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The United States Air Force Reserve: Past, Present, and Future

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ABSTRACT

This paper will explore the history of the Air Force Reserve from 1916. It will touch on several of the highlight issues that have shaped AFRES into today's fighting force.

Following this brief history, will be a discussion of the organization of the contemporary AFRES and its contribution to the Total Force. The final portion of the paper discusses the direction of AFRES in the future with emphasis on roles and missions and selection criteria for these roles and missions. It concludes with several recommendations for senior AFRES leadership.

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THE AIR FORCE RESERVE: PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE

Introduction

The Air Reserve Component (ARC), consisting of the Air National Guard and the Air Force Reserve, is recognized as the most successful Reserve program among the services and the Reserve program most ready to perform its war time mission. The ARC's performance in Desert Shield and Desert Storm certainly proved this to be the case.

How did this situation come about? Is it superior management of forces by the senior leadership? Is it a function of the mission? Is it luck? In my estimation, it's a little bit of all of these factors and some others as well.

The nature of the mission and the luck are tied together somewhat. We in the Air Force Reserve and the Air Guard are lucky in that we can train in, or in some cases, actually do our war time mission on a day-to-day basis. By the nature of their specialties, many ARC personnel can maintain mission skills without full time employment of those skills. We are also fortunate that the Air Force mission has always attracted a high quality recruit. The ARC mission benefits from this high quality since most people in the Air Force Reserve program were at one time in the active Air Force. We are probably most fortunate in that the Air Force and ARC leadership have more fully embraced the "Total Force" concept than the other services.

In this paper I will explore the history of the Air Force Reserve; how we arrived where we are today. I will follow this with a discussion of the present day Air Force Reserve structure and their roles and missions. The final part of my paper will cover the possible future roles and missions of the Air Force Reserve; where we're going. I will limit my paper to the Air Force Reserve portion of the Air Reserve Component.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE AIR FORCE RESERVE

Even though Congress did not form the Air Force as a separate service until 1947, the Air Force Reserve can trace its roots to the National Defense Act of 1916 that authorized strengthening the Aviation Section of the United States Army Signal Corps. This act allowed for the creation of a Reserve Corps of 2,300 officers and enlisted men. The first actual unit was designated the First Reserve Aero Squadron, and was formed in May of 1917. Congress ordered the First Squadron and a sister unit to active duty soon after the United States entered World War I. However, the 8,688 pilot graduates of civilian flying schools who entered the Army as Reserve Military Aviators made a far greater contribution to the overall war effort.¹

The Air Corps Reserve almost disappeared after World War I when the country neglected its entire post war military structure. Due, however, to the constant efforts of such groups

¹ Cantwell, Gerald T. *The United States Air Force Reserve 1916 - 1980*. Office of the AFRES Historian, March 1981, pg. 1.

as the Reserve Officers Association, Congress finally funded some Air Corps modernization and the Air Reservists started to see the appearance of their first benefits. At the start of World War II, there were about 1,500 Army Air Corps Reserve pilots on extended active duty. There were also about 1,700 non-rated officers and enlisted who added valuable skills at the start of the war.²

Most of the Army Air Corps pilots and officers commissioned just prior to and during World War II were Reserve officers. At the end of the war, the U.S. rapidly released most of the officers and enlisted of the Air Corps to civilian life as the military and the country demobilized. Approximately 234,000 officers and 196,000 enlisted men joined the Army Air Corps Reserve. This total was far short of the 1 million men the War Department sought as an augmentation to the Air Corps in the event of a future national emergency.³

The Flying Club

The first post-war Air Reserve program approved by the War Department in July of 1946, was intended to hold forces in reserve that would augment the regular active duty force on "M-Day," or mobilization day. Congress gave the responsibility for organizing, and training the Air Reserve forces to the Air Defense Command (ADC). By 1947, the command organized about 70 Air Reserve Training Centers, which were reduced almost immediately to 41 centers by a cutback in funds. By the end of 1948, ADC had organized

² Cantwell, pg. 1.

³ Directorate of Historical Services. *The Air Force Reserve Program, Changes and Reorganizations 1946 - 1964*. Continental Air Command, March 1965, pg A-1

264 Reserve tactical units, 90 Reserve service units, and 342 composite units,⁴ with a total force structure of about 87,000 officers and enlisted.⁵ The Air Reserve pilots of the day flew trainer aircraft such as the AT-6 or AT-7 for proficiency. Unlike the Air National Guard, there was no pretension of the pilots being combat ready. In fact, the best of the training units were not expected to be deployable for 90 - 150 days after recall to active duty.⁶

Shortly after the United States Air Force was formed from the remnants of the old Army Air Corps, the United States Air Force Reserve was officially named on 14 April 1948. In the next few post-war years the Air Force Reserve was able to add a few C-47s and B-26s to its fleet of trainers, but the Reserve "program" was little changed from the original "flying club." Even though the *flying* part of the program had not changed much, there were several significant events during 1947 and 1948 in the overall evolution of the Air Force Reserve. In the National Security Act of 1947, which formed the Air Force, Congress added increased powers to develop plans and programs for the Air Force Reserve. Starting on 1 October 1948, Reservists were first authorized pay for inactive duty. And on 15 October 1948, a Presidential Executive order brought attention to the Reserves of all services and led to another general reorganization of the Air Force Reserve.⁷

⁴ These composite units were in no way similar to today's new Composite Air Wings.

⁵ Directorate of Historical Services, pg. A-1.

⁶ Cantwell, pg. 2.

⁷ Directorate of Historical Services, pg. A-1.

The Continental Air Command

This reorganization led to the founding of the Continental Air Command (CONAC) on 1 December 1948, headquartered at Mitchell AFB, New York. All the responsibilities of the Air Defense Command passed to the Continental Air Command. The command operated through six regionally numbered Air Forces organized by territory. In 1950, CONAC reduced these six regional numbered Air Forces to four: First, Fourth, Tenth, and Fourteenth Air Force.⁸

During Fiscal Year 1950, the Continental Air Command provided for the participation of all Major Air Commands in reserve training. The Air Force Reserve Training Center program, the Volunteer Air Reserve Training Program, and the Extension Course Training Program were made responsibilities of CONAC. In the Air Force Reserve Training Center program (AFRTC), CONAC was called upon to organize 20 troop carrier wings and five light bombardment wings. The flying units could only train about 36,000 Air Reservists altogether, so the other Air Reservists were designated Mobilization Assignees (today referred to as Individual Mobilization Augmentees, or IMAs) and were assigned to Volunteer Air Reserve Training Programs, to Corollary Units (training with active Air Force units) or to Extension courses. For the first time, the United States organized Air Reservists in tactical units designated for mobilization as units.⁹

⁸ Directorate of Historical Services, pg. A-2.

⁹ Cantwell, pg. 3.

Korea

With the plan of 1950 barely in place, the Korean War started in June of 1950. The United States mobilized all 25 of its Air Force Reserve wings with a total of about 29,000 personnel. In addition, about 118,000 additional Air Reservists from the various other Air Reserve programs were called to active duty, bringing the Air Force Reserve total to about 147,000 mobilized. This total did not include the 40,000 Air Guardsmen that Congress also mobilized for the Korean conflict.¹⁰

Ten of the Air Force Reserve wings were mobilized intact, while the balance of the personnel filled vacant slots in other units as necessary. The Air Reserve forces played a large part in the Korean War, but the overall experience seriously upset the Air Reserve organization; the Corollary Training program dissolved and Air Force Reserve manning dropped drastically. The next few years were spent rebuilding and refining the Air Force Reserve concept. Jet aircraft reached the Air Force Reserve in 1954 and by the end of 1955, the again robust flying unit program consisted of 24 wings -- thirteen troop carrier wings, nine fighter bomber wings, and two tactical bombardment wings.¹¹

In November of 1957, service economy moves forced the reduction in Air Force Reserve flying wings from 24 to 15 and the closing of CONAC's First Air Force, leaving only three numbered Air Forces throughout the Air Force Reserve. CONAC again reorganized its

¹⁰ Cantwell, pg. 3.

¹¹ Cantwell, pg. 4.

command structure in 1960 by replacing all three numbered Air Forces with six Air Reserve Regional Headquarters. These Regional Headquarters were 85% manned by Air Reservists. This gave the Air Reservist his "first real role in the management of Air Force Reserve programs."¹²

The Active 60s

On four different occasions in the 1960s, the President called a portion of the Air Force Reserve to active duty. President Kennedy activated some troop carrier squadrons and some rescue & recovery personnel for the October 1961 Berlin Crisis. And again, Kennedy brought some troop carrier squadrons to active duty in October of 1962, for the Cuban Missile Crisis. The final two call-up occasions of the 1960s were in January and May of 1968 to support our growing commitment to Southeast Asia. The January call-up of two airlift wings was in direct response to the U.S.S. Pueblo incident in Korea. The units activated for Southeast Asia actually saw duty in many parts of the world as they augmented the active forces throughout their tour of extended active duty. Air Force Reservists, in non-activated duty status, directly supported the campaign in Southeast Asia from February 1965 until June of 1975 when Air Force Reserve medical personnel finished their volunteer duties in the temporary refugees camp at Eglin AFB, Florida.¹³

¹² Cantwell, pg. 7.

¹³ Cantwell, pg. 11.

In 1968, the Continental Air Command gave way to Headquarters Air Force Reserve (AFRES) at Robins AFB, Georgia. This new separate operating agency started the policy of having a major general dual-hatted as the Chief, Air Force Reserve *and* as the Commander of AFRES. The first Chief and Commander of AFRES was Major General Rollin B. Moore, Jr. The Air Force was unique in that it was the first service to grant its Reserve component the power to run its own programs; although Headquarters AFRES was, and still is, 60% staffed by regular active duty Air Force personnel.¹⁴

An interesting development in 1968 was the test, at Norton AFB in Southern California, of a new organizational structure called the "Associate" Unit. At the time, there were no Air Reservists flying the C-141 aircraft. The test-unit personnel worked side by side with their active duty counterparts, sharing the aircraft and maintenance facilities. Initially, not many in the Air Force or AFRES greeted the test wing with much enthusiasm; but the test proved so successful, that the Air Force eventually formed many other Associate airlift units as well as air refueling and aeromedical airlift units.¹⁵

The modern Air Force Reserve, as we know it today, started to take shape in the 1970s with the advent of the "Total Force" policy. Although Air Reserve units had been under the close scrutiny of their gaining major commands since the 1960's, the Total Force policy closed the loop on combat readiness standards with the active forces. The Air Force

¹⁴ Cantwell, pg. 14.

¹⁵ U.S. General Accounting Office. *Reserve Force: DoD Guidance Needed on Assigning Roles to Reserves Under the Total Force Policy*. Washington, D.C., December 1989, page 12.

Reserve began to gain more missions with "front line" assets. AFRES began to schedule training missions to augment the active forces in their actual mission roles. The Reserve Regions gave way to the return of the Reserve Numbered Air Forces in 1975, when the AFRES of today took its form with Fourth Air Force at McClellan AFB, Tenth Air Force at Bergstrom AFB, and Fourteenth Air Force at Dobbins AFB -- Headquarters AFRES is still at Robins AFB.¹⁶ Fourth and Fourteenth Air Forces divide airlift assets west and east of the Mississippi River respectively, and Tenth Air Force controls the fighter and tanker assets. The tankers will soon transfer to Fourth and Fourteenth to mirror the new Air Mobility Command structure. Fourth Air Force also controls all of the AFRES rescue and special operations assets.

Air Reserve Flying Centers

From 1946 to 1959 the Air Force operated so-called Air Reserve Flying Centers (ARFC) to train Air Force Reserve flying units. The units were staffed by regular Air Force personnel and civilians who provided all administrative and support functions. In the beginning, the Air Reserve Wing Commanders were subordinate to their ARFC of attachment, but eventually the tables reversed and the ARFCs Commanders came to serve a supporting and advisory role to the Air Reserve Wing Commanders. The Air Force placed the Flying Centers near population centers to make it easier for potential Air Reservists to get their flying training.¹⁷

¹⁶ Cantwell, pg. 16.

¹⁷ Directorate of Historical Services, pg. B-2.

The eventual phasing out of the ARFCs came because of the full time active duty manning problem. The commander of the Continental Air Command decided it was unfair for instructors to have what amounted to indefinite tenure at a single ARFC. He realized that Flying Centers needed full-time personnel, but also that using active duty personnel was not the answer to the training stability problem.

The Air Reserve Technician Program

The answer to the full-time core personnel question came in 1958. After nearly four years of negotiations between the Air Staff, CONAC, the Civil Service Commission, and other minor players, the Air Reserve Technician (ART) program was born. The program would replace the full-time active duty personnel at the Air Reserve Flying Centers with Air Reserve Technicians at the Reserve Wings. The Air Staff funded full implementation of the plan in two increments during fiscal year 1959. In short, the plan used non-active duty, traditional Air Reservists employed by an Air Force Reserve flying unit in the capacity of a Federal civilian employee (technician) five days a week. The overarching purpose of the ART program was, and still is, to improve combat readiness and to produce operationally ready Air Force Reserve units by using a full-time core of highly qualified civilians that are also Air Force Reserve military members of their unit of employment.¹⁸

With the coming of the ART program in 1958, the growing Air Force Reserve Wing

¹⁸ Kan, Kenneth C., Gerald T. Cantwell, and Victor B. Summers. *The Air Reserve Technician Program-Its Antecedents and Evolution (1948 - 1987)*. Headquarters AFRES, Directorate of Historical Services, October 1987, pg. 17.

structure quickly absorbed the ARFC program, and in June of 1959, CONAC deactivated the last Air Reserve Flying Center.¹⁹ With the implementation of the ART program, the Air Force Reserve Wings began to truly be "Ready" Reserves. The ART program has not existed without problems, however. The main difficulties seem to arise because of the dual-status issue. The military regulations and the civil service regulations do not "overlay" each other very well. But despite the "square-peg-in-a-round-hole" situation, the ART program is the single greatest factor in the high combat readiness of today's Air Force Reserve. As Major General Moore, the first Commander of AFRES, said: "I think that probably the greatest beneficial change (to the Air Force Reserve) came about in 1958 when the Air Reserve Technician program was first inaugurated..."²⁰

Into the 80s and 90s

AFRES manning, along with the military in general, continued to grow throughout the 1980s. The Selected Air Reserve (Air Reservists participating for pay) reached its high point in the early 1990s; we passed 82,000 on the way up in 1988, and we passed 82,000 on the way down at the close of Fiscal year 1992.²¹ The last ten years have been busy years for the Air Force Reserve. Beside the turmoil of the expansion and contraction, the men and women of the Air Force Reserve have been involved in several real-world contingencies along side their Air Force counterparts. In 1986, we flew tanker support for

¹⁹ Directorate of Historical Services, pg. B-3.

²⁰ Kan, pg. 60.

²¹ United States Department of Defense. *Defense 92, September/October*. Alexandria, Virginia: American Forces Information Service, 1992, pg. 32.

Operation "El Dorado Canyon" when the F-111s bombed Libya. We fully participated in the 1983 Operation "Urgent Fury" to liberate Grenada and in the 1989 Operation "Just Cause" that overthrew Manuel Noriega of Panama.²² Air Reservists can always be counted on to participate in humanitarian airlift efforts such as they did for the Armenian earthquake relief, Hurricane Hugo relief, Northern California earthquake relief, and most recently, the airlift to aid Somalia.

The biggest contingency and Reserve forces activation since the Korean Conflict was, of course, "Operation Desert Shield/Storm" (ODS/S) of 1990 and 1991. At the peak of the active duty recall, there were about 23,000 Air Reservists on active duty. The cross section of skills included aircrews, medical personnel, maintenance, security police, intelligence, and many more.²³ The Air Force Reserve responded on time, in some cases in fewer than 24 hours, and required little or no post-mobilization training before reporting for duty. By any measure, the Air Force Reserve and the Air Guard personnel activated for ODS/S, performed as advertised in our Total Force policy. The Final Report to Congress on the Conduct of the Persian Gulf War said that "Reserve forces played a vital role...what the DoD accomplished...could not have been done without the full integration of the capabilities of the thousands of Reservists and National Guard personnel. And...the use of Reserve Forces validated the key concepts of the Nation's Total Force Policy."

²² Gordon, pg. 139.

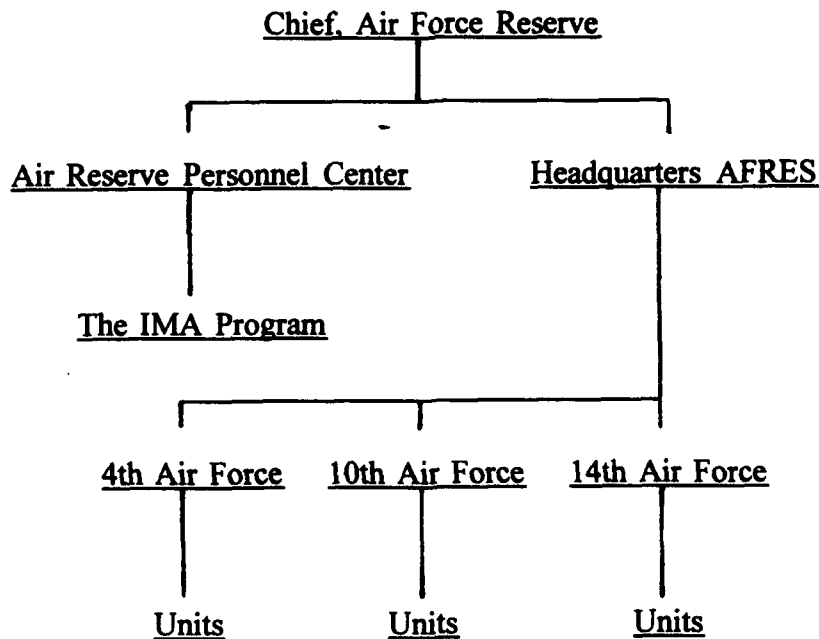
²³ Gordon, pg. 140.

The Air Force Reserve did not escape the major Air Force reorganization of 1992. Beginning in 1992, General Merrill A. McPeak, Air Force Chief of Staff, along with Secretary of the Air Force Donald B. Rice, instituted a top to bottom reorganization of the Air Force. The Air Force Reserve was obliged to undergo a similar process to mirror the active Air Force, beginning at the Numbered Air Force down to the squadron level. General McPeak's "skip echelon" philosophy caused the Reserve Numbered Air Forces to shrink to fewer than 100 personnel, from their high of approximately 250 technicians and Reservists. The primary focus of the NAFs is reduced now to supporting operations and logistics functions for their assigned Wings and Groups. All other supporting functions were either deleted or centrally relocated to HQ AFRES. At the same time, every AFRES Wing also implemented General McPeak's so-called Objective Wing Structure. Whether these changes will prove to be successful remains to be seen. The Air Force and the Air Force Reserve have not greeted the General McPeak changes with total acceptance; but change is seldom easy to sell.

THE AIR FORCE RESERVE TODAY

Organization

The Office of Air Force Reserve is located at the Pentagon. This is where the Chief of the Air Force Reserve and his staff are located. The Chief's staff concerns itself mainly with matters of Air Force Reserve policy and the never ending budget process. Even though the Chief of the Air Force Reserve is also dual-hatted as the Commander of AFRES, his Vice-Commander handles the day-to-day operations of AFRES, through the staff at AFRES Headquarters, Robins AFB Georgia. The Air Reserve Personnel Center (ARPC) with the Individual Mobilization Augmentee (IMA) program also falls directly under the Chief.



AFRES has 22 Wings, 19 flying Groups, and 146 other Groups that fall under the various Wings and Numbered Air Forces. Along with the Wings and Groups, there are 421 Squadrons, 91 flights, and 19 Medical units of various configurations.²⁴ The Airlift Wings are roughly divided geographically by the Mississippi River. Fourth Air Force controls the units in the West from McClellan AFB in Sacramento, California, and Fourteenth Air Force controls the units in the East from Dobbins AFB in Atlanta, Georgia. AFRES's Special Operations Wing, its one Aeromedical Airlift Group, and its one Rescue Wing all fall under Fourth Air Force.

All five AFRES Fighter Wings and both Air Refueling Wings currently fall under Tenth Air Force. AFRES will divide The Tankers among Fourth and Fourteenth Air Force when they work out the details later this year. Under General McPeak's reorganization plan, all active duty airlift and most active duty tankers were brought together under the Air Mobility Command (AMC). Since AMC will gain the AFRES tankers if they are activated, this move will align AFRES' tanker assets and airlift assets in a way similar to AMC.²⁵

Six of the Airlift Wings are Associate Wings, two of the Air Refueling Groups are Associate Groups, and the Aeromedical Airlift Group is an Associate Group. Under the Associate Unit concept, a "host" Air Force unit shares its airplanes with an associated Air Reserve tenant unit that does not possess airplanes of its own.

²⁴ "ROA National Security Report." *The Officer* February 1993, pg. 177.

²⁵ U.S. Air Force Reserve. *Air Force Reserve Roadmap to the Future*. Office of Air Force Reserve, The Pentagon, Washington, D.C., 1991, pg. 33-35.

In the so-called "Unit Equipped" community, each Air Reserve unit has its own airplanes that it does not share with any other unit. In AFRES, most of the "strategic" airlift units that fly the long-range heavy cargo jets (C-5, C-141) are Associate Units. The only exceptions are the Wings at Kelly AFB, Westover AFB, and Andrews AFB. All the AFRES air refueling units flying the KC-135 are unit equipped. The units that fly the KC-10, are Associate Units. All the AFRES Fighter units, Tactical Airlift units (C-130), Special Operations, Rescue, and Weather units have their own aircraft. AFRES owns over 460 total aircraft and its units are spread throughout 65 locations in 37 states and Guam.²⁶

Total Force Contribution

Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird first spoke of the "Total Force" concept in 1970 when he talked of the national defense relying on the "...combat and combat support units of the Guard and the Reserves." He proposed that a "Total Force Concept...be applied in all aspects of planning, programming, manning, and equipping...of the Guard and Reserve Forces."²⁷ In 1973, the next Secretary of Defense, James Schlesinger, announced to the military departments, that "The Total Force is no longer a 'concept.' It is now the Total Force Policy which integrates the Active, Guard, and Reserve forces into a homogeneous whole."²⁸

²⁶ Roadmap, pg. 11.

²⁷ Rostker, Bernard D., et al. *Assessing the Structure and Mix of Future Active and Reserve Forces*. Rand, Office of the Secretary of Defense, December 1992, pg. 4.

²⁸ Rostker, pg. 4.

The Total Force policy rests on two well-known principles: The Reserve forces will be the primary source of augmentation for the active duty forces, and on the integrated use of all available manpower, whether Active or Reserve. The effect of this policy is that the Air Force must equip all Reserve forces, if they are to be truly interchangeable, with "front-line" equipment and they should train to the same standards as their active duty counterparts. Before the implementation of the Total Force Policy, the Air Force Reserve aircraft inventory consisted almost entirely of obsolete "hand-me-downs" from the Air Force. As a measure of the Air Force Reserve of today, there are no aircraft in the Air Force Reserve inventory that are not also flown by the Air Force.

The approximately 82,000 Selected Air Reserves (Air Reservists currently receiving pay for performing required duty) and the 460 airplanes in the AFRES inventory make the following contributions to the Total Air Force:²⁹

Aerial Spraying Capacity	100%
Weather Reconnaissance	100%
Aeromedical Evacuation Crews	71%
Aircraft Battle Damage Repair	59%
Strategic Airlift Flight Crews	50%
Aerial Port Units	48%
KC-10 Tanker Flight Crews	43%
Air Rescue and Recovery	41%
Strategic Airlift Maintenance	40%
Tactical Airlift	26%
Civil Engineering	13%
Special Operations	12%
Strategic Airlift Aircraft	11%
Tactical Fighters	9%

²⁹ ROA National Security Report, pg. 177.

If it sounds as if the Air Force Reserve is doing a good job for the country, it's because it is. The people in the Air Reserve program are highly qualified and dedicated to the mission. Across the board, the Air Force Reserve is manned by 80% prior active duty personnel.³⁰ In some career fields such as pilot, the percentage of prior service personnel is much higher. The people know how to do the job and they take pride in their work. They get paid for their Reserve duty, but most people will tell you that they're in the Air Force Reserve for reasons other than money. Many people leave active duty for reasons such as too many family moves, for a less turbulent family life, and to regain control of the decisions that will shape their careers. They join the Air Force Reserve because they like the job, the mission, and the camaraderie of a military unit. They can have these things in the Air Force Reserve without giving up responsibility for the control of their personal lives and civilian careers.

It is definitely good work *if you can find it*; and that is the problem for most people leaving active duty desiring to enter the Air Force Reserve. Even though the Air Force Reserve is not shrinking as fast as the Air Force, there is such a high retention rate in the Air Force Reserve, even following Desert Storm, that few if any slots are available. AFRES can manage its downsizing for the time being through normal attrition rates. The real manning problem will come for AFRES in the future when the smaller Air Force will be separating too few qualified applicants for the Air Force Reserve jobs that will then be available.³¹

³⁰ Gillert, Doug. "Drills and Thrills." *Air Force Times* 28 Dec. 1992: pg. 12.

³¹ Gillert, pg. 12.

THE AIR FORCE RESERVE TOWARD THE YEAR 2000

The Budget Crunch

The future of the Air Force Reserve is as hard to predict as the future of the United States military in general. U.S. Defense spending will come under increasing pressure in the next few years as lawmakers seek ways to balance the budget, and at the same time, increase spending on domestic programs. Congress has taken relatively good care of the Guard and Reserve programs. As a proportion of the FY 1993 \$274 billion Defense budget, total Guard and Reserve military pay, and operations and maintenance (O&M) budget totals of about \$18.8 billion are a bargain. The Air Force Reserve, at \$1.9 billion, receives the least funding of any Reserve program except the Marine Corps Reserve program.³²

There is little "fat" for Congress to cut from the Air Force Reserve budget, but cuts will inevitably come our way. The fundamental reason for downsizing the Reserve programs is the same reason the active forces are being cut. The war that our forces were designed to fight in Europe is now extremely unlikely. And as our new Secretary of Defense, Les Aspin, has stated, it makes little sense to just create a smaller version of the force designed to win in Europe. What we need is an entirely new force shaped to meet the threats of tomorrow. The 1992 National Military Strategy of the United States, states: "We will...retain the potential to defeat a global threat...However, our plans and resources are

³² Towell, Pat. "Spending Bill Trims Some Now, Sets Bigger Cuts in Motion." *Defense & Foreign Policy*, 10 October 1992: 3184-3191.

primarily focused on deterring and fighting regional rather than global wars.”³³ Since the Air Force Reserve is a portion of the Total Force, we can expect to be “re-shaped” for this strategy along with the rest of the military.

Reshaping does not necessarily mean downsizing. I think it’s safe to say that AFRES will become a larger relative portion of the “Total” Air Force; however, I also think it’s safe to say that in the future, AFRES will undoubtedly have fewer selected Air Reservists on the payroll than today’s total of 82,000. The latest round of base closure recommendations announced in March by Secretary of Defense Les Aspin listed several Air Force installations which are currently homes for Air Force Reserve units. The decision as to whether these units will move to other bases or will be simply retired remains to be seen.

Roles, Missions, and Force Mix

All the services face an in-depth examination of their roles and missions in the coming years. Senator Sam Nunn of Georgia, chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, is one the most outspoken individuals on this issue. He asks such questions as: Do we really need four air forces? Do the Army and Marines have essentially the same capabilities? Do the services all need their own logistics centers? The roles and missions of the services have changed little since 1947 and Senator Nunn has charged the Joint Chiefs with completing a comprehensive roles and missions review as part of the current restructuring of the military. All Reserve forces can expect to be a part of the restructuring,

³³ *National Military Strategy of the United States*, January 1992, page 11.

and as such, should also expect to reexamine their roles and missions.

But probably more important to the Air Force Reserve than roles and missions is the question of force mix: which capabilities will be in the active force, which capabilities will be in the Reserve force, and which shall the Air Force blend into both forces. This force mix question is such a volatile issue that Congress asked RAND's National Defense Research Institute to study the problem. RAND delivered their report, "*Assessing the Structure and Mix of Future Active and Reserve Forces: Final Report to the Secretary of Defense*," in December of 1992. The length of the title was matched only by the length of the report: 330 pages of background along with an in-depth examination of several possible force mix options. Feelings tend to run high on the issue of force mix. On the one hand is the Ultra-Reserve perspective from the outgoing Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs, Stephen M. Duncan. His famous "rebuttable assumption" is that if we can save money by placing a mission in the Reserves, we should do it, unless there are unacceptable decreases in military capability by doing so. On the other hand there is the not uncommon mentality that believes every dollar spent on the Reserves is a dollar wrongfully taken from the active duty forces; that we don't need *any* Reserves because the active forces can go it alone. Clearly, the proper balance is somewhere in between these two points of view.

A complicating factor in the force mix question is the apparent attempt of the active forces to "unload" missions onto the Reserve forces as the active duty budgets shrink. The Reserve forces, and specifically the Air Force Reserve, should be careful about eagerly

accepting new missions without a thorough examination of all relevant factors. An example that is worrisome: the Air Force has convinced the Air Force Reserve to take some of the ancient B-52Gs for the new Air Reserve Component bomber mission. (The Air Guard will get some B-1s at the same time) I believe this B-52 mission will prove to be a tough mission for AFRES to handle, and that other present AFRES missions could suffer as a consequence.

What makes a Good Air Reserve Mission?

In 1989, Congress tasked the General Accounting Office (GAO) with finding out what processes guide the Department of Defense and the services when deciding which missions to assign to their respective Reserve components. The GAO found, that specifically within the Air Force (and all other services in general), the process was somewhat ad hoc and that "...force mix decisions were driven by particular circumstances; no formalized criteria exist to guide force mix decisions; and any criteria that one might find are designed to justify what is already in place."³⁴ In other words, officials made seat-of-the-pants decisions and backed them up with after-the-fact "criteria" to bolster the decisions; not so good. Since the time of this report, The Air National Guard and the Air Force Reserve have both published general guidelines for use when making force mix decisions.

The Air Force organizational structure revolves around aircraft rather than personnel units (as in the Army), therefore force-mix decisions have historically centered on modernization

³⁴ U.S. General Accounting Office, page 29.

and transfer of equipment rather than changes to the basic Air Force Reserve mission.³⁵

This could change soon as pressure mounts on the active budget. The Air Force Reserve leadership must remember that our job in the Air Force Reserve is not to *do* the mission, our job is to *train* to do the mission. During peacetime, the active forces *do* the mission. Therein lies the Total Force "disconnect" that we need to constantly keep in mind. As much as we might like to step up to an operational mission, we have to remember, we're only "part-timers." Any mission AFRES agrees to take-on, must be compatible with the part time nature of our work-force: the Air Reservist. If we have to man the mission with too many full-time technicians, we'll lose our cost effectiveness for the American taxpayer.

Therefore, the Air Force Reserve must carefully review each possible new mission (missions not currently in the Air Reserve) or percentage increase in the ownership of current missions, using the following four criteria:³⁶

1. I believe the most important factor to consider is: what percentage of the mission will the Air Force Reserve own? For logistical support reasons, AFRES should not fly older obsolete aircraft that the Air Force no longer flies. All services have mission capabilities

³⁵ U.S. General Accounting Office, page 12.

³⁶ The following four criteria were developed through a combination of personal experience in the Air Force Reserve, personal interviews with Major General Closner - Chief Air Force Reserve, and personal interviews with AF/REO and AF/REX personnel. The Air National Guard seems to have done more in this area of study recently than AFRES, accordingly I used inputs from their *Long Range Plan* as well as AFRES' *Road Map to the Future*. Many additional criteria exist, but I believe these are the ones that *must* be met to ensure satisfactory mission results.

ammunition supply companies in the Army; mine-sweepers and combat search and rescue in the Navy, and aeromedical evacuation crews and aerial port cargo personnel in the Air Force.³⁷ Can these services handle a contingency situation without calling-up the Reserves? In 1987, the Navy needed mine-sweepers in the Persian gulf, some Naval Reservists volunteered for duty but the Navy had to man the reserve ships largely with active duty personnel since there was reluctance to call-up the Reserve crewmembers.

A fundamental principle should be that each service needs to have in their active force enough capability in critical mission areas to handle a normal contingency without activating their Reserves. Reserve forces should only be called-up for large operations like "Desert Storm" and not for something small like "Just Cause." Of all the services, the Army has the least margin of safety in this regard. The Air Force Reserve owns 100% of only two missions, weather reconnaissance, and aerial spraying, both of which the Air Force is not likely to need, even in a large scale contingency.

2. The next most important standard, to me, is: is the mission supportable with available personnel? Are there personnel in the expanded local area to man the mission? This includes trained people leaving active duty that AFRES can gain, as well as a trainable civilian recruiting base. It is very difficult to run a flying squadron manned by "commuters." If your personnel cannot drive from their homes to the unit to perform their training periods, they will be of little day-to-day use to the unit. In a flying unit, you will

³⁷ U.S. General Accounting Office, page 4.

often find the commuters delinquent in one or more required training events. This is one of the factors that may cause difficulties for the planned B-52 unit at Barksdale AFB.

Applying this criteria would, of course, automatically rule out Air Force Reserve installations outside the CONUS, except those manned by full time AFRES employees.

3. There must a cost benefit to having a mission in the Air Force Reserve. The reserve can usually do the mission at a lower cost, but the cost benefit varies greatly from mission to mission depending on many factors. For example: how many prior service personnel can you attract to keep initial training costs low? How many full-time personnel (ARTs and civilians) will the mission require? The ART/civilian to Air Reservist manning ratio will be a function of the unit's operations tempo (how intensively you have to train for the mission). Will the mission require any major new military construction at the selected bed-down location? Because of tasks shared with the Air Force host, Associate Units tend to need fewer full-time people than unit-equipped units.

4. The mission itself must be compatible with the part-time nature of the Reserve Force. That is, the peacetime operations tempo must not be so high as to require an unreasonable amount of the Air Reservist's time. How much is unreasonable? Participation in a flying unit requires a member to do fifteen days of annual tour (AT), twenty-four Unit Training Assembly (UTA) days, and various additional flying training periods as well as possible temporary duty away from home station. All of this training can *easily* total 60 *different* days on which a flying Air Reservist reports for duty. That's an average of five days a

month spent at the unit. Many people do *more* than this, but is this a reasonable expectation for somebody with a family and a full time job? I think five to six days a month is pushing the limit of the Air Reservist's "participation envelope." Counting on Air Reservists to take over former active duty overseas mission locations is not a realistic expectation. The time spent traveling to and from such duty locations would be prohibitive.

If the nominal mission will require more time than five to six days per month, it's either not a good Air Reserve mission or the mission requirements need to be modified somewhat. For example: some aspect of the mission that requires recurrent training events (airdrop, air to air combat, etc.) will have to be deleted. If these deletions create an unacceptably low residual combat capability, then the mission probably cannot be economically done in the Air Force Reserve with normal Technician to Air Reservist ratios.

In summary, if we have sufficient people, a demographically acceptable location, a low peacetime operations tempo, and we won't own the entire mission or weapons system, then the Air Force Reserve can almost surely do an excellent job with the mission. There are many other considerations of course, but these, in my opinion, are the main "show-stoppers."

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

The RAND force mix study discussed on page 20 of this paper, praised the Air Force and the Air Force Reserve for the Associate Unit concept. I think the associate "system" could be expanded to cover units other than flying units. For example: why couldn't there be an associate hospital unit where the Air Force has a large medical center? And why is the associate concept only used in C-5, C-141, C-9, and KC-10 units? Why not investigate consolidating fighter and tactical airlift units with Air Force units to save base overhead money?

While I endorse the RAND study's idea of increasing the associate concept beyond traditional roles, I totally disagree with their idea of what would constitute an associate unit. While the study does not spell this out in great detail, they seem to be saying that you could tack an associate reserve squadron onto an existing Air Force wing. They also imply that this squadron could be run by a full-time core of active duty personnel. If this is actually what they are proposing, (it's not entirely clear) it would largely constitute a return to the Air Reserve Flying Center concept abandoned as unworkable in the 1960's.

The strength and vitality of the Reserve system is in its organization. The wings, groups, and squadrons are run by Reserve personnel who understand the nature of the Reserve program. If you have never been a Reservist, you cannot understand the forces pulling the Reservist in several directions at once: family, employer, and reserve unit. The active duty

personnel I have talked to have absolutely no concept of how the Air Force Reserve works; they usually share the common notion that "the Reserves get all the good deals." One of the main problems with Headquarters AFRES is that most of the military personnel in the building are active duty Air Force personnel that have never been Reservists and probably never will be. Most Reservists have been on active duty at one time or another, and understand their world much better than they understand ours. A Reserve system run by active duty personnel did not work in the past, and it certainly will not work in the future. It is no accident that the Air Force Reserve is proven and successful. Our associate and unit-equipped units, must maintain their own command structure to remain successful.

The Air Force Reserve Command leadership must evaluate possible new roles and missions with regard to existing Reserve missions. It is my personal belief that we should do a better job with the missions we already have, before we eagerly accept new missions and base stewardships. For example: many Air Force Reserve units occupy small, inadequate, and run-down facilities. Other units such as the strategic air-evac squadrons are woefully understaffed with full-time personnel given their large size. Let's just take a good "Quality" look at how we're doing with the missions and people we have, before spreading our dwindling resources even thinner than they are now spread.

For the Air Force Reserve to remain successful in the future, our senior leadership must, from time to time, reaffirm the part-time nature of the Air Force Reserve. There is an understandable, yet destructive, eagerness on the part of senior leadership to be "can do,"

when actually the “guys in the trenches” back at the units can’t do. Believe me, it’s no fun to find out Friday afternoon that you’ve been tasked to supply a flight crew on Monday for 30 days. What will happen, is that an angry flight crew of Reserve Technicians will cover the tasking, and they’ll be out of the office for the next 30 days. We have to be careful when we step up to operational missions. Everybody in the Air Force Reserve wants to “hack” the mission, or they would not be there in the first place. But, again, we have to remember that it is our job to *train* for the mission if called during a national emergency; and it is up to the Air Force to *do* the mission on a day to day basis.

Conclusion

This is an exciting time to be in the Air Force Reserve. There are great challenges as well as great opportunities ahead. But we must never lose track of our mission and our part-time heritage if we are to remain the most successful of the Reserve programs. We should remain faithful to the people and missions already in the program. The Air Force Reserve must not pay the start-up costs of new missions with money cut from the budgets of existing programs. And above all, let’s be sure we’re doing our current missions well, before we add new missions.

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In addition to the reference material above, I interviewed the Chief Air Force Reserve, Major General John J. Closner and numerous members of his Operations staff and Plans staff. While not quoted directly, their ideas and input were used in this paper.