Strategy Research Project

Air Reserve Component: Key to the Air Force's Future

by

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Class of 2013

DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT: A
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REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

Form Approved
OMB No. 0704-0188

The public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing the burden, to Department of Defense, Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports (0704-0188), 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to any penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number. **PLEASE DO NOT RETURN YOUR FORM TO THE ABOVE ADDRESS.**

1. REPORT DATE *(DD-MM-YYYY)*	**2. REPORT TYPE**	**3. DATES COVERED** *(From - To)*
xx-03-2013	STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT	

4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE
Air Reserve Component: Key to the Air Force's Future

5a. CONTRACT NUMBER

5b. GRANT NUMBER

5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER

6. AUTHOR(S)
Colonel Don R. Bevis
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5d. PROJECT NUMBER

5e. TASK NUMBER

5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER

7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)
Captain Kevin E. Kinslow
Department of Military Strategy, Planning, and Operations

8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER

9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)
U.S. Army War College
122 Forbes Avenue
Carlisle, PA 17013

10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)

11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)

12. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT
Distribution A: Approved for Public Release. Distribution is Unlimited.

13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES
Word Count: 7,725

14. ABSTRACT

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15. SUBJECT TERMS
Inflection Point, Budgetary Constraints, Capable and Efficient Force, Political Support, Assign more to the ARC

16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			**17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT**	**18. NUMBER OF PAGES**	**19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON**
a. REPORT	**b. ABSTRACT**	**c. THIS PAGE**			**19b. TELEPHONE NUMBER** *(Include area code)*
UU	UU	UU	UU	40	

USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

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Abstract

Title:	Air Reserve Component: Key to the Air Force's Future
Report Date:	March 2013
Page Count:	40
Word Count:	7,725
Key Terms:	Inflection Point, Budgetary Constraints, Capable and Efficient Force, Political Support, Assign more to the ARC
Classification:	Unclassified

The ARC has proven itself as a very capable, efficient, and experienced force that also happens to have strong political support which generally translates into resourcing. There is considerable supporting evidence that the USAF should stop trying to regress to its previous Cold War construct and take bold steps toward a better future by making better use of the ARC. However, the USAF appears to be fully invested in a linear solution to its problems and it is very doubtful it will reverse current trends unless directed.

Air Reserve Component: Key to the Air Force's Future

Gentlemen, we have run out of money. Now we have to think.

—Sir Winston Churchill[1]

The Environment We Face

Today, the United States is in a unique position in which we have not only the opportunity but the essential need to make significant strategic changes that would better align our military for the environment we expect to face in the future. The Iraq conflict is over. We are planning to terminate major operations in Afghanistan by 2014. Arguably, the United States' known threats to national security have been reduced. For the foreseeable future, we anticipate an environment that will require significantly less military engagements. As the need for combat operations reduces, we as a nation also need to regain control over our federal debt levels. The taxpayers are currently facing a federal debt rapidly approaching $17 trillion. Assuming there are no major cuts to entitlement programs like Social Security, Medicaid, and Medicare, the national debt level will continue growing at an exponential rate. In turn, discretionary spending will offset the growing non-discretionary spending requirements. This challenging fiscal environment is what Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, ADM Mullen, described in 2010 as "our nation's greatest national security threat."[2]

Our senior civilian leaders are aware of the fiscal challenges that our nation faces and have provided policy guidance to government agencies, to include the Department of Defense (DOD). Based on the challenges faced, the DOD and the respective military departments are at a historic strategic inflection point. Very tough decisions must be made at this inflection point to ensure the long-term security of our vital national security interests while balancing those decisions against a challenging fiscal environment.

Because the DOD is facing this challenging environment in which risks must be mitigated, a rare opportunity exists to rethink "business as usual." The DOD should reshape the military departments moving from a Cold War construct toward a construct that better meets the future national security requirements with a more effective and efficient 21st century military force. Much of the following analysis has implications to all services. However, the intent of this paper focuses only on the United States Air Force (USAF) and the need to reverse its current trend by making greater use of its Air Reserve Components (ARC) as part of the Total Force.[3]

The analysis will demonstrate how the USAF has the opportunity to modernize its capabilities in a fiscally constrained environment while minimizing the assumption of additional risks through the assignment of more mission and manpower to the ARC. The transition would also allow the USAF to decrease the size of its active component (AC) manpower and mission requirements resulting in a considerable savings to the federal budgets. Numerous credible sources support the analysis and recommendations included in this paper. To fully comprehend why the USAF should make progressive changes and assign the ARC more mission and manpower, one must first fully understand the ARC's general construct and how it is operationally utilized. One must also make note of the established construct trends.

Historical Use of the ARC and Construct Trend

The use of the Reserve Component (RC) became more prescriptive after the lessons learned from Vietnam were put into policy. During the Vietnam conflict, the RC was not widely called upon. In turn, augmenting the AC force requirements were filled through the selective service process that became more widely known as "the draft." In an attempt to avoid past mistakes, in August 1970 Secretary of Defense (SECDEF)

Melvin R. Laird called for a "Total Force Concept" directing the AC services to use the RC when augmentation needs existed. These directives required the AC to properly man, train, and equip the RC to support their respective parent services. This effectively meant that the nation could no longer go to war without mobilizing the Reserves. By 1973, SECDEF James R. Schlesinger stated that the Total Force was no longer a concept but a working policy.[4] In turn, the DOD made it policy to resource the Reserves properly.[5]

The USAF not only embraced the Total Force approach but also wisely used the concept as a force enabler. Through the transfer of older USAF aircraft and equipment, the USAF historically has resourced the ARC ensuring those forces were trained, equipped, and manned properly. The ARC is generally composes of a part-time force with a small number of full-time personnel present to ensure the training requirements are met. The USAF's use of the ARC as a "strategic reserve" offers considerable personnel savings because most personnel are part-time. ARC personnel and equipment also remains at the same readiness levels as their respective AC counterparts. Maintaining a high organizational readiness level is somewhat unique to the USAF. Other services generally keep their respective RC personnel at a lower level of readiness because of resource constraints. The higher level of readiness has enabled the USAF to successfully "plug and play" the ARC whenever the AC forces reached too high of an operation tempo, needed reconstitution, or greater capabilities depth was required. This successful Total Force model proved invaluable as it has maintained a large presence in the Persian Gulf region ever since Iraq invaded Kuwait in August 1990.[6] The Total Force protected our vital interests in the region and

continues to do so. However, it appears considerable changes may occur due to a sweeping change in our global security strategy and a fiscally challenging environment.

The DOD, like other federal agencies, is currently under considerable pressure to make tough choices and determine how best to maintain a strategic national and global advantage in a climate of significantly declining resources. The USAF has not been immune to these pressures and has proposed relatively significant changes in the way future wars are fought. These proposed changes attempt to balance maintaining war fighting readiness at acceptable levels while minimizing risks. Several of the proposals were perceived as extremely controversial and have been met with considerable political resistance. The controversial points and political responses will be addressed later in this analysis.

Based on recent overarching strategic guidance provided by the President and the SECDEF, the USAF proposed some significant changes to its force structure and mission design. The USAF budget proposal was part of the President's budget proposal to Congress for Fiscal Year 2013 (FY13).[7] Some of the factors the USAF considered as part of the proposal were the requirements to address possible future threats while adapting to constrained resources. The resounding point the USAF leadership made is the need to ensure readiness and quality are not sacrificed even though the Total Force would be smaller in the coming years. Some of the major proposed changes included the strategic shift to focus on the Asia-Pacific region through a broader investment in a new Joint concept known as Air-Sea Battle (ASB). The USAF also proposed cutting a significant portion of its aviation fleet and also proposed cuts to the AC and ARC end strength.

On many occasions, USAF leadership has been very complementary of the ARC. They have acknowledged the significant contributions the ARC has made to the Joint war fighter through successfully "leveraging our Total Force Enterprise."[8] However, due to the current fiscal challenges, the trend seen in the USAF's FY 13 proposal to Congress would shift a relatively significant portion of resources back to the AC while also reducing the ARC's resources. The USAF states "two decades of military end strength and force structure reductions in our Active Component have shifted the ratio of Active to Reserve Component forces."[9] Based on a force structure comparison to 1990 where the ARC was 25% of the Total Force structure, the USAF proposed to decrement ARC mission and manpower to get it back closer to the historic ratios.[10]

As part of the FY13 budget proposal, the USAF proposed cutting Air National Guard (ANG) and Air Force Reserve (AFR) end strength by 4.8% and 1.3%; respectively. The USAF also proposed cutting AC end strength by 1.1%.[11] These proposed changes would also result in a decrease in many mission sets where the mission either goes away or is shifted to the AC. The USAF also proposed a net Total Force decrease of 227 combat or combat support aircraft in FY13. According to the USAF, the proposed aircraft divestitures would result in $8.7 billion in savings.[12] The USAF also stated in the proposal that there will be a continued reliance upon the ARC but the Total Force will have to become smaller together while maintaining flexibility, agility, and readiness to engage a full range of contingencies and threats. As part of that reliance upon the ARC, the USAF does intend on increasing the number of "Total Force Integration associations" with the ARC from the current number of 100 up to 115.[13]

Upon release, the USAF's 2013 budget proposal was met with considerable resistance by not only members of Congress but also the Council of Governors.[14] The council strongly believed the USAF's proposed cuts would diminish the nation's ability to conduct Defense Support to Civil Authorities (DSCA) as well as Homeland Defense (HD) operations.[15] The USAF's budgetary proposal caused enough political consternation that Secretary Panetta took the unprecedented action of asking Congress to pause on considering the USAF's original budget proposal. This action afforded enough time for Secretary Panetta and other senior DOD officials to further consider the concerns specifically presented by the Council of Governors. The DOD proposal was modified where the updated submission lowered the number of ANG personnel and aircraft proposed for removal.[16] Despite the modified budget submission, much of the USAF's proposals to cut manpower and aircraft from the 2013 budget were ultimately denied by Congress.

After much political debate, the FY13 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) passed the Senate and House of Representatives and signed into law just before the end of calendar year 2012. However, Congress only allowed a very small cut to the ANG personnel while allowing the proposed cuts to the AFR remain as the USAF originally proposed.[17] Congress also restricted the USAF's proposed cuts to the ANG aircraft.[18] Not all of the proposed aircraft cuts will take place as some intra-theater aircraft will remain in the ANG inventory. The more notable development contained in the 2013 NDAA was the establishment of a commission to look at the structure of the USAF.

The 2013 NDAA directs the establishment of the "National Commission on the Structure of the Air Force." The commission's charge is to "undertake a comprehensive study of the structure of the USAF to determine whether, and how, the structure should be modified to best fulfill current and anticipated mission requirements for the USAF in a manner consistent with available resources."[19] It is notable that senior USAF officials made an appeal to the authorizing committees requesting that the NDAA exclude the mandated commission.

The commission will comprise of members appointed by the President, the Chair, and Ranking Members from the House Armed Services Committee (HASC) as well as the Senate Armed Services Committee (SASC). The specific areas that will be analyzed are the following: meeting the needs of the Combatant Commanders, the appropriate balance of AC to RC personnel, ability to conduct homeland defense and DSCA, obtaining reasonable deployment rates for the AC as well as the ARC, and ensuring there is a proper balance of efficiency, effectiveness, capabilities, and readiness.[20] The commission will begin holding hearings in the coming months with a final report due to the President, HASC, and SASC leadership by February 2014. Assuming the report contains specific recommendations, it will likely lack the authority to compel the USAF to adopt the recommendations. Based on similar commissions, like the Commission on the National Guard and Reserves (CNGR), Congress ultimately may direct the USAF to adhere to many of the recommendations.

The analysis provided to this point helps demonstrate how the ARC has been utilized historically as well as better qualify how the USAF would prefer to utilize the Total Force in the near to intermediate term. It is equally important to understand the

existing long-term strategic guidance as it helps define the road the nation is taking with respect to protecting the nation's national security interests. The strategic guidance also will help better frame the scope of the issue as the DOD postures our forces for the challenges of tomorrow.

Strategic Guidance and the Path Forward

As mentioned previously, the President and the SECDEF published overarching policy guidance in January 2012. These policies will be the basis guiding the DOD in programming and budgetary cycles for the next several years. The guidance appears to be an extension of the 2010 National Security Strategy and the 2011 National Military Strategy where economic concerns are brought to the forefront as well as the move toward a smaller and more joint force as operations in Iraq and Afghanistan begin to cease.

The main points found in "Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities For 21st Century Defense" describes the winding down of operations in Afghanistan, working through declining budgets, and the need to secure our vital interests through a "global presence emphasizing the Asia-Pacific and Middle East."[21] The new emphasis in the Asia-Pacific region is what has become more widely known as the military's "rebalance." The guidance also prescribes some of the future capabilities our forces should plan for in the future where the United States is capable of deterring or defeating aggression in one region while committed to a large-scale operation elsewhere. The guidance also makes it clear our nation will be certain to have the capacity to project power despite advanced anti-access or area denial (A2/AD) challenges.[22]

The requirement to counter A2/AD challenges led to the USAF and Navy's joint development of a relatively new concept known as "Air-Sea Battle" (ASB). A point to

make is the ASB concept as well as many other budgetary changes were addressed in the DOD's "Defense Budget Priorities and Choices." This strategic guidance is the budgetary guidance the DOD will follow in FY 13-17 and was the supportive guidance associated with the "Priorities For 21st Century Defense."[23]

The ASB concept primarily focuses on the USAF and Navy making investments in newer technologies allowing greater "reach-back" and power projection capabilities. The capabilities focus would improve command and control, long-range precision strike, advanced integrated air and missile defenses, robotics, submarine operations, electronic and cyber warfare technologies, and greater use of the air and space domains.[24] Later in the analysis, support is given why these types of "reach back" missions are typically ideal for the RCs. Ultimately, the new capabilities would allow for a more responsive force to the emerging threat China presents as A2/AD is their ultimate objective.[25]

Secretary Panetta made the point in the overarching guidance that the nation is currently at a "strategic turning point" where tough choices must be made. He stated the DOD will begin to shape a Joint Force for the future that will be smaller but will remain agile, technologically advanced, and ready. He also introduced the concept of "reversibility," which is the ability to preserve the ability to regenerate capabilities quickly to meet the requirements of future contingencies. Reversibility was specifically mentioned in reference to the health of the United States' industrial base and the appropriate balance between AC and RC forces. Secretary Panetta, accompanied by the President, further defined the intent of reversibility in a Pentagon media briefing prior to the release of the FY 13 budget. Secretary Panetta explained that reversibility means

that even though AC land forces will be smaller in the coming years, "it means reexamining the mix of elements in the active and reserve components; it means maintaining a strong National Guard and Reserve."[26]

The guidance contained in the “Priorities For 21st Century Defense" is also prescribed as the "blueprint for the Joint Force in 2020."[27] "Joint Force 2020" is the restructuring of personnel-based capabilities that will significantly lower the requirement for land component forces while increasing the reliance upon air-sea power projection.[28] As Chairman Dempsey wrote in his direction to the Joint Force, one of the key efforts is to "choose a smaller, well-trained, and equipped force over a large force that cannot afford world-class readiness."[29] He went on to state we must retain leaders with essential expertise and proven potential. Another strong point made was the need for the military to be more innovative in how it operates, which will determine our nation's success or failure. He also underscored that the future Joint Force "must get the people right."[30] Along the same line of thought, the President's guidance also highlighted the need to reexamine the mix of the AC and the RC forces. The intent is to ensure a proper balance is struck to meet the requirements of the new strategy and avoid repeating past mistakes with a "hollow force." To understand the guidance clearly, one should review the specific statement:

> Over the past decade, the National Guard and Reserves have consistently demonstrated their readiness and ability to make sustained contributions to national security. The challenges facing the United States today and in the future will require that we continue to employ National Guard and Reserve forces. The expected pace of operations over the next decade will be a significant driver in determining an appropriate AC/RC mix and level of RC readiness.[31]

One final source of strategic recommendations must be considered before closing out the discussion on the military's path forward. The Reserve Forces Policy

Board (RFPB) offered Secretary Panetta future force structure recommendations in April 2012.[32] The RFPB Chairman offered several proposals to Secretary Panetta for further consideration to help address the current and future challenges identified in the "Priorities For 21st Century Defense." The intent of the proposals were to help the DOD avoid past drawdown mistakes by providing more helpful "reversibility" instruments. Among the proposals was the recommendation to direct the Service Chiefs to fully examine whether their respective AC to RC mix ensured mission effectiveness and also considered the current fiscal constraints. One other key recommendation was the need to determine an accurate life-cycle cost comparison of a RC person to an AC person.[33]

It is important to note that senior leaders previously expressed concerns that the SECDEF received recommendations to change end strengths based on DOD's inaccurate costing models. It is not publicly known if Secretary Panetta approved all the RFPB's April 2012 recommendations. Based on the SECDEF's quarterly RFPB meetings, Secretary Panetta approved conducting a critical review of the AC to RC mix as well as developing an accurate RC to AC life-cycle costing model. During the meeting, Secretary Panetta asked the RFPB to make recommendations utilizing innovative ideas and to consider previous analysis conducted. Secretary Panetta asked the RFPB to submit ideas regarding the best way to utilize the RC based on the new strategy. Other requests included determining the best balance of the AC to RC, determine the best way to build experience in the RC, and accurately determine the full costs associated with a strong RC.[34] In December 2012, the RFPB completed and distributed its full costing analysis of a RC person as compared to the AC person.

Analysis presented in the next section fully supports the concept of assigning more mission and manpower to the ARC, which ultimately yields many material benefits. Some of the advantages of doing more with the ARC are making sound fiscal investments, capturing and retaining the Total Force's experience base, and ensuring the Total Force can modernize its capabilities.

The Need to Do More with the ARC

Retaining large standing forces is contrary to our Founding Father's intent as found in the United States Constitution. Article 1, Section 8 highlights the concerns the authors had about possible future government coups if large standing armies existed. In turn, the authors dictated there would always be a strong state militia as a form of deterrence protecting the nation from possible military insurrections.[35] Today, the argument against retaining large standing forces focuses on diminishing operational needs and facing significant fiscal challenges.

To make a more recent analytical point, Congress formed and directed the Commission on National Guard and Reserves (CNGR) in 2008. The CNGR's purpose was to conduct the necessary analysis to make informed recommendations on how the RC could transform and better support the nation's national security needs into the 21st century. One of the main points the CNGR concluded was the likely future increased reliance upon the RC even after operations in Iraq and Afghanistan ceased.[36] The CNGR acknowledged and recommended further analysis was necessary to determine if the RC should act as an "operational reserve" or as a "strategic reserve." A strategic reserve is only at a war-fighting readiness level at the time of need.[37] This is an essential issue for the DOD as the strategic determination would dictate the RC's resourcing levels required and the RC's future operational role. The appropriate forum

to have reviewed such an important issue should have been during the next Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR), which was scheduled for completion in 2010. Determining the RC's operational versus strategic role was not addressed in the 2010 QDR.

Proven Operational Capabilities

Unfortunately, the 2010 QDR effectively ignored the need to conduct the RC roles and mission analysis. Like the CNGR report, the QDR acknowledged the need for further analysis. However, the QDR delegated the analysis requirement to a separate entity led by the Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs.[38] In turn, a considerable amount of effort was put into a comprehensive review of the RC's roles and missions. This effort culminated with a very thorough review of the issue that offered the AC sweeping recommendations on how they should utilize the RC in the future. It is important to note the nature of the report was advisory only and contained no compelling authorities.

The analysis and recommendations included in the "Comprehensive Review of the Future Role of the Reserve Component" were thoroughly researched by a long list of DOD stakeholders. In the end, the review identified six broad objectives designed to improve the RC's future utilization and to capitalize on the RC's capabilities. The objectives included the following: determining accurate RC manpower costing, proper RC roles and missions, the need to rebalance the AC and RC mix, and the policy or statutory changes needed to execute the recommended changes.[39]

The fundamental message the analysis presented was that the RC is a cost-effective element of the DOD that provides the strategic depth to help quickly address medium to large-scale contingencies and are available on a regular basis when needed.

This description of the RC is the same as presented in the new strategic guidance in which "reversibility" was introduced. The review stated that as the DOD rebalances the force for future challenges, the RC should be "a force of first choice" for appropriate mission sets it is well suited to accomplish. The rationale used for this recommendation was based on the inherent cost effectiveness and broad range of military and civilian skill sets the RC provides.[40] The review detailed the types of missions that would be a better fit in the RC. The review listed "reach back" or continuity reliant type of missions as a good fit for the RC. One of the main benefits of assigning more mission to the RC is it would help alleviate some stress on the AC. Assuming mission sets will reduce, the USAF would be able to retain a broader range of capabilities or surge capabilities if those mission sets were assigned to the ARC. This strategic reserve capabilities model would afford the USAF the ability to realize significant personnel cost savings through the greater use of the ARC.[41]

Some examples the comprehensive review cited as RC "good fit" missions reach back missions in cyber defense, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR), efforts to combat weapons of mass destruction, and regional engagement. HD and DSCA were also listed as good fit missions for the RC.[42] The ARC performs all of these mission sets. It is also important to note that the ASB concept is likely to have a heavy reliance upon reach back requirements and the need for rapid forward deployment. As mentioned previously, the ARC maintains the same readiness standards as their AC counterparts. With proper resourcing, the RC could easily accept the rapid deployment and reach back requirements the ASB concept would likely require.

The comprehensive review also surmised that the RC should be the force of first choice when it came to missions requiring long-term continuity or a reliance upon relationships. The review made the recommendation that specific RC units should establish habitual relationships with specific Geographic Combatant Commands (GCC) to improve continuity and relationship building. The continuity would be important to missions like Building Partnership Capacity or Theater Security Cooperation.[43] The review also identified some of the significant efficiencies realized when the AC and RC associate. The review also encouraged the expansion of associations.

The comprehensive review also identified other mission sets that would be a good fit for the RC. Training requirements, combat support, administration and services functions, and medical support are additional examples of good fit missions for the RC. These are the types of missions the ARC has performed and is an example of what could help decrease the AC's requirements if assigned to the ARC. If new missions were assigned to the ARC, the appropriate full or part-time manpower must be resourced.

The comprehensive review suggested many mission changes the AC and the ARC should consider. However, the analysis avoided making any specific recommendations to change manning levels. The review surmised properly the respective parent services should determine personnel changes based on their depth of knowledge regarding the missions.[44] A final critical point the review made was that in order for the recommendations to be successful, it would be imperative that the parent services properly fund the RC for any construct changes. The point was also made regarding the need for the DOD to develop a strategic communication plan that would

help explain how the RC plays a vital role in protecting our national security interests and how those forces would be utilized differently in the future.[45]

While the review did concentrate much of the analysis on what missions should come to the RC, details were lacking regarding what missions would not be a good fit for the RC. However, many "think tanks" have conducted a considerable amount of analysis on that topic.

Analysis supports that the ARC provides "key capabilities to hedge against developments in the international environment. The larger number of less capable fighter aircraft, like the F-16s, and additional lift and tanker aircraft should be maintained in these reserve components."[46] Stated another way, this analysis supports keeping the more advanced aircraft in the USAF and would suggest the RC should act primarily in a supportive combat role. Because the more advanced aircraft would likely be persistently forward deployed, this further translates into the AC primarily utilized in deployed high operations tempo missions. However, the ARC should remain in the more advanced aircraft to help relieve deployment stress. This could easily be accomplished through the expansion of associations. Detailed analysis also suggests that maintaining an AC to RC balance like mentioned above would provide a "robust hedge for the unknown future, at a lower cost than if they were maintained in the active force."[47] Further analysis revealed the AC should narrow its mission sets to retain effectiveness but while helping to save critical resources. Additional risks assumed through mission divestiture in the AC could be offset by assigning the requirements to the RC. Additionally, the ARC is an easily scalable force and would make it "possible to save money by locating additional responsibilities and capabilities in the Reserve Components."[48]

The Heritage Foundation also strongly advocates for a strong ARC to assist the USAF with its modernization challenges. They recommend that the USAF should "recommit to the Total Force efforts."[49] They noted the many political challenges the USAF experienced when previous attempts were made to cut ARC force structure to support the USAF's aircraft and equipment modernization efforts.

The most recent political challenge the USAF experienced was the 2013 budgetary proposal as mentioned earlier. The Heritage analysis concluded that modernization of the ARC is "essential to enhance recruitment and retention and to keep ready the expertise generated during constant rotations to Iraq and Afghanistan."[50] By committing to the Total Force, the ARC could continue to relieve pressure on the AC by focusing on HD and humanitarian support missions, maintaining the deployment cycles, and divesting legacy platforms (primarily aircraft) in favor of modern platforms to include unmanned platforms. Another key point was the need to expand the association construct; specifically in the fighter fleet. Younger AC pilots would be able to obtain more flying time with seasoned instructors who reside in the ARC while also able to leverage the advantages of the experience base found in the RC's maintenance troops. The analysis cited a RAND study that found ANG maintenance squadrons consistently outperformed AC organizations "generating more flying hours per person."[51] The ARC's experience base is one of the main reasons the USAF has very recently decided to expand the current number of associations with the ARC.

At this point in the analysis, the preceding arguments for the USAF to assign more mission and manpower to the ARC have focused primarily on the operational

benefits. There is an even stronger argument made to do more with the ARC based on the cost effectiveness and efficiencies the ARC has to offer as compared to the AC.

Cost-Effective ARC

As addressed in the "Comprehensive Review," there was a great need for the DOD to assess accurately the cost of a RC person as compared to an AC person. As mentioned earlier, Secretary Panetta charged the RFPB to conduct the research needed to determine accurate costing analysis. On December 12, 2012 the RFPB published the conclusion of the costing analysis. As part of framing the problem, the report highlighted that sustaining the current trends with the current force structure is unsustainable. Furthermore, the "Secretary of Defense, senior officials, and think tanks have all underscored this problem."[52] As part of the RFPB's analysis, each cost was broken down by element such as military pay, Medicare contributions, retirement, military construction, and health programs. The analysis concluded the highest total life-cycle cost of a RC person was 26% as compared to an AC person. All other costs fell significantly below 26% and included costs associated with standard deployment cycles and dwell times.[53]

The total life-cycle costing analysis is critical because many in senior RC leadership positions have professed that the RC person only costs about one-third the cost of an AC person. The costing assertion was often criticized by the parent services as invalid and ignored.[54] This statement has been a point of contention for many years since the costs associated with a RC person is a significant determiner when the parent services consider making adjustments to their force structure. This information validates the concept that the total life-cycle cost of an ARC person is relatively inexpensive as compared to that of an AC person. In turn, this newly validated information should help

change the force structure calculus going forward. However, change occurring assumes the USAF (and other parent services) view the information from a non-parochial perspective and seriously consider the correct costs of AC versus RC personnel in future programming cycles.

Political Support

One last point to make regarding the analysis contained in the "Comprehensive Review" was the historical reflection to the "Abrams Doctrine." This concept developed due to very little public and political support to the military for their efforts in Vietnam. The Abrams Doctrine derived from former Army Chief of Staff, General Creighton Abrams' belief that "the nation must never go to war again without the involvement of the RC and thus, the support of the American people." He believed there was a strong link between public support for military operations and employing the reserves.[55] This philosophy was formalized with the "Total Force" guidance that followed as mentioned earlier in this analysis. As the Chief of the National Guard Bureau (CNGB), Lieutenant General (LTG) Blum, often publicly stated, "when you call out the Guard, you call out America."[56] The Abrams Doctrine likely influenced his statements.

LTG Blum successfully used this concept during his time as the CNGB to obtain substantial resourcing for the NG after Hurricane Katrina and during the surge of combat forces in Iraq. National Guard (NG) leadership was equally successful in gaining public support to counter the 2005 Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) round. The NG was scheduled to lose a relatively large portion of force structure. Due to flawed analysis, many of the initial negative BRAC decisions were overturned.[57]

The RC is unique in the sense that the organizations and personnel are very closely tied to their respective communities. In turn, this closeness tends to create

substantial political support and strong relationships at the local, state, and federal level. The NG is in a unique position to capture stronger community and political support as those forces fall directly under the Governor as the Commander-in-Chief of the state's NG when not in a mobilized status. Conversely, it is an axiom that communities are less connected to AC personnel because they are generally perceived as a transient population moving in and out every two to three years. That perceived lack of community connectivity translates to less local social ties and less political support at all levels as compared to the RC. The ARC's strong state and federal level political support was visible in the recent actions taken to oppose the USAF's FY 13 budget proposal.

Ultimately, the Congressional restrictions to retain ARC manpower and personnel places the USAF in a challenging position as the planned divestments are assumed and are not factored in as part of the USAF budget. This unplanned budgetary change forces the USAF to create programmatic offsets to retain the "unwanted" assets. The situation seen in the FY 13 budget is effectively a repeat of many previous budget rounds the USAF proposed. Congress historically imposed many unwanted restrictions on the USAF's ability to cut aviation or manpower resources. When cuts to ARC resources are presented for consideration, restrictions are more pronounced.[58] The elected officials generally tend to view any substantial cuts to "their RC" as potential job killers or a loss of critical capabilities to their respective communities or states and tend to oppose the USAF's proposals.

One area where the USAF may gain new political support is the previously mentioned plan to do more with associations. The USAF intends to capitalize on the experience advantage residing in the ARC. Generally, ARC personnel have more years

of experience compared to their AC counterparts. Based on that fact, the USAF plans to groom its junior pilots and maintenance troops through the expansion of "active associations" with the ARC.[59] Specifically, the USAF plans to build an association relationship with every ARC fighter unit by FY 2018.[60] The USAF is also planning to establish more associations with its mobility fleet as well.

There are several distinct advantages gained through the greater use of associations. The operational advantage is enabling the younger and less experienced AC pilots to gain instruction and flight time through the broad expertise and equipment that resides in the ARC. The initiative is also economically efficient as it will help the USAF save money by utilizing current and existing training resources versus the likely investment to establish new training resources. The associations will result in AC personnel being assigned to many more local communities as compared to the current USAF base structure. The AC being assigned to local communities should also help the USAF gain more political support of its association efforts. The greater political support is an axiom, but it stands to reason the associations will generate more local jobs and taxpayers in the respective communities.

Rationale to Cut the ARC

Based on the many challenges discussed previously, one would reasonably ask why the USAF has ignored a considerable amount of analysis and wants to continue cutting the ARC. The other question regarding the cuts to ask is what are the anticipated benefits. The simple answer to the questions is the USAF does not have the budgetary resources to support all of its requirements and must assume greater operational risks in select areas. In turn, the USAF must make the difficult decision to cut old or "nice to have" programs based on the capabilities it must retain or build to

support strategic guiding principles like those found in the "Priorities for 21st Century Defense."[61]

The Total Force has persistently been engaged in combat operations for over 20 years. During that time, the USAF aircraft inventory declined, aged, and was not replaced with many new aircraft. At the same time, the AC end strength also declined. Much of the USAF's budget authorizations were utilized for operational needs versus for procurement. The USAF is currently facing a dire need to modernize its programs and eliminate older and less effective programs.[62] Older equipment tends to cost considerably more to keep operationally ready and becomes the target for attrition whenever required program cuts exist. Historically, the ARC received older but operationally effective airframes from the AC as newer aircraft or equipment were assigned to the AC inventory. Due to what has been known as an USAF "procurement holiday," the ARC has not received many new airframes or missions for the past 20 years. In turn, some of the oldest aircraft and equipment reside in the ARC. From a linear business perspective, it stands to reason that future program cuts should come from the ARC due to the older age of its equipment and associated overhead costs.

The USAF's justification to cut the ARC personnel in the FY 13 NDAA was based on an AC to RC force structure imbalance that developed prior to the 1990 Gulf War. The USAF wants to rebalance its force back to previous levels. Previous attempted cuts to the ARC force structure were due to the USAF's considerable need to modernize its aging aircraft inventory and equipment. The USAF would prefer to recapitalize and modernize the AC while reducing the operational tempo demands absorbed by the ARC after the September 11 attacks. Adding to the rationale to cut the ARC is the USAF's

belief that the costs to mobilize and deploy an ARC person results in significantly greater costs as compared to the AC person.[63]

With respect to the future development of the ASB concept, the USAF is planning to make future technological investments in the concept that would require additional resourcing demands. While details are still developing, it is anticipated the USAF would only look at the AC as the "force of first choice" unless directed to do something different by outside influences. As mentioned previously, there are many ASB mission sets needed to accomplish the concept that generally would be a good fit for the ARC. The USAF's risk associated with the ASB concept is the requirement to dedicate new resources to the concept, which will likely meet resistance from the land-component services. Applying new resources to this area will be perceived by many as a "budget grab" in times of budgetary austerity. It has also been argued that the ASB, as an overall United States strategy, is flawed because it could cause an extremely rapid military escalation with China. This is especially true as it relates to the areas of cyber and space.[64]

In the end, the USAF believes by cutting the ARC through its rebalancing efforts, it will achieve greater flexibility to adapt to the changing demands of a complex strategic environment. The USAF believes a correct mix of forces must be leveraged across the Total Force to shift quickly and efficiently from one mission to another. The USAF believes rebalancing the force back to the 1990 levels will accomplish the desired end-state. The key guiding principles for the USAF's rebalancing proposal were the need to execute the new defense strategy and modernization of the force for "tomorrow's fight."[65] On the surface, the USAF's decision to cut the ARC sounds reasonable if the

rationale is based on a simple linear approach where the Total Force will get smaller together.[66] However, the USAF's assumptions and rationale are inherently flawed since an outdated Cold War construct is the USAF's desired end state. The new strategic guidance dictates that we must meet the war-fighting requirements for "tomorrow's fight" in times of fiscal austerity. The USAF has the rare opportunity to reshape its future by taking bold strategic steps to help ensure the USAF remain as the world's premier air force.

Recommendations and Conclusion

It is clear the USAF must meet the requirements established in the "Priorities for 21st Century." This new strategic guidance directs the DOD to continue securing our national security interests, but with fewer resources. It is equally clear the USAF must modernize its aging fleet and make tough choices on retaining or creating the required capabilities to win future potential conflicts. However, the USAF apparently believes the most prudent way to move forward is through a simple linear motion in which the Total Force gets leaner together. It is clear the USAF has resisted the need to think about the future of the Total Force through a different lens despite the mountain of existing analysis suggesting the USAF should do more with the ARC.

Due to the new strategic guidance, the Army and Marine Corps will significantly decrease personnel. In turn, many USAF requirements will also significantly decrease due to its role supporting those components will significantly diminish. This decrease will create excess capacity in virtually all USAF mission sets. The more significant excess capacity will include fighter support, tanker requirements, ISR requirements, and airlift demands. Based on these assumptions, the USAF must take a different perspective. The ARC is the most viable solution to retain strategic capabilities without incurring the

significant personnel costs, satisfy its modernization challenges, and meet the policy requirements established in the "Priorities for 21st Century."

- Reverse the current trend of cutting the ARC's mission and manpower and assign additional AC mission and manpower to the ARC as appropriate.
- Decrease AC end strength.
- Build on current and future "Active Associations" by assigning more AC personnel to ARC locations.

Reversing the current trends and adding more appropriate AC mission and manpower to the ARC will allow the USAF to focus on higher priority deployed missions. Higher operation tempo missions should remain in the AC while any reach-back or surge capabilities, like those identified in the "Comprehensive Review of the Future Role of the Reserve Component" should be assigned to the ARC. This is especially true as it relates to new missions sets like those required in the ASB concept. It is undeniable that the ARC has proven its operational reliability over the past two decades and is a very capable force. The ARC should be the "force of first choice."

Decreasing the AC end strength could easily be accomplished once more mission and manpower were assigned to the ARC. A significant portion of the manpower added to the ARC would not require full-time personnel. Drill-status members could satisfy the new mission requirements.[67] By making prudent use of the ARC's drill-status members, the DOD would yield significant budgetary savings that could be applied to the USAF's modernization needs or offered back to the federal budget as an offset to the nation's deficit. This effort would not only be compliant with the President's strategic guidance, but it also would comply with the guidance found in

Chairman Dempsey's Joint Force 2020 initiative.[68] However, greater reliance upon the ARC is not without a cost. The USAF will have to plan and budget for a better equipped and modernized ARC.[69]

While the USAF does have plans to establish new Active Associations, it should build upon current and future associations by assigning more AC personnel to ARC locations. This would yield significant cost savings to the USAF as the requirement to maintain a large AC training cadre will diminish. This change would also allow the junior USAF personnel benefit from the experience and expertise inherent to the ARC. It is conceivable that the USAF could close an AC base, which would yield considerable savings to the federal budget. Greater use of associations also affords the USAF ready access to the ARC resources when needed for day-to-day USAF requirements and training.[70] Another benefit is the opportunity to create better retention in the Total Force. If an AC person desires to separate from the active duty, the ARC unit would likely be able to offer the person the opportunity to remain as a drill status member. In turn, this saves the Total Force a considerable cost associated with training new members. This type of situation is part of the "reversibility" concept Secretary Panetta would want to further develop. One additional intangible benefit would be the greater political support the USAF would likely realize through expanded associations. Through more military personnel being assigned to local communities, it stands to reason political support would follow in the way of resourcing as seen in the RC.

The information presented in this body of analysis validates that the USAF is failing to see the potential that exists in the ARC. If the USAF were to implement the recommended changes, it would be complying with the new strategic policies

established by the President and the Secretary of Defense. The ARC has proven itself as a very capable, efficient, and experienced force that also happens to have strong political support that generally translates into resourcing. There is considerable supporting evidence that the USAF should stop trying to regress to its previous Cold War construct and take bold steps toward a better future by making better use of the ARC. However, the USAF appears fully invested in a linear solution to its problems. It is very doubtful the USAF will reverse current trends unless directed. It will likely take the newly established Commission on the Structure of the USAF to make the recommended changes and for Congress to compel the USAF to make those changes. In the end, the USAF must realize that more effectively utilizing the ARC is the key to a successful future.

Endnotes

[1] *National Defense Online,* November 2011, http://www.nationaldefensemagazine.org/archive/2011/November/Pages/%E2%80%98Gentlemen,WeHaveRunOutOfMoney;NowWeHavetoThink%E2%80%99.aspx (accessed December 8, 2012).

[2] *CNN Wire Staff Online*, August 27, 2010, *http://articles.cnn.com/2010-08-27/us/debt.security.mullen_1_pentagon-budget-national-debt-michael-mullen?_s=PM:US* (accessed December 8, 2012).

[3] The ARC consists of the Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve. The term Total Force, in reference to the USAF, consists of the combined AC, ANG, and AFR forces.

[4] Dennis Reimer, Roger Schultz, and James Helmly, *The Independent Panel Review of Reserve Component Employment in an Era of Persistent Conflict* (Washington, DC, U.S. Department of the Army, November 2010), 72.

[5] U.S. Department of Defense, Personnel and Readiness, *Managing the Reserve Components as an Operational Force*, Department of Defense Directive Number 1200.17 (Washington, DC: Office of the Secretary of Defense, October 29, 2008), 1.

[6] Michael B. Donley and Norton A. Schwartz, *Department of the Air Force, Fiscal Year 2013 Air Force Posture Statement,* Posture Statement presented to the House Armed Services Committee, 112th Cong., 2nd sess., February 28, 2012, 8.

[7] Ibid., 2.

[8] Ibid., 8.

[9] Ibid., 8.

[10] Ibid., 9.

[11] Ibid., 7.

[12] Ibid., 6.

[13] Ibid., 9.

[14] The 2008 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) created the Council of Governors. Its purpose is to advise the SECDEF, the Secretary of Homeland Security, and the White House Homeland Security Council on matters related to the National Guard (NG) and civil support missions. More specifically, the Council serves as a mechanism for governors and key federal officials to address matters pertaining to the NG, Homeland Defense, and Defense Support to Civil Authorities.

[15] *National Governors Association Home Page,* "Council of Governors" linked from "Federal Relations," http://www.nga.org/cms/federalrelations (accessed December 27, 2012).

[16] James Dao, "Efforts Undo Budget Cuts Set For Air National Guard," *New York Times,* April 25, 2012.

[17] *National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2013: Conference Report, To Accompany H.R. 4310*, Public Law 112-239, 112th Cong., 2nd sess. (December 18, 2012), 176.

[18] Ibid., 773.

[19] Ibid., 162.

[20] Ibid., 163.

[21] Barack Obama, *Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities For 21st Century Defense* (Washington, DC: The White House, January 2012), Intro.

[22] Ibid., 4.

[23] Obama, *Defense Budget Priorities and Choices,* (Washington, DC: The White House, January 2012), 1.

[24] Michael O'Hanlon and James Steinberg, "How Air-Sea Battle Fits in U.S. Planning," *The Washington Post,* August 24, 2012.

[25] Obama, *Defense Budget Priorities and Choices,* 5-6.

[26] Dan Cohen, "Panetta Outlines Vision for "Joint Force of 2020," January 5, 2012, http://www.defensecommunities.org/headlines (accessed November 13, 2012).

[27] Obama, *Defense Budget Priorities and Choices*, 1.

[28] Ibid., 11.

[29] GEN Martin E. Dempsey, U.S. Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Chairman's Strategic Direction to the Joint Force,* (Washington, DC: Joint Chiefs of Staff, February 2012), 8.

[30] Ibid., 9.

[31] Obama, *Priorities For 21st Century Defense, 7.*

[32] The RFPB is a federal advisory committee established in law to provide the SECDEF with "independent advice and recommendations on strategies, policies, and practices designed to improve and enhance the capabilities, efficiency, and effectiveness" of the RC.

[33] Maj Gen Arnold L. Punaro, USMCR (Ret), Chairman, Reserve Forces Policy Board, "Report of the RFPB on Avoiding Past Drawdown Mistakes to Enhance Future Total Force Capabilities," memorandum for the Secretary of Defense*,* Washington, DC, April 9, 2012, Tab A.

[34] Distributed notes from Secretary Panetta's quarterly meeting with the RFPB titled, "Secretary of Defense Charge to RFPB on 5 September 2012," September 5, 2012.

[35] U.S. Constitution, art. 1, sec 8.

[36] Commission on the National Guard and Reserves, "Final Report Executive Summary, January 31, 2008," (Arlington, VA: CNGR, January 2008), 8.

[37] The term "Operational Reserve" is based on the definition found in DOD's Directive Number 1200.17, "Managing the Reserve Components as an Operational Force," (Washington, DC: Office of the Secretary of Defense, October 29, 2008), 8.

[38] James E. Cartwright and Dennis M. McCarthy, *Comprehensive Review of the Future Role of the Reserve Component: Vol. I, Executive Summary and Main Report,* (Washington, DC: Office of the Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs, April 5, 2011), 2.

[39] Ibid., 3.

[40] Ibid., 25.

[41] Ibid., 92.

[42] Ibid., 39.

[43] Ibid., 91.

[44] Ibid., 9.

[45] Ibid., 25.

[46] The Defense Advisory Committee, *A New US Defense Strategy for a New Era: Military Superiority, Agility, and Efficiency,* (Washington, DC, November 2012), 36.

[47] Ibid., 36.

[48] Ibid., 44.

[49] Robert P. Haffa, Jr., *Full-Spectrum Air Power: Building the Air Force America Needs,* (Washington, DC: The Heritage Foundation, October 12, 2012), 26.

[50] Ibid., 26.

[51] Ibid., 26-27.

[52] Reserve Forces Policy Board, "Cost Methodology Project Final Report: Eliminating Major Gaps in DoD Data on the Fully-Burdened and Life-Cycle Cost of Military Personnel," briefing slides with appendices, Washington, DC, December 12, 2012.

[53] Ibid., 18.

[54] The total life-cycle cost is the average cost of a RC person throughout their career and includes standard deployment cycles of deploy to dwell at a ratios of 1:5 deploy to dwell.

[55] Cartwright and McCarthy, *Comprehensive Review of the Future Role of the Reserve Component,* 15.

[56] H. Steven Blum, "The National Guard Transforming to an Operational Force," *Joint Force Quarterly,* no. 43 (4th Quarter 2006): 12.

[57] The author worked as a Congressional Fellow and as a Congressional Liaison for almost 7 years and witnessed the successful approach LTG Blum and the 54 Adjutants General took with Congress and the Governors to obtain NG resourcing and political support at times of conflict with the Air Force, Army, and DOD writ large.

[58] Thomas P. Ehrhard, *An Air Force Strategy for the Long Haul*, (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, September 17, 2009), 90.

[59] An "active association" is where the Air Force assigns Active Component personnel and equipment to an Air National Guard or Air Force Reserve base.

[60] Aaron M. Church, "Association Push," *AIR FORCE Magazine,* June 2012, 44.

[61] Donley and Schwartz, *Fiscal Year 2013 Air Force Posture Statement,* 2.

[62] Ibid., 5.

[63] Jacob A. Klerman, *Rethinking the Reserves,* (Arlington, VA: RAND Corporation, Prepared for the Office of Secretary of Defense, 2008), XV.

[64] T.X. Hammes, "Offshore Control: A Proposed Strategy," *Infinity Journal* 2, no 2, (Spring 2012): 13.

[65] U.S. Department of the Air Force, *FY 2013 Budget Overview,* Air Force Justification Books (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Air Force, February 3, 2012), 27.

[66] Donley and Schwartz, *Fiscal Year 2013 Air Force Posture Statement,* 6.

[67] Drill status members are those individuals that work for the ARC on a part-time basis but retain the skill levels and training required to deploy on short notice. More than two-thirds of the ARC are drill status members.

[68] Dempsey, *Chairman's Strategic Direction,* 9.

[69] Andrew Feickert, *Army Drawdown and Restructuring: Background and Issues for Congress,* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Office, January 3, 2013), 30.

[70] Church, "Association Push," 45.