



Air Force Reserve Senior Leader Conference

Monday, 26 March 2012



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As Prepared
for Delivery

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Introduction

Thank you for that very kind introduction. I greatly appreciate the opportunity to spend time with all of you today. General Stenner, thank you for your tremendous leadership of the Air Force Reserve. The Total Force has a strong partner in you and the men and women of the Air Force Reserve.

And as we—the Total Force—operate around the world together, shoulder to shoulder, we are all grateful for the professionalism and skill of Air Force Reserve Airmen. Our success with integrating as a Total Force has set the platinum standard of active and reserve component interdependence, delivering maximum, appropriately tailored airpower capabilities to the Joint team. Indeed, our success is a tribute to all of you in this room, to other Air Force Reserve leaders throughout the Total Force, and certainly to the Airmen whom you lead. Secretary Donley and I are genuinely thankful for your efforts.

Balancing Risk: Readiness, Force Structure, and Modernization

In this tight fiscal environment, maintaining our effectiveness will remain our top priority, but it will pose significant challenges. Undoubtedly, you have heard many discussions referring to the term “hollow force.” I’d like to add a little more fidelity to this discussion, because instead of a single and simplified element of operational effectiveness, with “hollow force” indicating a lack thereof, we really are talking about three separate but very closely related dimensions—readiness, modernization, and force structure—that mutually affect each other, and thus must be carefully considered and balanced together. Correspondingly, a shortfall in one or more of these dimensions leads to insufficiencies that also are distinct but intertwined—specifically, a hollow, aging, and unbalanced force.

To my first point—**readiness**: This is the dimension of effectiveness that, when lacking, technically results in a hollow force. By that, we mean that although force structure exists on paper, its readiness to perform is largely illusory, usually due to



deficiencies in resourcing for training, unit equipment, or operations and maintenance. A hollow force can result also from system-wide issues with training, morale, and retention, which we can address, in part, by building upon our progress with Total Force Integration associations. TFI associations—particularly, active associations, and to some extent, classic associations—are very important because they leverage highly experienced reserve component Airmen to help accelerate the maturing of active component counterparts into “seasoned” status more quickly. When constituted and operated properly, TFI associations also create much-needed efficiencies, both in operations and with overhead.

All considered, TFI associations add capacity at reduced cost during surge operations; they leverage experience and encourage retention of vital human capital; and they increase Total Force combat capabilities and effectiveness. Therefore, in addition to the 100 TFI associations that we currently maintain—across a variety of weapon systems such F-16 and C-130J, and across combat enablers and functional areas such as tankers, RED HORSE, security forces, and intelligence—we are planning to add active associations at all Air Reserve Command fighter locations. Also, Air Mobility Command intends to establish active or classic associations at all future KC-46 units in the continental United States. For Fiscal Year 2013, we intend to establish 15 new associations.

Modernization is also vitally important to maintaining an effective force, as it ensures the force’s longer-term viability. Insufficient research and development, testing and evaluation, and procurement efforts tend to threaten this viability. So, because of the long procurement drought of the 1990s, and moreover, after committing the lion’s share of the post-9/11 defense budget to wartime operations, we are having to manage a significant and ongoing rise in average aircraft age—fighters at 22 years old, bombers at 35 years, and tankers at 47 years.

We therefore have been especially dedicated to mitigating the risk from the long pause in modernization, ensuring that our acquisitions are appropriately prioritized, and avoiding future procurement pauses—all to ensure our longer-term viability. We are protecting—in some cases, even increasing—our investments in our top acquisition priorities such as the KC-46A; our variant of the Joint Strike Fighter,



the F-35A; the Long-Range Strike family of systems; Space-Based Infrared System; Advanced Extremely-High Frequency and GPS-III satellite systems; and remotely-piloted aircraft.

Along with tending to these important efforts to modernize and recapitalize our materiel, we also must remember the personnel side of the equation. Modernizing the force also includes our recruiting efforts, as well as initial and advanced training and development activities, and retention measures—all to ensure that our manpower needs are met with Airmen who are current on their skills and relevant with their experience.

Here again, it takes a Total Force perspective to modernize effectively, with an understanding that most of the recruiting, and initial and advanced formalized technical training occur in the active component, with some of the ongoing experiencing and “seasoning” occurring through active TFI associations that I mentioned earlier.

Finally, when we refer to proper **force structure**, we are talking about ensuring that the force is appropriately sized and composed to execute our defense strategy effectively. This involves extremely intricate considerations to ensure not only that our force is able to meet current demands, but also is sustainable and effective over the longer term. Force structure that is mismatched with our strategy can result in units, and ultimately a Total Force, that are ill-suited for assigned missions—missions that are prioritized by the new Defense Strategic Guidance, for example.

We therefore must ensure that our manning, our equipment, and our mission and operations concepts are balanced and assigned appropriately throughout the entire Total Force. In particular, because imbalanced force composition creates unsustainable deployment-to-dwell ratios, it negatively affects our retention of personnel, and thus ultimately reduces our effectiveness, particularly of high-demand units, but also of the Total Force as a whole.

Therefore, with the difficult cuts in sheer numbers that we had to make, the more difficult task was actually to balance active and reserve component reductions appropriately. No matter how difficult, we had to rebalance the Total Force after two decades of military end strength and force structure reductions that increased the



reserve components from 25% to 35% of Total Force Airmen, and from 23% to 28% of total aircraft inventory. These measures, beginning in 1990, were appropriate to optimize the Total Force for requirements then, so that we could conduct post-DESERT STORM steady-state rotations with what essentially was a garrison force that had not yet transitioned to an expeditionary one.

But the circumstances and demand signals now are fundamentally different, and the situation calls for a rebalance. The active-to-reserve ratio has shifted to the point where now, relating to current trends and future eventualities, we realized that we could not sustain further active component cuts without jeopardizing the collective effectiveness of the Total Force; because ultimately, any imbalance between the components will put at risk our collective ability to conduct future surges, operate through the surge successfully, and then fulfill post-surge, steady-state rotational requirements.

Moreover, we had to rebalance the Total Force in consideration of the unique roles that the active component will continue to fulfill for the entire Total Force, such as the preponderance of recruiting, and initial and advanced technical training that I mentioned earlier, as well as almost all of Total Force research and development, testing and evaluation, procurement, and filling of Air Staff, Joint Staff, OSD, and interagency positions.

But there still is no doubt—none whatsoever—that the investments in the reserve components were, and remain, smart and essential investments in overall readiness, capability, and surge and rotational requirements. For our active component forces, we would prefer to do that at a one-to-three deployment ratio; however, the norm has been and likely will remain closer to a one-to-two ratio. For our reserve components, we would prefer not less than a one-to-four activity ratio, and ideally one-to-five, based on reserve component Airmen continuing to volunteer to deploy as they have been doing in substantial numbers for many years.

To achieve these ratios, which balance operational needs with acceptable stress on the force, we had to make, again, very difficult choices, with proper consideration for a multitude of factors—including, for our reserve component Airmen, consideration for maintaining civilian employment, and for minimizing uncertainty



for civilian employers who enable our reservists' ability to share their wide-ranging talents and skills in service to our Nation.

Improving Strategic Planning Processes and Transparency

These three major dimensions of effectiveness—readiness, modernization, and force structure—were balanced carefully through Joint-sanctioned simulation and modeling. Through these analytic excursions, we, including Air Force Reserve and Guard leadership, came to understand what trade-offs were possible, and we came to deliberate on how best to fashion a ready and superb Total Force, even amidst substantial budgetary pressures and declining material resources. We did not always agree with complete unanimity, which is understandable because of our different perspectives and institutional imperatives.

But I sincerely believe that different viewpoints ultimately strengthen our Total Force, as long as, through our deliberations, we always remain steadily focused on our common goal of sustaining a ready, vital, and viable Total Force. I therefore welcome robust debate in common cause—to present and discuss different ideas on how to achieve an even better Total Force.

It is in this spirit that the reserve component leadership and I are developing the terms of reference for an independent study—the Air Force Reserve Component 2020 Study—that will evaluate our ongoing Total Force efforts. In the meantime, we will remain unified and committed to working together, including through our corporate processes, with Air Force Reserve and Air National Guard leadership involved at every step of our analysis and decision making, whether for Total Force associations, optimal force composition and component ratios, or development of core function master plans.

For all of these efforts, we will need bold leadership—from you in this room and at all levels throughout our Total Force—so that as a Total Force, we can achieve needed effectiveness in providing full-spectrum airpower for America.



Conclusion

I appreciate that with the passage of the Budget Control Act last August, the release of the new Defense Strategic Guidance in early January, and the Fiscal Year 2013 budget request last month, you probably have a lot of questions about our future. And moreover, with the possibility of sequestration cutting the defense budget even further and deeper, and with uncertain prospects for the passage of a defense authorization and a federal budget, we, quite frankly, are moving into FY 13 and beyond with a significant degree of uncertainty.

So I appreciate the various levels of apprehension that you in this audience, and the Airmen whom you lead, are feeling. But we also should note our collective resilience and ability to respond to America's needs, and that when challenges confronted us, we seized the opportunity, and performed admirably.

We need to look only one year ago, when we adeptly shifted focus repeatedly, as needed, to respond to emerging crises, and surged our operations to meet the requirements of our very own version of "March Madness." No NCAA tournament brackets, no friendly office pools—but rather, a magnificent Total Force response to exigent surge requirements, across the full spectrum of operations, and spanning the entire globe, from humanitarian and disaster relief operations in East Asia, to enforcing a U.N.-sanctioned no-fly zone in North Africa, to providing Presidential support in South America.

It wasn't easy, but we did it—and we did it well, together, as a Total Force. So we can be proud—as a Total Force. We celebrate the fact that Air Force Reserve Airmen are everywhere, performing superbly on behalf of our Nation, from Afghanistan to Japan, from Ethiopia to South Korea, from Honduras and Puerto Rico to Djibouti and Burkina Faso.

And we haven't forgotten that, right here at home, Airmen of our reserve components are the Total Force's presence in thousands of communities across the Nation—our ambassadors to and liaisons with the American people whom we loyally serve. No one should ever doubt—I, for one, do not question—the extraordinary importance of this vital link, particularly in these times when so very few of us, as a



percentage of the total U.S. population, have donned the uniform of the United States.

And we are grateful for reservists' contributions to many of the vital missions that compose our collective Total Force portfolio—some predominantly, such as 100 percent of aerial spraying and weather reconnaissance, 63 percent of Air Force mortuary affairs operations, 61 percent of aeromedical patient staging, and 60 percent of aeromedical evacuation capacity. So, as Secretary Donley expressed this morning, I convey sincere gratitude to you for your leadership; to the Airmen whom you lead, for their commitment to *Integrity, Service, and Excellence* in their many important undertakings; and to their families, whose quiet, behind-the-scenes sacrifice so often produce very significant contributions in their own right.

Thank you for your attention this morning. I now look forward to your questions.