



# Expeditionary Aerospace Force

## DETAIL CONCEPT PAPER

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The Expeditionary Aerospace Force (EAF) embodies the Air Force vision to organize, train, equip and sustain its future Total Force – Active, Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve – to meet the security challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. The EAF addresses these challenges through enhanced sustainability, readiness and responsiveness and through fostering an expeditionary warrior mindset. The fundamental objective of the EAF is to enhance the operational capabilities the US Air Force provides today to its clients, the warfighting Commanders in Chief (CINCs), while sustaining a viable force that can also provide those capabilities in the future.

## Expeditionary Aerospace Force

**Expeditionary Aerospace Force:  
The 21st Century United States Air Force organized, trained,  
equipped and sustained to handle expeditionary operations  
across the spectrum of conflict**

- **A New Playbook to meet CINC needs**
  - Responsive / Tailorable / Trained to Task
  - Meets steady state taskings / protects ability to surge
- **Smarter Use of all resources**
  - Increasing Deployment Pool
    - More inclusive use of the entire active duty force
    - More effective integration of Total Force
  - Light / Lean / Lethal
  - Rotational schedule
- **Culture: Expeditionary / Warrior**

**EAF** is about truly embracing and understanding the concepts and implications of **engagement** and **presence** articulated in our current vision *Global Engagement: Strategy for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. The EAF is a proactive move away from the Cold War USAF. It is reaffirmation of the vital role aerospace power plays across the full spectrum of military operations in support of the National Military Strategy. It is recognition of the growing tendency to employ aerospace power frequently and over sustained periods as a part of that strategy. And it is recognition that this demand for aerospace power is driven by its unique characteristics – range, speed, flexibility, and precision.

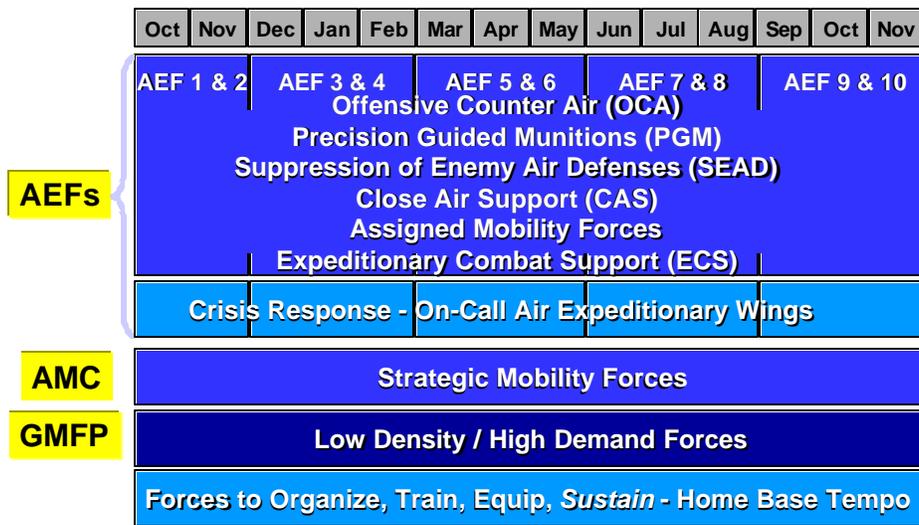
**Force Management:** At its core, EAF is about structural and cultural changes to create more effective force management tools. A key objective is to understand where USAF resources are limited and how over committing them to meet requirements today can result in less capability to meet essential requirements tomorrow.

The most talked about change under EAF is the Aerospace Expeditionary Forces (AEFs). Under this construct, a pair of AEFs defines the level of deployment our combat and combat support units can sustain. A pair of rotating on-call Aerospace Expeditionary Wings (AEWs) provides the punch in our crisis response capabilities.

The AEF force management tool looks beyond simple aircraft counts to measure tempo. It addresses the many deployments which involve only combat support forces – which we call Expeditionary Combat Support (ECS). We are also trying to include metrics for the number of forward operating locations (FOLs) which can be as stressing on some forces as number of aircraft deployed. And, a going in objective is to control home base TEMPO because it is critical to long-term retention and readiness.

The AEF force management tool complements two existing tools for deploying forces. Air Mobility Command (AMC) uses mobility commitment lines to control and measure the tempo of the tanker and airlift force. The USAF and joint community together use the Global Military Force Policy (GMFP) to measure and try to control the demand for our low density/high demand (LD/HD) assets such as AWACS, U-2s and special operations.

## EAF Force Management Tools



AEF - Aerospace Expeditionary Force AMC - Air Mobility Command  
 GMFP - Global Military Force Policy

We must protect the forces that accomplish the USAFs Title 10 task to train, organize, equip and sustain. Major Theater War (MTW) plans often assume we will surge these forces forward, and recover them later. However, under the stress of multiple rotational deployments such a surge is counter-productive. Using these forces for deployments interrupts sustainment actions on MTW capabilities and delay efforts to recover, refurbish and re train returning forces. This hidden cost of business is extremely important to sustaining a viable force. It is often overlooked as we assess our ability to sustain increased numbers of forces forward...or assess force structure cuts using only MTW scenarios.

Finally, while not specifically addressed by these management tools, non-deploying capabilities are critical to expeditionary operations. Fixed assets such as satellite control stations, logistics depots, intelligence production centers, long-haul communications, etc., are critical in reducing the footprint required to deploy forward and all provide critical support to deployed forces.

**EAF Across the Spectrum of Military Operations:** In a heavily engaged environment, the USAF must have effective processes to manage the transition from Small-Scale Contingencies (SSCs) up to MTW. The National

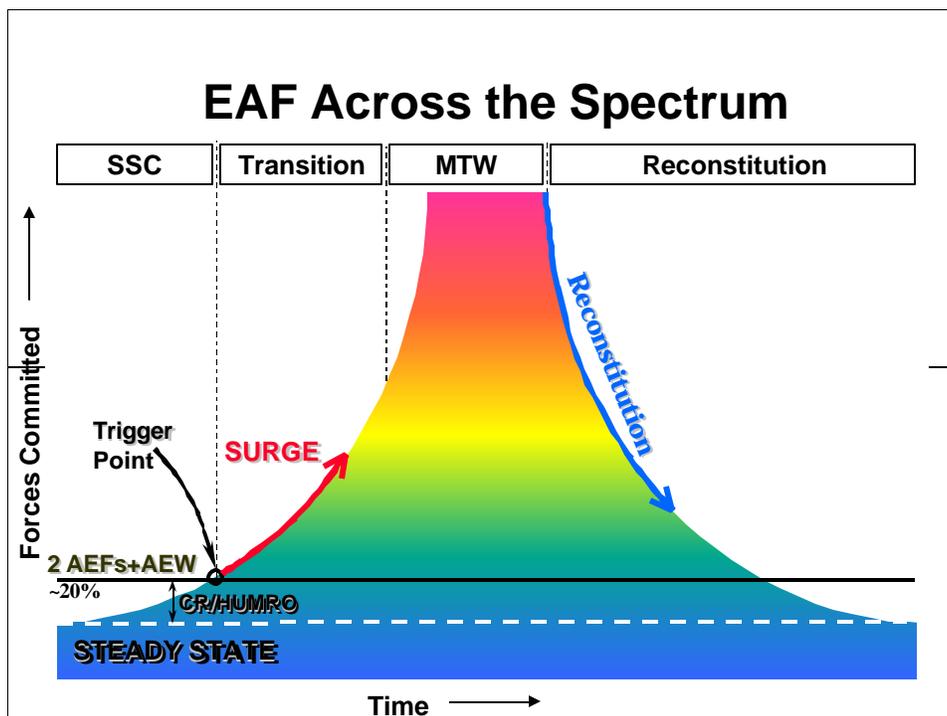
Military Strategy dictates the Air Force be prepared to support requirements across the spectrum of military operations. Therefore, while the force management tools and their controlling mechanisms are significant accomplishments, *they are not sufficient to achieve the EAF vision.*

Most graphics depict the spectrum of operations as a linear transition from peace operations to the high end of major theater war then back to peace; with a color scale from green to red to green.

The EAF spectrum reflects the reality of engagement, which adds a baseline of long-term rotational deployments. Surge then is an accumulation of contingency commitments, on top of this baseline. This accumulation can come from a single event (our national NATO commitment in Kosovo) or a number of smaller contingencies. Commitments can build to a major theater war level of effort; but hopefully will level off well short of that mark. After surge, it is necessary to disengage below the sustainable engagement level for a period of time to reconstitute the force. Yet, after a surge, it can also be a major challenge just to get back down to the previous deployment baseline.

The force management tools define **sustainable engagement**. The total operational commitment is met with forces from the 2 tasked AEFs and an on-call Air Expeditionary Wing, along with mobility and LD/HD assets operating below their defined “surge” lines. This commitment is sustainable over time, provided recurring needs of the force, including personnel, maintenance, and equipment, are addressed.

Some level of crisis response must be included in sustainable engagement, otherwise, the force will be surging for every little event worldwide.



**Surge Operations** begin when tasks exceed sustainable USAF capabilities. The force management tools provide “Trigger Points” to identify when requirements exceed sustainable commitment levels. Two AEFs and an AEW provide the trigger(s) for combat and combat support. Similarly, GMFP and mobility commitment

lines define trigger points for those forces. Another logical trigger should be any time we tap into our train, organize, equip or sustain forces for operational tasking.

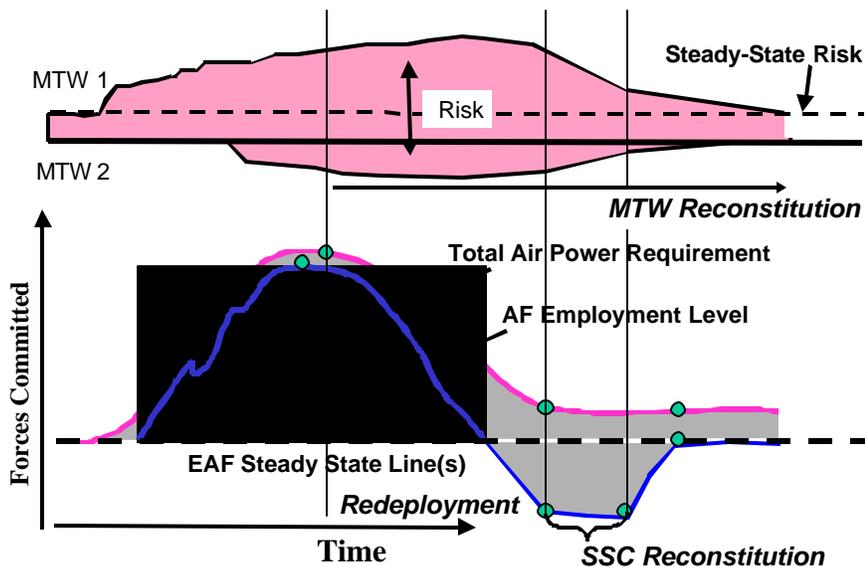
The forces in two AEFs and the on-call AEW could have handled all of the contingencies between Desert Storm and Kosovo without requiring a major surge. Those events would have fallen in the crisis response zone for most assets. However, Kosovo is an example where the Air Force's engaged forces

did reach a level of effort nearing commitments planned for major theater war response. When that happens, there is a point between the trigger point and full mobilization where the EAF can no longer retain a clear semblance of a predictable schedule and other sustainment options, to include Presidential Selective Reserve Call-up or Full Mobilization, are considered.

As surge increases, selective disengagement from ongoing steady state commitments should also be considered. However, Kosovo showed that selective disengagement can be complicated by CINCs interpret the need to selectively increase engagement as a risk management measure.

Any time assets surge past their own trigger point, some cost is incurred. Planning for **reconstitution** must begin simultaneously with start of surge operations. Reconstitution efforts will continue beyond the end of the contingency operation. Factors to consider in reconstitution planning include levels of consumables and munitions expended, training lost, impact of personnel retention and attrition rates across the Total Force, and post-contingency steady-state operational requirements. The figure below depicts the reality of engagement, surge and reconstitution in the USAF today.

## Reconstitution for Engagement & MTWs



Today, any time we deploy forces we are using parts of our “two-MTW” force and are introducing some risk to planning factors. There are no residual USAF forces. If we don't fence our train, organize, equip and sustain forces during engagement, we aggravate the impact with reduced readiness.

Kosovo provides case study of the issues the EAF concept was intended to address. Kosovo was the first large contingency for the USAF using the post-Cold War force structure. It is the first large contingency executed from a fully “engaged” posture. Kosovo also is the first USAF reconstitution needed since Korea. Finally, Kosovo showed that even during a large effort, other rotational commitments continue.

The EAF is already paying dividends in reconstitution planning. Using the force management tools, the USAF was able to measure and articulate the impacts Kosovo operations, on top of our other worldwide commitments, had on the force.



EAF **structural changes** enable more responsive force packaging; provide better visibility into force TEMPO and better detection when the force is stressed; and focus relief on stressed areas. The most visible example is the organization of combat and combat support forces into standing AEFs. As already discussed, these structural changes provide Air Force senior leadership with a force management tool that better assesses readiness, quantifies tempo impacts, and guides investments.

**Cultural changes** involve how we recruit, train, nurture and retain our Airmen and how we structure, manage and invest in the force. Airmen need the skills to excel in the expeditionary world ... and the stability to pursue a rewarding personal life. This is the major task still facing the EAF.

Many processes we use to grow and manage these expeditionary airmen haven’t evolved to the reality that recurring expeditionary rotation and contingencies are part of normal Air Force operations. Over the past nine years, most airmen have come to understand this reality. But, since our systems haven’t adapted, skills or resources airmen need in deployed environments remain unaligned.

Training must adapt to this environment. Training must involve subjects like buddy care and basic survival skills for expeditionary airmen who will live in “field” conditions on a recurring basis. Airmen must understand what makes aerospace forces expeditionary and how to make them more expeditionary. We must know how to

measure, limit and sustain long-term engagement (steady-state contingencies); how to quickly transition to surge operations up to and including MTW level of effort, and then smoothly reconstitute back to sustainable engagement.

How we manage the force also hasn't evolved fully to the new reality. We must institutionalize the rule sets and the planning concepts that create more effective force packaging; make TEMPO visibility and relief happen; and target investments to create more sustainable, ready and responsive forces.

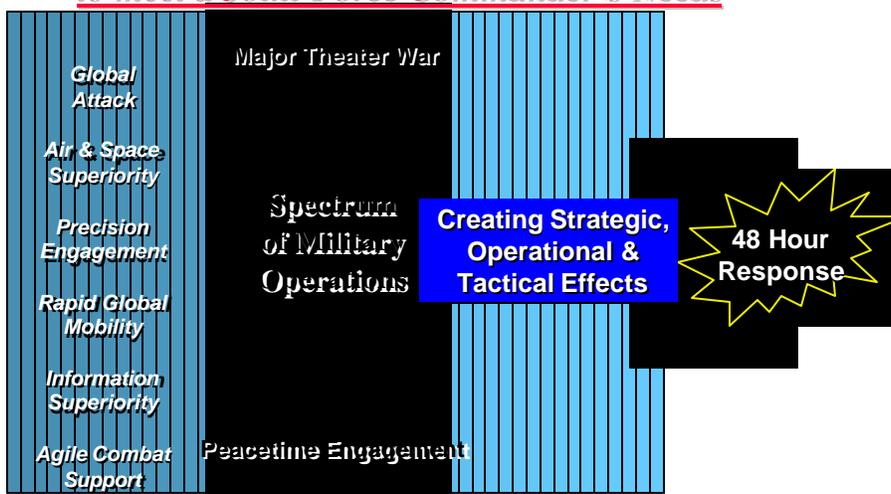
At deployment levels below surge, adherence to the AEF schedule (or the mobility commitment lines or the GMFP) and their rule sets is essential to USAF mission accomplishment...sustaining and retaining the force and still meeting Joint Force tasks. We need to stop managing the nation's aerospace force as if deployments are extraordinary events warranting disruption of sustaining functions.

These concepts embody the "expeditionary warrior mindset".

**Operational** change encompasses innovative approaches and new technologies that make us light, lean, lethal and rapidly deployable/employable worldwide. More simplistically: light and lean means smaller forward footprint; more lethal means less force required for a desired effect; and rapid response reduces demand for forward presence. They reduce the burden engagement places on the force.

## EAF: Expeditionary Vision

***Rapidly Executable Course of Action, Tailored to meet a Joint Force Commander's Needs***



Doctrine, material and logistics are the primary accounting systems, but the key to innovation is fostering concept development and learning. Formal experimentation is needed to test new ideas and doctrines or to try new organizational, logistics and employment concepts. In addition to developing concepts, experimentation supplements education and skills training by allowing airmen to test innovative ideas and helping them learn new ways to accomplish the mission. We must also do a better job of implementing lessons learned from past operations. Finally, acquisition, research and development must leverage technology to enable our evolution toward the EAF vision.

EAF focuses on managing available forces against joint tasks. EAF force management tools help identify force structure shortfalls that may merit investment. The force is essentially MTW sized but SSC tasked, resulting in shortfalls in some capabilities, which in turn leads to excessive tempo for some AF people. Finally, EAF does highlight force attributes that reduce the burden of engagement.

But, EAF does not drive specific changes into employment concepts. EAF has not added any new missions, tasks or functions to USAF. And, EAF is not a program.

### **Main EAF points:**

- EAF is about structural and cultural changes to create more effective force management tools
- In a heavily engaged environment, the USAF must have processes to smoothly transition across the spectrum of military operations
- Force management tools define **sustainable engagement**: the levels of deployment/tempo our forces can sustain
- Force management tools provide “Trigger Points” to determine when commitments are exceeding sustainable levels (surge)
- Efforts to mitigate and plan for **reconstitution** must begin simultaneously with surge operations
- Any time we deploy forces we are using parts of the nation’s “two MTW” force and are putting the execution of at least parts of one MTW planning at a degree of risk
- Adherence to the AEF schedule (or the GMFP or the mobility commitment lines) and their rule sets is an essential part of the USAF mission...sustaining and retaining the force while meeting Joint Force requirements
- Light and lean means smaller forward footprint; more lethal means less force required for a desired effect; and rapid response reduces demand for forward presence
- We must manage deployment and other requirements to keep them within sustainable levels

**Why is it important?** EAF addresses the high demands the strategy of Global Engagement places on USAF forces. These demands include maintaining high deployment tempos and multiple sustained forward operating locations while retaining rapid crisis response capability...and the ability to conduct two Major Theater Wars. These demands are stressing our people and our assets. The symptoms include lower retention rates, decreasing readiness rates, increasing cannibalization rates and lower mission-ready rates. EAF steps up to a dual challenge: sustaining our aerospace assets and retaining our people while presenting timely, relevant forces to meet the demands of our national strategy.

**How was it developed?** This expeditionary approach, while renewed and refocused, is strongly rooted in the history and traditions of air power. It is further embodied in the core competencies of the US Air Force and the USAF’s central mission of providing timely and responsive land and space-based aerospace power. In turn, it helps to implement the key concepts found in Joint Vision 2010. Finally, it reflects the lessons learned from the recent use of “Air Expeditionary Forces” we have deployed for carrier gap filler and other short duration missions.

**The EAF is still evolving!** It is a journey, not a destination. New concepts are already evolving out of our lessons learned from surging into, sustaining, and planning to reconstitute from Operations ALLIED FORCE and SHINING HOPE.