

Reservists conducting  
tactical training in  
F-16s

# An Unrivaled Wingman *Air Force Reserve Vision*



By JOHN A. BRADLEY

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1<sup>st</sup> Combat Camera Squadron (Jacob N. Bailey)

Since its establishment in December 1948, the Air Force Reserve (AFR) has steadily grown from a standby force using outdated aircraft to a highly experienced, fully engaged force operating cutting-edge equipment. We frequently provide unique capabilities for significantly less than the cost of a full-time force and have enjoyed tremendous success through modernized equipment and organizational improvements. We will sustain these successes by addressing a growing number of challenges that threaten the ability of our Reservists to contribute efficiently and effectively to national defense.

### Mission

The Air Force Reserve mission is the same as that of the U.S. Air Force: to defend the United States and its global interests—to fly and fight in air, space, and cyberspace. Similarly, the AFR purpose, as derived from Title 10, U.S. Code, is to provide combat-ready units and individuals for Active duty whenever there are not enough trained units and people in the Active Component to perform a national security mission.

The United States no longer faces a single monolithic threat as it did during the Cold War. The threats now are multiple and ambiguous, and they emanate from highly

agile and adaptable foes. The Department of Defense is responding by restructuring its forces to defend the homeland and execute the war on terror. In turn, the Air Force will recapitalize, modernize, and transform its organizational structures to become more lean, lethal, and agile—a rebalanced Total Force that will focus on the warfighter.

The scope and nature of today's challenges are shaping our organizational constructs, defining our roles and missions, altering our participation expectations, and affecting the type of people we recruit and retain.

Because the Air Force Reserve is often tightly integrated with the Active Component, it can be difficult to distinguish between Reservists and their Active duty counterparts. Former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Richard Myers, USAF, said, "It is almost impossible to tell a Reservist from an Active duty servicemember, so many Active duty personnel don't know how much the force depends on Citizen Soldiers." This was a great compliment, but it highlights the problem Reserve Components have when asked to validate their contribution to the fight.

It is important that senior leaders appreciate just what the 76,000 dedicated AFR members have contributed and the capabilities they possess. Not only is the Air Force Reserve fully engaged in the war on terror, but it has also provided critical responses to natural disasters, such as the tsunamis in East Asia and hurricanes in the Gulf states.

As a percentage of the total Air Force requirement, the AFR in fiscal year 2005 made the contributions shown in the accompanying table.

**Percentage of U.S. Air Force Requirements Performed by the Air Force Reserve**

Mission Area	Percentage of Requirements
Weather Reconnaissance	100
Aerial Spray	100
Aeromedical Evacuation	60
Strategic Airlift	43
Tanker Support	23
Personnel Recovery	23
Theater Airlift	21
Intelligence	20
Flying Training	14
Special Operations	10
Bomber	8

The Air Force Reserve has fought forest fires with C-130s equipped with the modular airborne firefighting system, flown *Noble Eagle* combat air patrols with its fighters, tankers, and airborne warning and control system crews, and controlled satellites and unmanned aerial systems all around the globe. Moreover, it was the sole provider of weather reconnaissance (hurricane hunters) and aerial spraying capability, which was so vital in preventing the spread of disease after Hurricane Katrina.

*Air Expeditionary Force (AEF) Participation.* AFR fighter packages continue to flow into the AEF cycle, and expeditionary combat support personnel continue to meet a wide range of requirements, from security forces to truck drivers. A-10s from the 926<sup>th</sup> Fighter Wing (New Orleans) and 442<sup>d</sup> Fighter Wing from Whiteman Air Force Base (AFB), Missouri, deployed to Operation *Enduring*

*Freedom*, while F-16s from the 482<sup>d</sup> Fighter Wing (Homestead AFB, Florida), the 419<sup>th</sup> Fighter Wing (Hill AFB, Utah), and the 301<sup>st</sup> Fighter Wing (Naval Air Station Joint Reserve Base, Fort Worth, Texas) supported Operation *Iraqi Freedom*. Additionally, Reserve Litening Advanced Targeting pods with their precision engagement capability, which enabled the strike on Abu Musab al-Zarqawi's hideout, are deployed and flown on both Active duty and Reserve A-10 and F-16 aircraft.

*Disaster Relief.* Reservists, many of whom lost their own homes during Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, provided disaster relief by moving over 2,700 tons of cargo, as well as evacuating 5,800 storm victims and 2,600 patients. Reserve recovery teams were credited with 1,045 rescues. The 920<sup>th</sup> Rescue Squadron (Patrick AFB, FL), flying HH-60 helicopters, was the first unit in the air and saw 187 people rescued in a single 12-hour mission by 1 crew. That same wing provided flawless search and rescue support for the space shuttle *Discovery* and saved 24 lives, including the high-profile recovery of a Navy SEAL team in Afghanistan.

After Hurricane Katrina, the 910<sup>th</sup> Airlift Wing (Youngstown Air Reserve Base, Ohio) deployed three specialized spray C-130s, unique to the Air Force Reserve, to provide aerial spraying for mosquito control over the affected areas. They treated over 2.9 million acres—an area almost the size of Connecticut. These were remarkable contributions from the Air Force Reserve, whose \$3.9 billion cost is only 4 percent of the Air Force budget.

**The Challenge**

It is one thing to employ a force designed as a strategic Reserve in a surge capacity and

another to sustain that level of daily operational support over the long haul. The Commission on the National Guard and Reserve addressed this issue in its 90-day interim report to Congress, finding that “a balance between the use of the Reserve Components as an operational and as a strategic Reserve, as necessary to meet national security objectives, must be achieved, and the Reserve Components must be tasked, organized, trained, equipped, and funded accordingly.”

Add to this concern the program budget decisions directing a 10 percent reduction in personnel, plus base realignment and closure (BRAC) mandates that directly impact over 6,000 Reservists, and the solutions become more complex. Finally, with implementation of 20 Total Force integration initiatives intended to streamline and integrate the force further, the number of challenges grows exponentially.

Setting a clear direction for the Air Force Reserve, and identifying critical Reserve Component attributes to military and civilian leadership, are vital to the future viability and efficiency of the force. To address the avalanche of approaching challenges, we have developed an AFR Vision, a significant undertaking that identifies strengths and issues throughout our Reserve Component and across the Reserve's major commands. The realization of this vision will ensure unity of force as we allocate resources and implement changes.

The vision begins by recognizing that we are all part of a single team, fighting as a unified force. We share the same priorities and goals, and this team spirit goes to the heart of providing the best possible support to the



Medics remove patient transported from Ramstein Air Force Base in Air Force Reserve C-141

U.S. Air Force (Doug Moore)

JFQ FORUM

Air Force and its joint partners—flying and fighting as an unrivaled wingman.

Flying and fighting as one Air Force means that we function as a more unified force. We will:

- integrate at all levels of war, providing flexible, tailored, and adaptive ways to fight alongside other air components
- populate Air Force equipment, cockpits, and ramps to serve the mission best, focusing less on who owns the equipment and more on maximizing warfighter effects
- provide the most motivated, ethical, trained, and experienced Airmen in the world.

Challenges clearly indicate that the future requires lean, flexible organizations, constructed to support and quickly adapt to current and emerging missions. The Air Force Reserve will always train to the same standards as the Active Component. It will always strive to maintain parity in equipment with the other Air Force components. It will always remain accessible, flexible, and combat ready.

### Operational Reserve

As we learn to sustain an operational Reserve, we will need to derive ways to provide that support with minimal mobilization. Accordingly, one of the fundamental concerns of some policymakers is achieving

assured access to AFR personnel. Although mobilization has traditionally been the approved mechanism that guarantees the use of Reserve personnel and equipment, recent policies have restricted the use of the mobilization process.

The Services are adjusting to these new policies by looking for ways to further enable and encourage Reserve participation through volunteerism. Several of our vision aimpoints are designed specifically to enhance volunteerism and minimize mobilization, and are premised on the Air Force Reserve remaining as operationally engaged in the foreseeable future as it was during the past 3 years.

Reserve members cannot volunteer, Active Air Force members are left to manage the requirement. If Active duty does not have the personnel to cover the need, they must turn back to the Reserve Component and invoke the mobilization process to meet the shortfall. There are valid reasons for certain extended tours (such as the need for leadership positions), but when possible, it is best to provide Reserve units with basic requirements and allow them to determine the best way to meet the tasks. This flexibility is critical to the Reserve's ability to provide voluntary support. More flexibility almost always equates to more support being provided by the Reserve.

We have settled on six aimpoints, which are subsets of the basic AFR vision and serve to guide our decisionmaking across a broad array of issues:

- *Operational in Peace and War:* enhancing and enabling the key attributes that make the AFR operational in peace and war

- *Clear Participation Expectations:* eliminating disconnects between what is required and what is expected

- *Proactive Force Planning:* optimizing ways to employ our force and advocating processes and improvements that make everyone more combat effective

*force integration is perhaps the most significant reason we have today's operational capabilities*

A major challenge to the Air Force Reserve functioning as an operational Reserve is effective participation in the Air Expeditionary Force. We always encourage members to participate in the AEF and other contingency deployments and urge combatant commanders to reverse the trend of mandating longer stays in-theater before rotating Reservists. Mandatory tour lengths are increasingly hitting 120 days or longer, making them difficult for Reservists to fill. If

Oregon Army National Guardsmen board KC-135 from Illinois Air National Guard to support hurricane relief in Louisiana



U.S. Air Force (RUBY ZARZYCZNY)



U.S. Air Force (LANCE CHEUNG)

Pennsylvania Air Force Reservists pilot a C-130 over Southwest Asia

- *Leveraged Community*

*Connections:* connecting to our communities, not just tying to them, and leveraging these connections to maximize participation over a lifetime of military and civilian service

- *Flexibility in Participation:* organizing participation options to maximize combat readiness

- *Combat Ready:* preparing not only to come alongside but also to take the lead as needed.

### Operational in Peace and War

We will organize and operate as a variable force. We are committed to being an operational force because the Air Force has more missions than the Active Component has forces to support. While the Air Force Reserve is not a full-time force, Reservists stand shoulder to shoulder with the Active force executing essential missions every day.

In the future, many of us, as individuals and units, will engage in daily operations while others remain in reserve. The mix of Reservists who are engaged and in reserve will change rapidly in response to surges and shortfalls in national defense requirements. Accordingly, we will take organizational, personnel, and other actions needed to ensure that we function smoothly as a variable force.

Volunteerism is the attribute that enables an operational force and is the hallmark of the AFR participation. Our members are already volunteering to support daily operations and national emergencies for long periods and in high numbers. We will do everything to enhance and facilitate their ability to serve on Active duty, while protecting their civilian commitments.

Tomorrow's Reserve will continue to provide significant and sustained voluntary operational support to the Air Force on a daily and ongoing basis. Our brand of volunteerism expects Airmen to serve more than required.

### Clear Expectations

Each Airman will understand his or her participation expectations. The sustained missions of the Air Force require significantly more manpower than is available by those simply performing their minimum duty. Service policy already enables, encourages, and supports Reserve volunteerism whenever possible, but we are setting the bar even higher for voluntary participation and expect

our people to meet or exceed those expectations.

To encourage volunteerism, we will work to ensure seamless transfer between Service components, Reserve subcomponents, and participation statuses. As we move forward, we fully expect that minimum annual participation requirements for many members of the Ready Reserve may include more than training.

Because we are looking to the Ready Reserve, we will look to our Individual Ready Reserve (IRR) subcomponent for increased participation. The IRR is an integral Ready Reserve asset consisting of previously trained individuals we can use in either a voluntary or nonvoluntary status whenever there are not enough trained and ready members in the selected Reserve. IRR volunteers can be matched against current requirements and be provided necessary training and equipment.

We recognize retirees as another source to fill the ranks of volunteers in an operational Reserve. While this group has never been involuntarily mobilized and can be called up only under full mobilization authority, it can be used on a voluntary basis to support daily Air Force operations.

To enhance service further, we will need to relieve tension between mandating duty and volunteerism. The future Air Force Reserve will reduce this stress through participation practices that allow members to maximize their effectiveness during the time they are in uniform, thus focusing on what makes Airmen passionate about service. Telecommuting, alternative training assemblies, and aligning annual tours with Active Component mission needs are examples of practices we will expand.

F-22A refuels from KC-135R from 916<sup>th</sup> Air Refueling Wing, Operation Noble Eagle



Recent legislative changes to encourage Total Force integration and engagement have helped current participation levels to continue. These changes include:

- modifying the stated purpose of the Reserve Components to reflect the operational mission, responsibilities, and contributions of the Guard and Reserve more accurately
- eliminating the restriction on using Federal civil service military leave for military technicians
- lifting the 179-day military personnel appropriation restriction to allow Guard and Reserve members to serve up to 3 years of duty without counting against Active duty end strength.

On the heels of these successes, the Department of Defense is considering new legislative, policy, and procedural changes aimed at further improving volunteerism. These legislative initiatives are building on the Total Force concept that began in the 1970s. Force integration is perhaps the most significant reason we have today's operational capabilities. The Air Force, ahead of the Defense Department, embraced the integration of the Reserve and Air National Guard in all matters of planning, programming, equipping, and training. The contribution of the Reserve Components has gradually increased to where they provide most or all the capability in such mission areas as weather reconnaissance (hurricane hunters), aerial spray, firefighting, and aeromedical evacuation.

The challenge is to move beyond current Total Force thinking to sustain an operational Reserve. This process began in earnest when

General T. Michael Moseley, Air Force Chief of Staff, commented on the way ahead and the four points that will drive the Air Force's future:

- the Total Force must be adaptable to today's, as well as tomorrow's, fight—and equally adaptable to unknown applications
- it must be seamless among the Active, Guard, and Reserve Components
- it must operate in a joint environment—not only in what is purchased but also in the way it fights, speaks, and thinks
- it must be affordable.

Given the nature of the challenges General Moseley outlined, it is imperative that we keep the Air Force Reserve both lean and on the leading edge, enabling its strengths to help keep the entire Air Force ready to fly and fight efficiently and effectively.

### Proactive Force Planning

The future demands that we support the Active Component in operationally important war-fighting missions. To provide this support, we will apply our resources to produce the combat capabilities the Air Force needs. We will tailor our organizations to be lean, smart, and flexible. We have already engaged the corporate process and programmed over 90 percent of the Phase I and Phase II Total Force initiatives.

We strive to strike a balance between mission and location to address where our members can realistically serve. When considering missions that are best suited to producing combat capability, we assess the availability of personnel within a recruiting area that offers practical support to the mission, evaluate the compatibility of the mission operations tempo with Reserve service, and consider the affordability of the overall manpower requirement.

Undertaking new missions will require bold decisions about how we use existing resources. We will develop a resource allocation strategy that will serve as a prioritized blueprint that enables us to organize, train, and equip.

An immediate force planning challenge

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### *the Air Force Reserve benefits from the continual interplay between Reservists' civilian and military lives*

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is dealing with the changes under BRAC, which will displace up to 6,000 AFR personnel. Our Active duty counterparts understand that moving every 2 to 3 years is an expected part of their career. Many Reservists, however, left the Active duty lifestyle to provide a more stable family situation, establish community

ties, and continue to serve in a more predictable environment. Permanent change of station policy does not allow Services to cover relocation expenses of part-time personnel, so Reservists are faced with a decision to commute to a new community, cross-train into a new specialty, or, in the worst case, no longer participate. The Reserve Recruiting Service is concerned with recruiting and readiness challenges that will result from the proposed unit moves, realignments, and closures.

The impact on the relationship between Reservists and their communities is doubly important because the Air Force leverages the value of community connections.

### Leveraged Community Connections

While the Active Component shares ties to family and community, what will continue to set Reservists apart is their connection to employers outside the Air Force. For most Reservists, civilian employers will remain the primary means of providing for their

families. Without employer support, many members may be discouraged from volunteering. In the Reserve force of the future, it will be critical to identify new ways to keep employers informed on service expectations.

To achieve our goals, we will not simply be *tied* to our communities—we will be *connected*. If we are connected to a community,

Air Force Reserve pararescuemen from 304<sup>th</sup> Rescue Squadron training off Djibouti



1<sup>st</sup> Combat Camera Squadron (Ricky A. Bloom)

we can draw from it and positively feed into it, while being tied to a community may lead to being restrained by it. We will never take for granted the role families and civilian employers play in enabling our members to serve.

We will improve existing community links to develop good family-employer-Reserve connections. This triad will remain central to our identity. It is an enabler that will allow our people to train, participate, and volunteer, and it fosters support when mobilization is necessary.

We will value how civilian and military experience complement each other. The Air Force Reserve benefits from the continual interplay between Reservists' civilian and military lives. One evolves with the other. This synergy is critical, making members better employees and Airmen as we mature and grow.

The command will seek maximum flexibility in balancing existing versus future manning requirements. It will pursue legislative changes to provide relief to Reservists affected by BRAC in the areas of transition assistance, relocation allowances, veteran's benefits, and health care. Reservists will be offered new opportunities in emerging missions, such as the unmanned aerial systems and air operations centers, as well as Total Force Integration opportunities, such as the Fighter Associate Program and participation in Active/Reserve Associate units.

### Flexible Participation

We will deliver the best personnel and equipment to the mission, whatever the fight. Reserve flexibility adds strength to the Air Force and brings trained people to combat. Because the future Reserve depends on flexibility to maximize resources, we will meet Air Force mission requirements with volunteers first. For this to succeed, the future Air Force Reserve must have stability, flexibility, and individualized control of its programmed resources.

Because we share the same Federal mission as the Active Component, our force has the same goals and objectives. Accordingly, we will unify and align our resources with the other Air Force components into the most combat-effective, flexible, adaptive, and tailored unified organizations possible—regardless of who owns the bases or facilities.

We will unify and align because it allows the Air Force to leverage resources better where it makes sense, whether in an equipment-constrained or a people-constrained environment. We will continue a human resource policy that is not based on “up or out,” thus allowing qualified individuals to continue performing where their contributions will be greatest. We will implement a “lifetime of service” human resource strategy that gives us the flexibility to task members, maximize Active duty participation, and allow

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*if we cannot access experience  
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service that is consistent with members' abilities and passions.

Our resource strategies will allow members to stay in place longer and build experiences. This model creates force management challenges for the Air Force Reserve, but it also provides seasoned and experienced assets to the Air Force. Thus, we will optimize the fact that our members are geographic-centric but work to minimize the effect that has on managing the force.

### Combat Ready

The Air Force Reserve will train, activate, and fight—in that order. To enable that, the paths to leadership must be open to the best and most capable, regardless of status. We will provide deserving Reservists access to developmental opportunities so they can compete for increased leadership responsibilities, including command.

Our developmental paths will involve cross-flow between staff and field assignments to broaden the development of future leaders. We will foster high degrees of innovation and flexibility in structuring the AFR leadership development programs.

The Air Force Reserve will continue as a primary source for retaining people with Active Component experience. It will persist in offering opportunities that appeal to those leaving full-time service but who want to remain part of the Air Force.

We will leverage and develop the strengths of a diverse force and train leaders to recognize and employ those strengths to maximize combat readiness. We will define

*experience* as more than time spent in the Active Component; it will encompass all duty performed, regardless of type.

If the pool of people leaving the Active Component shrinks, the Air Force Reserve will stand ready to enlist and train first-term Airmen from the community. If we cannot access experience from people with prior service, we must be prepared to develop our own experience.

In coming years, a number of mission related factors will require the Air Force

Reserve to increase modestly and remix its full-time support manpower. The future requires a greater operations tempo than can realistically be supported strictly on a part-time basis. An influx of first-term Airmen will increase the need for full-time

trainers and management activities.

Our goal is to maximize Air Force combat capability by using the appropriate flexible, tailored, and adaptive organizational constructs. We will never forget that we are a drill-based force.

Maintaining combat readiness for an operationally engaged force is a major concern. Program Budget Decision 720 directs a reduction of over 7,700 manpower positions, 10 percent of the total AFR force. The recent personnel and budget cuts have forced our programmers and strategic planners to scrutinize every mission area and program while ensuring the force is combat-ready and prepared to fill the requirements of the combatant commander.

The contributions of the Air Force Reserve to national defense are monumental. As the Reserve team strives to sustain this level of support for the long haul—becoming more adaptable, better trained, and more fully equipped—we will continue to meet the challenges of the new environment. We will continue to seek new opportunities that are right for our members and recognize the delicate balance between Reservists, their families, and their employers.

We want everyone to recognize the vital role our dedicated Airmen and their families play in the defense of the Nation. By remembering that we are *One Air Force in the Same Fight*, we will draw closer to fulfilling the vision of providing the best possible support to the Air Force and joint partners—flying and fighting as an unrivaled wingman. **JFQ**