigned under their current rater, matched against the ratee’s Report on Individual Personnel (RIP). This requirement is the same for IMAs even though they may work most of those days for their civilian employer. By changing the contents of this block to instead match the number of actual Active Duty days the IMA performed during that reporting period, the proposed policy would restrict the number of lines appropriate for the number of days inserted into “Number of Days Supervision” block. Now that the evaluations

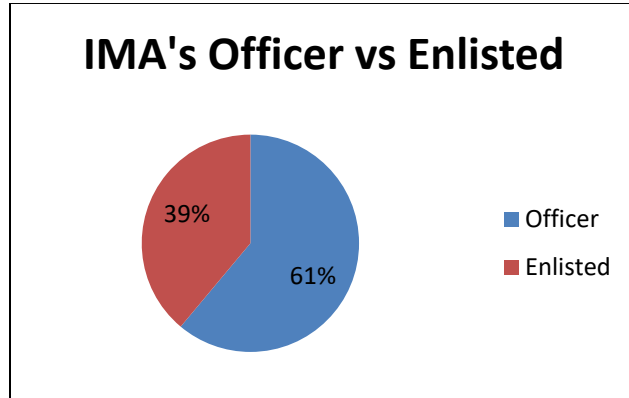
have been converted to Adobe Acrobat smart forms, the potential exists to code the restriction within the form. If the Number of Days Supervision is less than 30 days, the form would only allow four performance lines in the rater's block and one line in the additional rater's block. This method satisfies multiple goals; it relieves the Active Duty from writing a complete evaluation on an IMA who performed 2-weeks of Active Duty, prevents exaggeration of accomplishments on the evaluation, clearly conveys participation to the promotion boards, and does not require significant changes to the existing standard template forms.

### **Increasing the Length of Augmentation**

The other half of the IMA cost-benefit equation is the length of time in which the Active Duty has to utilize the IMA. Multiple supervisors interviewed stated the minimum augmentation length of two weeks was not enough to fully integrate the IMA into the mission and assign meaningful tasks. The solutions researched to solve this issue will analyze the costs behind increasing the Annual Tour length from two weeks to three weeks, and a method to increase Active Duty augmentation from two weeks to four weeks by converting IDT's to Active Duty days.

The first solution is not complex. Instead of an IMA performing a two week Annual Tour they would perform a three week annual tour. This solution increases the Active Duty augmentation by 50%, giving the supervisor one extra week to assign mission tasks. This solution would be implemented in exactly the same way the two week tour is implemented. Funding this extra week on the Annual Tour is the largest detractor. The IMA Program employs an Officer-heavy workforce, which would require more money to fund than the typical 80/20 Officer to Enlisted ratio (See Figure 9). If the Air Force Reserve wanted to pursue this solution

to increase the augmentation from two weeks to three weeks, they would be required to fund an additional \$9.4M in personnel costs for wages (See Figure 10).



**Figure 9. Ratio of Officer to Enlisted employed in IMA Program<sup>36</sup>**

Rank/Grade	# of IMA's	Basic Pay/Mo (2015)	Basic Pay/Wk	Extended Cost
A1C	6	\$2,055.30	\$471.71	\$2,830.25
SRA	245	\$2,351.40	\$539.67	\$132,218.07
SSG	526	\$2,951.40	\$677.37	\$356,296.88
TSG	863	\$3,565.80	\$818.38	\$706,262.22
MSG	636	\$4,367.10	\$1,002.29	\$637,453.42
SMS	235	\$4,945.20	\$1,134.96	\$266,716.52
CMS	116	\$5,954.70	\$1,366.65	\$158,531.69
2LT	9	\$2,934.30	\$673.45	\$6,061.01
1LT	81	\$4,434.30	\$1,017.71	\$82,434.36
CPT	817	\$5,469.60	\$1,255.32	\$1,025,594.83
MAJ	1430	\$7,221.00	\$1,657.28	\$2,369,908.52
LTC	1171	\$8,281.20	\$1,900.60	\$2,225,606.44
COL	551	\$9,977.10	\$2,289.83	\$1,261,694.25
BG	43	\$12,043.80	\$2,764.15	\$118,858.49
MG	22	\$13,647.30	\$3,132.17	\$68,907.68
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>6751</b>			<b>\$9,419,374.63</b>

**Figure 10. Annual Cost to Fund IMA's for One Additional Active Duty Week<sup>3738</sup>**

The other potential drawback to the solution is the additional week the IMA would be away from their civilian job. There is a delicate balance between a Reservist's civilian and military employer. In a memo dated 20 Nov 2015, Chief of the Air Force Reserve Lieutenant General James Jackson stated, "The reservist-employer partnership is critical to the capabilities

that the Air Force Reserve provides to our nation, and is a key factor in maintaining Reserve-Work-Life balance”.<sup>39</sup> Interviews conducted with IMA’s found that one additional week of Active Duty was not a significant strain on their civilian employment.<sup>40</sup>

Another potential method to increase Active Duty augmentation would be to convert IDT’s to Active Duty days. As described in this research, one IDT is equal to a 4-hour Training Period and one full day of pay. The IDT’s break down as follows:

**1 x IDT = 4-hours = 1 Full Day worth of Basic Pay**

**2 x IDT = 8-hours (or 1 x Training Day) = 2 Full Days worth of Basic Pay**

**24 x IDT = 96-hours (or 12 x Training Days) = 24 Full Days worth of Basic Pay**

**IDT’s are Performed Monday through Friday (business days)**

**12-day Annual Tour = 12 Full Days of Basic Pay**

**Annual Tour is consecutive...IMA works 10 x business days and gets paid for Saturday/Sunday**

An IMA uses two IDT periods (8-hours total) on a typical Training Day (one IDT in the morning and one IDT in the afternoon). This means that the IMA gets paid for two full days of work (one for each IDT) for performing one Training Day. Each IMA must perform 24 IDT’s (12 Training Days) each year. If these days were repurposed to only execute annual medical, dental, immunization, and fitness tasks, the number of Training Days could potentially be reduced to 5 Training Days total (or 10 IDT periods). This leaves 14 IDT’s leftover, or seven Training Days (2 x IDT’s = one Training Day). By converting them to Active Duty days, those 14 IDT’s would turn into one Active Duty day each, creating 14 days or two full weeks of Active Duty augmentation. These days could be combined with the original two week Annual Tour to create a four week Annual Tour without needing to increase the Reserve budget (See Figure 11 for sample IMA Schedule).



the cost of the civilian employer and slightly on the IMA. The IMA works an additional three duty days for the same pay (Training Days are performed on business days Monday through Friday, but if converted to Active Duty days the IMA still gets the weekend paid/off). In some circumstances, non-local IMA's who travel great distances may find the four week consecutive tour difficult if they have family commitments. The civilian employer loses their employee for three additional business days each year, but in a four week straight timeframe. This could place employers in difficult situations to plan around, potentially forcing them to hire a temporary employee for that month. Also, out of six interviews conducted with Active Duty supervisors one of them noted they preferred to use their IMA's one week at a time, when needed. If forced to use their IMA four weeks straight, it would detract from the effectiveness. This could have similar impacts in Cyber and Intelligence units where mission tasks change dramatically over the course of the 11 months the IMA is away. To combat those circumstances, the Reserve's could offer (as an exception to policy when justified) a split in the four week Annual Tour to perform two 2-week Annual Tours. This capability would allow those units, those IMA's, or those civilian employers to remain flexible to accommodate extenuating circumstances. The flexibility for unit commanders to split an Annual Tour is afforded today under the current two week Annual Tour construct.<sup>41</sup>

## **RESULTS AND CRITIQUE**

As discussed, there are multiple alternatives the Reserves can analyze to increase the effectiveness of the Reserve IMA Program. Each improvement discussed above was developed under the assumption that the IMAs would maintain mission readiness, and the second highest priority was the effectiveness of the IMA contribution to the Combatant Commander's mission.



By mapping these improvements in a weighted impact matrix, it is feasible to compare the results to choose the best possible solution (See Figure 12).

<b>Weighted Impact Matrix</b>				
<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Improvements</b>			
	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D (A &amp; C)</b>
	Streamline IMA Processes (Scheduler & Evaluation Process)	Increase to 3-Week Annual Tour	Convert IDT's to Create 4-Week Annual Tour	Combination of Streamlined Processes & IDT Conversion to 4-Week Annual Tour
Impact on Active Duty Unit	[2] Reduce Admin Burden	[3] Increases Augmentation Time	[5] Increases Augmentation Time	[7] Reduce Admin Increase Aug
Impact on Reserve Budget	[-1] Invest in Web Development	[-4] \$9.4M Annually	[0] N/A	[-1] Invest in Web Development
Impact on Civilian Employer	[0] N/A	[-1] Loses employee extra 1-week/yr	[-2] Loses employee extra 3 days/yr, 1 mo straight	[-3] Loses employee extra 3 days/yr, 1 mo straight
Impact on IMA	[1] Increase Augmentation Time	[-1] 1 extra week away from family if non-local	[-2] Works 3 adn'l days for same pay	[-1] Works 3 adn'l days for same pay
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>[2]</b>	<b>[-3]</b>	<b>[1]</b>	<b>[2]</b>

**Figure 12. Impact Analysis of Potential Improvements to IMA Program. Each improvement was weighted on a scale of -5 to 5 (-5 being the biggest negative impact, 5 being the best positive impact).**

Each improvement is weighted against the criteria to formulate a score on a scale of -5 to 5 (-5 being the biggest negative impact, 5 being the highest individual positive impact).

Combining improvements allowed a fourth category, Option D, which combines the streamlined processes with the IDT conversion to create a 4-week Annual Tour. Option A and Option D

score the best on the impact scale; however, Option D incurs significant risk to the program. Scores are based on averages and while they can be modified based on weight of the criterion, they are still subjective and dynamic. For example, Option D has the most reward when weighing impact on the Active Duty unit alone (cumulative positive impact score of 7). However, that reward comes at the cost of the civilian employer (negative impact score of -3). IMA's frequently work for Department of Defense contractors or as Air Force Civilians. Unforeseen or strong negative feedback from major civilian employers with whom the Air Force maintains close relationships could cause an increase in sensitivity with the civilian employer. Decision makers must weigh the importance of the criteria themselves. If the Active Duty (i.e. Combatant Commander requirements) demand more manpower augmentation for short-term mission objectives, it may be necessary to weigh that criteria with more importance and implement Option D, at the expense of the civilian employers. If that decision becomes necessary, converting IDT's to Active Duty days would allow the IMA a consecutive month of activation each year within the same budget. One month augmentations have vast possibilities to cover manning gaps created due to Active Duty members deploying, attending Professional Military Education (PME), AFSC Upgrade Training, or shortfalls due to a Permanent Change of Station (PCS). Similarly, an IMA serving a one month tour has the capacity to aid unit resources for larger time-intensive projects such as inspection preparation, unit deployment preparation, hosting symposiums or summits, or energizing projects on-hold due to a high operations tempo. However, under current circumstances where deployments are decreasing, providing manpower relief to the Active Component, it may be risk-appropriate to modify the IMA Program in incremental changes. Option A offers a low-risk effective solution. Improving the IMA information systems and websites used to schedule IMA augmentation and improving the

evaluation process are two key areas that will decrease the administrative burden on the Active Duty and increase the cost-benefit. The RIO, charged with “seamlessly integrating” IMAs, are already undertaking efforts to simplify the scheduling process, and should not lose focus on this overdue endeavor. After resolving processes that impact the Active Duty directly, other legacy paper processes such as submitting leave, certifying orders for pay, and applying for new assignments are crucial indirect processes that require automation to decrease the administration burden on the IMA themselves. Eliminating any printing, routing, and wet-ink signature processes should be a high priority objective for the RIO. The less time an IMA spends routing paper processes the more time they have for mission tasks.

### **CONCLUSION**

As a whole, the IMA Program provides the Reserves a method to maintain a ready force with a capability to activate when necessary to meet Active Duty Combatant Commander requirements through wartime, contingency, or peacetime. IMA’s serving RPA and MPA days fill a critical role to the warfighter representing the core strength and flexibility of the IMA Program. However, the IMA Program requires process improvements to meet the current demand of our warfighters. The minimum annual service requirement for an IMA creates additional processes for the Active Component that outweigh the cost-benefit of 10 business days of disputably effective mission integration. 45% of IMA’s fall into the category of meeting minimum requirements each year. Increasing the effectiveness of this demographic would make significant force improvements to a resource constrained Active Component. Streamlining the IMA administrative processes and upgrading legacy information systems presents a readily available solution to allow the IMA more time and focus on mission augmentation. The easier these processes become, the more the Active Component will leverage the augmentation and the

less they will see the IMA as a burden. If fiscal and manning resource demands continue to rise, the Reserves may be forced to place a higher priority on augmenting the Active Component and a lower priority on impacting civilian employers. Converting IDTs to Active Duty days allows the Active Component the benefit of IMA augmentation for a one-month straight tour under the same Reserve budget. This two-phased approach can be leveraged by the RIO as a viable option to meet both Reserve readiness and Active Component integration objectives to fulfill the needs of our Combatant Commanders.



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<sup>41</sup> Air Force Instruction 36-2254, Volume 1, Reserve Personnel Participation, Personnel, 26 May 2010, page 47.



## **APPENDIX A: ABBREVIATIONS**

ADCON – Administrative Control

AFPC – Air Force Personnel Center

AFRC – Air Force Reserve Command

ARCNet – Air Reserve Component Network

AROWS-R – Air Force Reserve Order Writing System

ARPC – Air Force Reserve Personnel Center

EPR – Enlisted Performance Report

IDT – Inactive Duty Training

IMA – Individual Mobilization Augmentee

MPA – Military Personnel Appropriation

OPCON – Operational Control

OPR – Officer Performance Report

PME – Professional Military Education

PRF – Promotion Recommendation Form

RPA – Reserve Personnel Appropriation

RIO – Readiness and Integration Organization

TR – Traditional Reservist

UTAPS-Web – Unit Training Assembly Participation System – Web

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