

Internal and external reviews will reshape the Air Force's Active Duty, Guard, and Reserve.

# REBOOTING the Total Force

By Amy McCullough, News Editor

**T**he National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2013, signed into law by President Barack Obama on Jan. 2, created a National Commission on the Structure of the Air Force, to be composed of eight members. The independent commission is charged to determine the appropriate USAF force structure in a way that avoids the political animosity, sense of surprise, and distrust of the system that accompanied the proposed reductions to Air National

Guard forces included in the Fiscal 2013 President's budget request.

The goal this time around is to find ways to reduce costs while keeping the current and anticipated needs of combatant commanders—and the unique capabilities of the Active and reserve components—in mind. The commission held its first meeting on April 30 and is to report back to Congress by Feb. 1, 2014.

Of the eight "Air Force Structure" commissioners, four were appointed by



USAF photo by SSgt. Eric Harris



An Alaska Air National Guard aircrew drops equipment from a C-17 during an Arctic search and rescue exercise.

Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Edward Eagerton



*Air Force Reserve airmen remove the filler hose from an AFRC C-130 at Dyess AFB, Tex., after loading the airlifter with fire retardant.*

the President while the other four were selected by leaders of the House and Senate Armed Services Committees. Only four have direct ties to the Air Force.

The eight members include: retired Lt. Gen. Harry M. Wyatt III, former Air National Guard director; F. Whitten Peters, former Air Force Secretary; Erin C. Conaton, former Air Force undersecretary; retired Gen. Raymond E. Johns Jr., former commander of Air Mobility Command; R. L. Brownlee, former Army acting secretary; Janine Davidson, former deputy assistant secretary of defense for plans; Margaret C. Harrell, director of RAND Corp.'s Army Health Program and a senior social scientist; and retired Marine Corps Lt. Gen. Dennis M. McCarthy, former assistant secretary of defense for reserve affairs.

“Our proposed force structure is relatively stable for now,” said then-Air Force Secretary Michael B. Donley during a May 8 Senate defense appropriations subcommittee hearing. “But beyond FY ’14, it is dependent on decisions yet to be made, and especially on achieving a balanced approach to deficit reduction to avoid further sequestration.”

### **Determining the Mix**

Even before law mandated the commission, Air Force leadership had decided to establish a task force with a similar objective: the Total Force Task Force.

“I don’t think we knew the level of integration” that had already occurred between the three components, said Lt. Gen. Michael R. Moeller, deputy chief of staff for strategic plans and programs

on the Air Staff, referring to the recent coordination between Active Duty, Air National Guard, and Air Force Reserve planners. But because of “the number of changes that are happening both in the strategic and fiscal environment and then combined with what was a bruising, bruising experience in the ’12 and ’13” budget requests, USAF leaders realized there was still more work to be done before they could determine the most effective Total Force capabilities mix, said Moeller.

As a result, Donley and Chief of Staff Gen. Mark A. Welsh III signed a memorandum on Jan. 28 creating the Total Force Task Force, or TF2. The idea is to step back from the ongoing Total Force debate and take a fresh look at how to most effectively integrate all three components in a way that will magnify the strengths of each.





USAF photo by Capt. Raymond Geoffroy

**Airmen and soldiers load an Army helicopter on an Air Force Reserve C-5 at Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan.**

The task force's approach will be a sharp contrast to the controversial 2013 budget process because it's designed to be "open and transparent." The task force also will provide a point of contact for the state adjutants general (TAGs) and external stakeholders and give the Air Force an avenue to provide updates throughout the process, said Moeller in a late March interview with *Air Force Magazine*. Moeller said his job is to "clear any bureaucratic obstacles" for the three two-star general officers leading TF2.

The three TF2 leaders are: Maj. Gen. Mark E. Bartman, assistant adjutant general-air, Ohio National Guard; Maj. Gen. Brian P. Meenan, mobilization assistant to the commander of Air Mobility Command at Scott AFB, Ill.; and Maj. Gen. John Posner, director of global power programs on the Air Staff. Each is on six-month orders to the task force, and they have between them a core team of 25 to 30 people working full-time on Total Force issues. They also will tap a much larger "matrix organization" that expands and contracts depending on the workload.

## The Rough Year in Total Force Relations

A little over a year ago, the Air Force proposed massive cuts to the Air National Guard in its Fiscal 2013 budget request. It asked Congress for permission to retire 286 aircraft, more than half from the Guard. It also outlined plans to cut 9,900 personnel across the Total Force, including 5,100 Guardsmen, 3,900 Active Duty members, and 900 Air Force Reservists.

At the time, USAF leaders said the force structure changes were necessary to preserve its fighting effectiveness in the face of steep spending reductions. But Congress, the nation's governors, and the reserve components were caught by surprise, creating a public-relations nightmare that service leaders are determined not to repeat in their future long-term planning for the Total Force.

As soon as the Fiscal 2013 request became public, many state leaders, adjutants general, and members of Congress blasted the proposed cuts, claiming the Guard was bearing a disproportionate amount of the pain. In late February 2012, members of the Council of Governors—a bipartisan group of 10 governors appointed by the White House—met with then-Defense Secretary Leon E. Panetta to discuss a letter, signed by 49 governors, voicing concern over the Air Force's proposal.

Roughly one week later, the adjutants general for the COG co-chairs presented an alternative proposal to the Air Force.

"The proposal is not the ideal solution because it was crafted within constraints identified by the Air Force to address governors' concerns regarding ANG manpower and aircraft," stated an April 2012 letter from the National Governors Association to the House and Senate Armed Services Committees' staffs. Nevertheless, the council said its plan, which would have cut thousands of additional Active Duty billets while retaining thousands of Air Guardsmen, would save about \$700 million over the Future Years Defense Program.

The Air Force, in its evaluation of the initial counterproposal, said it would actually increase USAF's "budgetary shortfall over the FYDP by \$528 million" while "imposing unacceptable stress on both the Active and reserve components."

The battle continued to play out in the halls of Congress and across the country, and by late March 2012, Deputy Defense Secretary Ashton B. Carter got involved, launching an independent review of the council's proposal. Panetta presented the Defense Department's counter to Congress in late April, offering to retain 24 C-130 transports in its

“The determination of our leadership to break down barriers preventing us from planning and advancing as a Total Force will drive this effort to success,” said Maj. Gen. Joseph G. Balskus, Moeller’s military assistant and an Air Guard officer, who works closely with the task force.

“The team we have assembled from the three components and the extended team members across Headquarters Air Force, [and] the Air Force secretariat, Air National Guard, and Air Force Reserve is incredibly impressive.”

### Purely Integration?

Moeller said TF2 is a “fundamentally different” approach from the way the Air Staff has operated in the past.

“We stand up these steering groups and planning teams and these different entities and they look at specific problems and then they go away,” said Moeller. “I’ve not seen such a level of effort where the Chief and the Secretary have essentially hired three two-stars



Marine Corps photo by Cpl. Enrique Saenz

**Now-retired Marine Corps Reserve Lt. Gen. Dennis McCarthy—seen here in 2005 as Marine Forces Reserve commander speaking to troops in Norway—is chairman of the Air Force Structure panel.**

for a six-month period to come in and lead this.”

The task force will become a permanent part of the Air Staff even after it makes its recommendations. The goal is to serve

as a one-stop point of contact on all Total Force issues.

“I’m not sure how it’s going to look. One of the recommendations may be to stand up a task force-like entity in the Air

Fiscal 2013 budget request to ensure that the Air National Guard could meet its mandate to support the states.

The \$400 million package outlined in Panetta’s April 23 letter to Congress did not specifically address which units might be affected, but DOD officials said the compromise would save about 2,200 Guard positions.

“I strongly urge you to consider this proposal, which we believe sustains our national defense requirements and is responsive to concerns raised by the Council of Governors,” wrote Panetta in the April 23 letter to Rep. C. W. Young (R-Fla.), chairman of the defense appropriations subcommittee.

Although many in Congress seemed to think DOD’s counter was a step in the right direction, they also felt it didn’t go far enough.

Sen. Carl Levin (D-Mich.), chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, noted in a statement to the press that Panetta’s “recommendation would reverse more than 40 percent of the personnel reductions to the Air National Guard initially proposed by the Air Force.” Levin also said the 24 additional C-130s represented “progress toward restoring some proportionality to the Air Force’s proposed budget.”

However, Sen. Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.), co-chair of the Senate National Guard

Caucus, said in a press release the Air Force still “failed to meet the governors in the middle” of the personnel cuts.

“Recognizing the complexity and importance of the synergy between the Active and reserve components ... senior leaders of the Air Force—Active, Guard, and Reserve—reviewed the FY13 [President’s budget] force structure decisions in light of these concerns and developed a Total Force Proposal” that was presented to Congress in November 2012, according to the Air Force’s Fiscal 2013 National Defense Authorization Act implementation plan.

The new proposal retained 90 percent of the savings included in the original Fiscal 2013 request; however, it also restored about 38 percent of the reserve components’ aircraft and 75 percent of the Air National Guard end strength reductions.

The Total Force Proposal also reversed the slated elimination of one ANG and one Reserve C-130H squadron, one ANG KC-135 squadron, and two ANG A-10 squadrons. And it reversed the planned shift of all MC-12W Liberty intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance aircraft to the Guard.

In addition, the proposal restored some of the reserve components’ missions and added new missions for some Guard and Reserve units.

With the new proposal, the Air Force also made some changes to the Fiscal 2012 President’s budget force structure for the Active component. These included divesting two C-130H squadrons, four KC-135 aircraft, and one fighter squadron and the transfer of one fighter squadron to the Air Force Reserve.

Most of the changes are set to take effect in Fiscal 2013 or 2014. The remainder will go into effect no later than Fiscal 2017, according to the NDAA implementation plan.

“Our Air Force continues efforts to maximize the strength of our Total Force, and we are pleased with the progress that is being made on this front,” said Air Force Secretary Michael B. Donley in a March 28 release. “This implementation plan illustrates the Air Force’s continued commitment to transparency as it completes the force structure requirements directed and authorized by the NDAA.”

Ultimately, the National Defense Authorization Act, signed into law by President Obama on Jan. 2, directed USAF to shrink its force structure by 122 aircraft and about 6,100 Active Duty military billets, 65 aircraft and roughly 1,400 military billets from the Air National Guard, and 57 aircraft from the Air Force Reserve.





USAF photo by SMSgt. David H. Lipp

**Above: North Dakota Air National Guardsmen (l-r) SrA. Michael Carlson, SrA. Cody Jenson, and SrA. Kathleen Stenger exit the missile field after an exercise at Minot AFB, N.D. Right: MSgt. Aaron Smith Jr. (l) and MSgt. Megan Reed, Reservists with the 55th Combat Communications Squadron, fine-tune a radio frequency module and stabilize a satellite communications antenna during African Lion, a bilateral US-Moroccan exercise.**

USAF photo by SrA. Will Touseaint



don't know where you are starting from," he said.

A successful comprehensive review means dusting off plans and studies completed as far back as 2002. It also means reaching out to experts—including former heads of the National Guard Bureau and Air Force Reserve—and consulting with think tanks, TAGs, the Council of Governors, and other independent organizations. The review also will consider the Defense Strategic Guidance and the National Security Strategy as well as the Air Force strategy development effort and the Defense Strategic Review.

"Even as the task force got started, they realized there is just a lot out there," said Moeller. "The magnitude of their work is bigger than anyone thought."

Originally, the task force intended to "report out" in October, but that's "slipped slightly" due to the extensive analysis required in the review, Moeller told the House Armed Services subcommittee on readiness on April 24.

"I think November, early December, the task force will report out on its findings," he added.

Staff and use it just purely as an integration cell," said Moeller. "You have the Chief of the Air Force Reserve, you have the Air National Guard, we have the different Air Staff directors, and the secretariat, but I think we would all agree that there has to be some plug-and-play for the external entities like the TAGs and [Council of Governors]. Right now we really don't have a place where they can plug in, with the exception of the task force."

Although TF2 has many chores, they all fall under three overarching objectives: conduct a comprehensive review of the existing Total Force structure; develop strategic assumptions and questions; and present recommendations to Donley and Welsh for review, said Moeller.

"We're doing things simultaneously, but the majority of the comprehensive review must be done ... because you don't know where you are going if you



**Maj. Gen. Steven Kwast (shown here as a brigadier general at Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan) is the Air Force representative for the Quadrennial Defense Review. The recommendations of the task force and the national commission will be folded into the QDR, Kwast said.**

One challenge will be coming up with a unified set of definitions and assumptions. Although the coordination between the three components has improved vastly over the years, each brings a unique perspective to the table.

“The language is just different. The tribes are different and we need to come to agreement on these pieces,” Moeller said. He acknowledged that it will be tough to reach consensus on some of those issues, but said the entire process will be more effective if a compromise can be reached at the beginning.

Air National Guard Director Lt. Gen. Stanley E. Clarke III told lawmakers during the April 24 hearing that it’s important to maintain all parts of the Total Force: All components must work under the same standards, meet the same inspections, and be operationally engaged. In addition, all three components must be adequately resourced, he added.

“I think that the Total Force is better today because of that, and we stand ready to work anywhere, anytime, alongside our regular Air Force or reserve airmen at any time,” said Clarke.

Maj. Gen. Richard S. Haddad, deputy chief of the Air Force Reserve, told lawmakers the Reserve has “always prided itself on being that combat-ready, efficient and effective, and cost-effective force.” And considering the reserve components have been operationalized since Operation Desert Shield, he said, “there’s no question that there’s a need for us.”

Although Haddad said he was hesitant to “get ahead” of the task force and its findings, he said his “hat goes off” to Air

Force leadership for being “extremely transparent with this process.”

“I think it’s important that we really look at the roles and missions of our Guard, Reserve, and Active Duty, and then come back and make those assessments as to where we’ve put weapons systems and force structure,” said Haddad. “And I truly believe that it’s better to put it in the Guard and Reserve, as opposed to putting it in Congressman [Ron] Barber’s [D-Ariz.] Boneyard there in Tucson, because I think it allows our nation to have that capability and capacity at a lower cost.” Haddad was referring to the Air Force’s request to retire 286 aircraft—most from the Air National Guard—in Fiscal 2013 as part of its cost-saving measures.

### Everything on the Table

Moeller said the fiscal environment remains the biggest assumption the task force must make. Other assumptions, he said, will include a combination of “constraints, restraints, and yes-no-type questions.”

“We need to make sure that any courses of action that this team comes up with is in the realm of the real world,” he noted.

That’s easier said than done, since officials have yet to fully grasp the full ramifications of sequestration—the 10 percent across-the-board spending cuts mandated by Congress.

“It comes down to covering the gaps with those assumptions,” said Moeller. “If the assumption has to change it could change the Total Force planning effort, but the only wrong answer is not getting started.”

Moeller told lawmakers the task force is looking at a broad range of policies and personnel requirements that will ensure the Air Force embraces the “unique advantages that come from the reserve component—both the Air National Guard and the Air Force Reserve.” The task force also is looking to make certain that the “unique capabilities” of the reserve components “mesh” with the unique capabilities of the Active Duty to “ensure that we can cover the full spectrum of our responsibilities for the future.”

The task force’s conclusions will help shape the Fiscal 2015 planning and programming process and beyond. That means Fiscal 2016, “realistically,” would be the absolute earliest any of its recommendations could be implemented, said Moeller.

However, as of early April it still wasn’t clear how the national commission and the task force would compare and contrast or exactly how the two sets of recommendations would be married together. Maj. Gen. Steven L. Kwast, the Air Force’s representative for the Quadrennial Defense Review, said it’s not quite clear what role the force structure issue will play in the QDR, but both the task force’s recommendations and those of the national commission “will all fold in to the QDR,” allowing the Air Force to “tackle this holistically.”

“We’re collaborating with the national committee and the task force on that issue, but everything is on the table,” said Kwast during a Mitchell Institute for Airpower Studies event in Arlington, Va., in late March. “That’s good, because the pathway to success is open collaboration. We need to bring in the governors and TAGs as part of it so we can design something that allows each of those parts to serve its purpose as well as each other.”

Kwast said one of the problems with past force structure decisions is that “we’ve been trying to use Title 32 people” in Title 10 roles. “That’s not how they are built, but they need to complement each other. We need to design the bones in a way that they complement each other.”

Moeller agreed, saying the Air Force has never really discussed Title 32 responsibilities, such as specific requests from governors for capabilities needed for disaster response, in the context of the Total Force. “Opening that aperture” for both the Active Duty and reserve components is another way the task force is unique, he said.

“The Chief and the Secretary want this to be really and truly an open effort,” said Moeller. “That, fundamentally for me, is what is different from what we have done in the past.” ■