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Press Briefing, Department of Defense

Presenters:

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Gen. Michael E. Ryan, Chief of Staff, USAF

Air Expeditionary Forces

Peters: Good morning. I am very pleased to be here this morning to join General Ryan as we unveil a major restructuring initiative for employing our Air Force, becoming an expeditionary aerospace force to ready ourselves for the 21st Century.

During the Cold War, the Air Force was a garrison force focused on containment and operating as wings primarily out of fixed bases in the United States, Europe and the Pacific. Over the last decade we have closed many of those fixed bases and our operations have increasingly focused on contingency operations in which selected squadrons deploy from the United States, the Pacific or Europe to forward base bases for the duration of the mission.

As we have responded to contingencies around the globe, we have selected units to deploy on an ad hoc basis, and we have plugged these units into command and control structures that have been unique for each operation.

Recently we have also been experimenting with moving a large integrated force of fighter and bomber aircraft into a foreign theater as a unit with integrated command and control to give an area CINC the ability to put large, sustained firepower onto targets within 72 hours of an execute order. We have called these forces air expeditionary forces or AEFs.

Today, we are announcing the next logical step in organizing and training the Air Force to respond to contingencies. As General Ryan will brief in a few minutes, our experience with AEFs has convinced us that such forces are a far superior way to respond to crises and that we should move forward from ad hoc forces and command and control structures we have used in the past.

The use of AEFs will also allow us to cut optempo—that is the number of days our troops spend away from home—because widespread use of AEFs will allow us to better integrate Air National Guard and Air Reserve Forces into our contingency deployments, giving us additional capability from our existing Reserve and Guard units.

Today, we are announcing our plan to link geographically separated Air Force operational wings, groups and squadrons, active, Reserve and Guard into 10 notional AEFs, each with a cross-section of Air Force weapon systems to include fighters, bombers, support aircraft, and tactical airlift, with integrated command and control, trained as a unit to respond rapidly and decisively to potential crises anywhere in the world or to fill in rotational assignments such as Operation Southern Watch.

Each AEF will be able to provide both decisive firepower and humanitarian support.

For now the Air Force will continue to respond to major theater wars outside of the AEF organization in accordance with existing war plans. As the AEF structure matures, we expect it to be used for major theater wars as well as for contingencies.

The key features of the structure we announce today and which will be implemented by January 1, 2000 are as follows.

First, in our notional planning, each AEF will be on call to handle contingency operations for a 90 day period every 15 months. On average, two AEFs will be on call at any one time.

Second, each AEF will train as it will fight, with its active, Reserve, and Guard units all training together using integrated command and control provided by a lead wing plus command elements from constituent units. Importantly, AEF units will train for deployment together in exercises like Red Flag.

Third, each AEF will be specifically tailored to a particular contingency in support of our warfighting CINCs, enabling our air forces to be lighter, leaner, and more lethal than ever before. While our regional CINCs will benefit from the AEF structure, the men and women of our Total Force will also be big winners in the expeditionary aerial space force construct. It will allow more predictability and stability in their lives as units will deploy for operations only once during a 15-month rotation schedule.

As part of this restructuring we will provide all of our operating units a schedule of all deployments for training and exercises as well as for AEF operations one to two years in advance. This will provide our traditional Guard and Reserve forces and their employers much better notice of deployments than we have today, thereby facilitating our use of those forces.

We anticipate a reduction in optempo for our airmen deployed abroad with a similar reduction of work requirements for troops who remain at bases back home, and who must fill in when troops deploy today.

Indeed, as we implement this restructuring, we will be shifting some 5,000 jobs into the career fields that deploy most often, thereby cutting optempo and work demands even more.

Finally, by cutting optempo and work demands at home and by providing a more stable and predictable schedule, we hope to reduce the number one complaint we hear from our forces—we are deploying them too often on too little notice and are working them too hard when they're at home filling in for others who have deployed.

We have wonderful airmen who will do all that we ask them to do, but we have been asking them to do too much. Through the Expeditionary Aerospace Force initiative we hope to address these concerns and in the process achieve better retention rates among all of our people.

General Ryan and I are enthusiastic about these reforms because they will give needed relief to an overtaxed Total Force and their families while providing warfighting CINCs a much superior 21st Century fighting force.

At this point I'll turn the podium over to General Ryan to give you the details.

Ryan: Thank you, Secretary Peters.

I'll run through some of these slides fairly quickly because Mr. Peters has already covered some of the ground work. But I want to emphasize a few points on the initial slides, and then I'll go into some detail about how we have conceptualized and how we want to implement the AEF concept.

First of all, we think a real paradigm shift has occurred. That is that we are away from a Cold War kind of strategy where we had operating bases overseas that were set up, collocated operating bases where we deploy into fixed structures ready to go. We have moved away from that, from a containment strategy to one of global engagement with shaping and responding as the key words for the United States Air Force, and we'll be operating from bases that have limited infrastructure as we have seen occur over the past nine years.

This requires an expeditionary approach to the kinds of capabilities the Air Force needs to bring to bear for the nation and for the combatant commanders in the field.

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This slide just says that in this decade the shift has already occurred. We are engaged in all manner of expeditionary missions today. Since Desert Storm we have increased our optempo four-fold in these kinds of activities. Lots is happening across the globe, different kinds of demands on our forces, and we need to be responsive to that globally engaged character of our forces today, and we think it's going to be that way in the future. We need to design how we present the Air Force in the 21st Century to meet those demands.

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So we think that this expeditionary aerospace force must meet the national needs, ensure it has joint effectiveness—that it presents to the CINCs that kind of capability that they require—and leverages the Air Force strengths. That is, we are capable of a rapid response with trained and ready forces that are capable, lean, agile, and structured so that they fit very rapidly into a situation, in a command and control structure, that makes them effective.

We know we're going to have to do this in a fiscally limited capacity. We know the optempo demands will still be there. We have to take care of our folks in the quality of life, and we think we will continue to have readiness challenge in the future. So we're starting right now to work on this better way to utilize the aerospace forces of this nation.

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What is it? It's a systematic way to be able to present rapidly responsive forces that are light and lean tailored to the needs of the CINC. It's an integration of our total Air Force, something we haven't done in the past. Using our Guard and Reserve forces in a much more effective way than we have in the past. Using all of our capabilities across the spectrum in an effective way. It's institutionalizing in our force this expeditionary culture.

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What isn't it? It's not a risk to CINCs' op plans. This is not a major change to a CINC's op plan. It's not a major structural change to the United States Air Force vertical structure, and I'll explain that in a minute. It is not tiered readiness.

It's not tiered readiness for a couple of reasons. Our business requires that the primary forces that we use be ready all the time, and the aviation business is so unforgiving that you cannot tier the readiness of aviation assets without paying a price and a very large risk in safety. So from just an up front standpoint we have a very hard time in the United States Air Force in tiering readiness in any way that has to do with front line forces.

Secondly, in the construct of today's two major regional wars, two theater wars, the Air Force is tasked up front with almost every one of our assets to be rapid responders. So there is no way that we can tier readiness in this concept. This concept, however, addresses those, as we initially begin to implement this concept, it addresses our capability to respond up through small scale contingencies.

If we default to a major theater war, that is a different construct than AEF. We will want to migrate, as we work on this concept and flesh it out, the ability to use it as an up front response to the major theater wars. But we have not gone that extra step yet. We have some work to do with CINCs' Op plans with respect to this. But for right now, we're talking about the day-to-day responses that we've experienced over the last ten years.

This is no substitute for BRAC. It has nothing to do with BRAC. And it's not a super base concept. That's not what we're talking about.

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If you look at where we've responded over the last few years, you'll find that we have stood up a group of expeditionary bases: Tuzla, Tezar, Brindisi, many bases in the Southwest Asia region.

We've gone and opened episodically bases at hot spots around the world. We've taken our support forces and bedded them down to open up those bases to assure that we have good force protection and take care of our troops as they come onto the ground. Yet, we have never put into our programs or upped our base support structure to take care of that.

What has happened to us is that at our home bases we have had units deployed forward who are working 12 hours; and then the units that stay at home, if it's a security police force, it has to go on 12 hour shifts. Then we've rotated these forces in a way that we have put a great burden on our support forces across the United States Air Force because we'd sourced them to open these bases and sustain them from across the Air Force. That's not right.

We think we will continue to have to do this into the future and what we ought to do is to bring our manpower up to a standard that allows us to address that and not pull the support from our home bases to be able to do the expeditionary business. We need it for both.

I'll talk to you how we plan to spread that in just a few minutes.

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So what are we working on here? What's the problem? One is the preparation of our forces—to organize, train, equip, and have them readily prepared, trained-to-task, to meet the CINCs'

needs.

We also need to sustain that force with Total Force management to take care of that at home and away optempo that we have for our support forces.

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In the United States Air Force we're organized vertically. Normally a major command has numbered air forces with units under each of the numbered air forces. The AEF concept would take units from across MAJCOMs and virtually link them into approximately ten air expeditionary forces using the Total Force. Those forces would be on alert or forward deployed, depending on the situation, and I'll explain that on the next slide.

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We have just nominally named the AEFs, the Arnold and the Mitchell AEF. Portions of those AEFs would deploy forward to fill the fixed requirement that we have in Southwest Asia today, or even to Turkey or Bosnia where we have requirements that are known. The remainder would be on call to fill unknown requirements or to bulk up as we have in the past in those areas where we need rapidly responsive forces for the particular situation.

Our concept has two AEFs at any one time on the bubble—that is ready to go, on alert.

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What portions of the Air Force are we talking about? Almost all of it. Our fighters are normally available across commands to be able to respond. We have done this before. We have just not done it in a structured way. That is if you go to Southwest Asia over the past year you would find units from PACAF, from USAFE and from the continental United States. We have used all of our forces. Some of our forces we lock down, though. For instance on the Korean theater, we have not tapped those forces. Nor have we tapped Aviano, for instance, because it's locked down in a fixed contingency. But the rest of the forces, both active, Guard and Reserve are available across the spectrum of Air Force capabilities to include tactical airlift and tankers.

Tankers deploy forward. We reserve some of the tankers and of course our strategic lift to take care of the mobility air bridge for all our forces—not just for the Air Force, but for the Army, Navy and Marine Corps. And special operation forces are in their own optempo, op cycle.

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What would one of these look like in the next level of detail? We would have a forward deployed piece as we talked about that would be available, trained-to-task, have habitual relationships before they go to be able to take care of those kinds of requirements such as Bosnia and Southwest Asia.

We would have an on-call force that's capable of responding to any contingencies that may be out there in addition to the knowns. We will also have to manage in this concept what we call our high demand, low density assets such as U-2s and Rivet Joints and some of our C2 elements and the E-3As. These forces are always in high demand to be first in and normally last out.

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When we present these forces we would present them according to Air Force doctrine.

That is they would come in under an air component who is normally already stood up in theater, as most of our components are, for regional areas of the world, reporting to CINCs or JTFs in that area. Then, we would stand them up as air expeditionary wings underneath that particular component command, and command and control structure. So there's no change in the way we do business today. Our AEF concept is below the air component level.

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What would one look like? This is a notional AEF which has a group of shooters, as we would call them, other support aircraft, and some on-call. The forward deployed piece, for instance about 75 airplanes would be able to meet, notionally, the capabilities that we have bedded down right now in Southwest Asia, along with our high demand, low density assets. We would have these coming from every one of our components. For instance, a reserve outfit would be able to provide three KC-135s out of two units to be forward deployed. Our Reserves and Guard are very, very interested in participating in this operation.

We have done this in the past with our Reserves and Guard. We've done it with C-130s; we've done it with fighters in specific instances. If we can give our Guard and Reserve a long lead notice that they will be needed for this AEF timeframe in which we would like them to be able to deploy, they can arrange with their schedules and their employers to be available. They've done it for us in the past and they tell us that in our Total Force that they can do it better in the future if we can give them more notice.

We would do that, for instance we can do it with A-10s, we can do it with C-130s, and KC-135s in a way that we "rainbow" across to provide units that would rotate within the timeframe, just as we do today at some of our locations overseas.

About 75 forward deployed aircraft. About 100 on call. About 175 total. We could up the number that we have on call if we had presidential selective reserve call up, and increase the number if that were required. But when you get to that level where you need to call them up, you're almost transiting into what would be a major theater war and we would default to the OpPlan.

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What would the life cycle of an AEF look like? Once you stood it up, we would do the normal training that we do on a day-to-day basis in preparation for whatever contingency is out there. At some lead point before employment, forward deployment or when they are on call to the CINC when they are in a vulnerability window, we would integrate that force in a way that it's trained to the task we know they need to do when they go forward, those tasks that we suspect they may need to do. We would do that through Red Flags, through exercises, and through the training that we do on an integration basis of Air Force assets. And we would, if it were a joint operation that they needed to be in, we could also fit very well into joint training during this timeframe. We would then have the forces deploy on call for operations on the lower end all the way up through major theater wars.

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So what would one of these look like with ten AEFs in a notional basis? Let's say on a 90-day schedule—we are still not sure that that's the right number. We're still looking at it. And a 15-month rotation. We would have at least two AEFs stood up at any one time. They would come back in their normal stand-down as we do today, either seven days for 45 days away or two weeks for 90 days away. Then back up into their normal training cycle, then into their spin-up time for deployment. In this way we could cover at any one time two AEFs.

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The support forces that I talked about before primarily are security forces, medical teams, services, transportation—the things you need for the infrastructure of a base to keep it full. To make sure it operates.

We would select some lead bases—the most likely ones to be the command wing for that particular deployment. We would bulk up those bases, robust the lead bases, with those kinds of large team tasks such as security police and medical. Those kinds of tasks that require teamwork and that require habitual relationships for rapid response so that the first day they hit the ground they were trained-to-task and would work with each other.

Some of our other smaller team tasks that aren't as critical but they are necessary and vital to the operation, we would spread across some of the other bases that would contribute forces to this effort—in total about 29 bases in this total concept. We would add about 5,000 plus folks to those support bases. Where do we get them? We get them from the cycle that we're in now, particularly with competitive sourcing where we are pulling down some of the support force capabilities that don't require a military to do, and transitioning those over to either contract or outsourced or privatized. We can use those resources plus headquarters drawdown to be able to bulk these bases up and robust these lead AEFs and other bases that contribute forces.

About 5,000 folks.

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Q: That will be a mix of active duty and...

Ryan: That will be active duty primarily. We would source the 5,000 from some of the headquarters drawdown we're doing through our competitive sourcing that we are doing today. To make sure that some of the lead bases where we would outsource some functions are covered, we would transfer those manpower slots to other kinds of functions and bulk them up. Say if we needed, for instance, additional security forces and we had outsourced utilities there, we would use some of the savings to pay for this.

Q: How many of these support forces do you figure each AEF would require? The firefighters, medical teams...

Ryan: If we went full blown... Well, just today. If you look at the number of support forces we have deployed to Southwest Asia, not counting Turkey, Bosnia, all the rest of it, we have 3,000 right now deployed over there. We think that 5,000 is about the number in this concept that would allow us not to rip off the bases at home and still sustain the force. It's not a major change at these bases, I think is the point. If you divide 5,000 by 29 bases, it isn't a huge number of folks—under 200 a base. But we feel that isn't very much.

Our folks that we leave at home when we take a 44 man security police force forward really feel the optempo at home, as well as what we're doing in the deployed location. And we've done it across most of our specialties. We need to fix it.

I think we thought that sometime in the future that this kind of activity would go away.

We'd go to Desert Storm and we'd come home, or we'd go to Bosnia and we'd come home. The realities of the world say that we'll probably stay for awhile. When we do that, we need to make sure that we resource what we have put forward, and this is our attempt to do that, take care of our folks.

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How would this take care of the contingencies we've had say since 1992 in bulking up forces at each one of our locations, and then the episodic things that we had to do where we increased the force? If you take the two AEFs, say 75 from each of them, shooters, that would fill about here the 150. Then if you took the remainder on call, we would more than be able to cover all the contingencies that we've had since 1992. In fact this is a little conservative because it does not include the low density/high demand assets that we have deployed forward. Only those which were shown in those slides before.

So, we think that with two AEFs in the current conditions, resourced properly, trained, equipped, and ready to go, we can cover the contingencies that have been asked for us on a day-to-day basis over the next seven years or so.

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What's in this for the CINCs? They get trained-to-task, robust forces—not ones that we ad hoc and put forward. They get rapid response forces that are tailored to meet the kind of contingencies they have, or if it is a contingency that we have not predicted, they have forces that are on the bubble and ready to go. It gives them full spectrum capability we think that will fit nicely into op plans, although we haven't taken that next step to integrate them into the timephased force deployment list for major theater wars, but that's the next step we need to look at.

What's in it for our airmen? For our airmen, it employs our Total Force. We use our Guard and Reserves forces even more fully than we do today. More predictable and stable schedules for our folks. Our folks, as Mr. Peters said, will do anything for us. What they look for, though, on a day-to-day basis is some stability in their lives so they can plan on what happens next month or next year. Barring a major theater war, we think this concept will give that stability to our force.

We need to improve our force structure. We owe that to our folks to do it. This benefits us and without doing a major reconstruction of the Air Force in any way.

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That's a quick synopsis of our expeditionary aerospace force concept for the United States Air Force going into the 21st century.

Mr. Peters and I would like to take your questions.

Q: One thing that the expeditionary does to you is expose your people into situations where you're not normally situated, and brings up the force protection issue. You've mentioned security police a number of times. The Downing Report followed the 4404th in Saudi Arabia for a number of security problems—people showing up as individuals, not trained together, no time to get acquainted with the area, that sort of thing.

How does this expeditionary concept, what you're doing here, improve your force protection concept?

Ryan: First, we would be able to plan much further ahead than we have in the past on the deployments that are known deployments. The forces would work together in a workup period before they went. There would be habitual relationships that would be established with these forces from the very beginning. The bases that are chosen as our lead bases would be the command and control element at the wing level and below. For those kinds of activities that had to do with force protection, for instance security police, interface with the local nationals, our OSI and others pull that together.

We have stood up, as most of you know, a Force Protection Battle Lab down in San Antonio that has given us greater capability.

If you go to our deployed bases overseas today you'll see that that's some of the finest force protection you'll find anywhere in the world. With this concept we think we can even make it better.

Q: What about the intelligence function? That was one of the gaps cited in Khobar Towers, that you didn't have, your security forces didn't have an intelligence function helping with the antiterrorists.

Ryan: Right. That is embedded now in our force protection capabilities as we bring them forward in this concept. In fact we do it today.

Peters: The units that we assign to the AEF include non-flying units such as space units, intelligence units, and others, so the hope is you get a full package here that's coordinated in advance. That has had a chance to train together, and plugs into the existing infrastructure of intelligence and other things. But, we will have all those assets moving forward with the AEF.

Ryan: Some of that is also done already in the command and control structure in which the AEF fits. The forward deployed numbered air force or air component commander has those capabilities also embedded in an enduring way in the theater. Unless it's a pop-up theater where we're not currently engaged.

Q: Could you talk a little bit about how you're going to organize the ten packages? Are they going to be two of the ten out of the assets in Europe, a couple in the Pacific? How are you going to organize the assets for the ten packages?

Ryan: We will organize them in ways that we balance capabilities, and we will go across MAJCOMs to do that. That is that Elmendorf could be supplying pieces of an AEF that was organized out of Langley. So we will go across MAJCOMs as we do today, in fact. In the eight AEFs that we've stood up previously, we have gone across MAJCOMs.

So packaging of this is one of the issues that we are working between now and next year when we actually stand this up. But there are no barriers right now to pulling forces from the Pacific or Europe barring a local contingency that they need to be involved in.

Q: So each AEF will have assets drawn from a number of bases...

Ryan: Right.

Q: But once they're assigned to their specific package, whatever one of the ten they are, they will stay with that...

Ryan: We think it will be fairly stable. We would like habitual relationships to occur during their run-up time and the time they're deployed. When they come back home, we reorganize and do our organize, train and equip in a vertical manner for the particular MDS, for the particular kind of aircraft to make sure it's up and ready to go. The integration function happens before they go on the deployment.

Q: You spoke of 29 bases, are you talking about bases at home and overseas? And are you going to have these support forces like five fighting units and all on a constant basis at these bases waiting for AEFs to go? How is that going to work?

Peters: We are talking about overseas bases as well as US, we believe. We also think that these units, the plused-up people will not necessarily be the ones who deploy. They will deploy along with others and they will backfill when other units are deployed.

Our current plan is to have the large team units located hopefully on the lead wings and the smaller team units can be located pretty much anywhere, and we'll pull them together during the training cycle. They don't need to be physically together for the whole year.

Q: So you won't have personnel waiting at these bases...

Peters: No.

Q: ...for possible deployment. Or for any AEF, right?

Peters: They will be waiting at one of the home bases, hopefully, and then will deploy with the AEF when they go.

Ryan: Unless we have to default to a major theater war, in which case then all bets are off.

Q: When you're talking about lead bases, are you talking about that's where the command and control will be?

Ryan: That's where the leadership for that particular bed down will come from.

Q: And there will be ten of those?

Ryan: We think ten now. We've said ten because ten is the number of AEFs we will have, but there will be subordinate others. This accounts for standing up four base structures out of two AEFs.

Q: Do you already have in mind which bases?

Ryan: We have some in mind. Some are very logical, large power projection bases where you'll be drawing forces. Those are pretty obvious.

We're still working our way through just how we would distribute this manpower on those bases, but we know conceptually we need to do it, and we would like to do it so they have the command element and the forces under that command element at the base level come from the same unit. The critical elements.

Peters: Let me make one other point here. That is, this is not a net plus-up in Air Force forces. What we're doing is we're swinging people from those specialties that don't deploy very much to those specialties that deploy a lot. We're able to do that now because we are in fact taking down the number of active duty people we need in some of these non-deploying specialties through A-76 and other efforts. So there may be no net plus-up on any particular base. Every base has utilities, utilities are being outsourced, that frees up resources, those resources are going to swung around to various support forces, civil engineers, security forces, and others. So the lead base designation is primarily a command and control concept, but also makes sure that these large team groups are together on a base where they can in fact work some of the year together, rather than just in the spin-up periods.

Q: Will you be offering any kind of incentives to people to join those specialties where you need more folks?

Peters: The answer is yes. We do have selective reenlistment bonuses in some of those now. Also we have told people throughout the Air Force that there are not going to be any more involuntary actions and that we will retrain people in these specialties which are drawing down, so we anticipate that we will be retraining people into these areas.

Q: It seems like the two drivers behind this concept is one, to better meet some of these contingencies that have characterized the last decade or so; and secondly, to take the burden off the force. I wondered if both of you could comment on which one is the main driver? Is it relieving the burden, or is it tailoring the Air Force to better meet the needs of the nation?

Ryan: Let me start with the premise. The premise is from our standpoint that we had to make a decision sometime. We finally got the message here that the kinds of activities that we're doing are not going to go away. We are not going to deploy and then come home rapidly. Often we'll deploy and stay for awhile. The CINCs need forces that are trained to the task that they require because we're having so many pop up contingencies as we have seen.

So we think it's at least an equal driver between the requirements to do this and the requirement to take care of our folks and give them a little more stability in their lives.

If you want a world class Air Force, you've got to be able to tell your people what you expect of them and have it be a reasonable task for their day-to-day lives, because we're going to ask a lot of unreasonable tasks out of them when a major theater war comes.

Peters: I'd answer your question slightly differently. I think there really are three issues here. The first was we are working the AEF concept to do traditional deployments to improve our relationships with our CINCs, to give them better command and control, better trained forces, and a better product. That has been ongoing for some time and we realized as we went into this and looked at this, this gave us a great opportunity, first, to use the Guard and Reserve much more intelligently. Our Guard and Reserve forces have been with us for a long time, they've

taken pop up assignments, they do that well. But it is clear we're demanding a great deal of them. We need to give them and their employers the relief that a fixed schedule will give them.

Once we started looking at this, we realized if we set up a known in advance schedule that that would greatly increase our ability to draw off the Guard and Reserve forces.

That begins the optempo piece.

We've been talking, I think, for some time, going back to the Chief's and my testimony in Congress about the fact that we were working people very hard at home. That is an unintended consequence of these deployments, and it's an unintended consequence of the fact that when we budget for base infrastructure we look at the bases where we are, not the bases where we think we might be in the future. So effectively, we're looking at drawing down all these fixed bases and it wasn't until recently that we realized that in reality we're keeping a lot of other bases alive as well and we've got to provide manning for that. So we were able to put this all in a piece. But certainly the driving force was we were able to show that the AEF was a viable concept and produced a much better product for the CINCs, and we built on that.

Q: I know you said this wasn't a BRAC action, but is this going to be, is BRAC going to be essential to make this work somewhere down the road?

Peters: No. Let me explain that.

This deals with operations. As I said in my opening remarks and as the Chief has said, we're going to take geographically separated units and make them work together as a fairly stable team. This is not hard to do because these units have airplanes and they can fly out to training sites. This is not hard to do from that standpoint. It is a little bit harder to do from command and control but we have the networks and things now, too. So this is really an operational construct.

Now if we had a BRAC, there are lots of other infrastructure things we do that might ultimately lower our costs of doing this and do all the other things which BRAC hopefully will do.

But BRAC is not necessary. This is not a pre-BRAC. This really has no relationship to BRAC.

It is basically doing much more, much smarter organization and training of our existing forces on our existing bases, using those extra assets that are being developed through the outsourcing and privatization.

Q: As part of the training cycle to this would there be more Red Flags, more training exercises to go with that?

Ryan: We're fleshing that out to see if there's a cost there, but there may be a slight cost. We need to reorient ourselves in our Red Flag and some of our other local exercises to align ourselves with this construct. We think that's smart. In fact we're going to align other things with this construct including our operational readiness inspections to allow us to, if they're going to go and they're getting ready to go, why don't we check them and make sure they're ready to go instead of checking them when they're off. There are savings, also, in doing it this way.

Q: The last part of this, is the information superiority AEF concept dead? Or is it somehow woven into this? At one point they were talking about doing an ISAEF as perhaps a way if you get enough information together early you wouldn't have to deploy an AEF. Is that issue?

Ryan: That's not embedded in this concept.

Q: Can you talk me through the high value assets? It's not quite clear to me how you keep all those and splice them across ten AEFs.

Ryan: That's going to be a difficult issue, and we set them aside, as you saw on the charts. We almost operate those. There are some of them that are critical to our inner-relationships in command and control in the theater. We would like to train up with the crews that would do that on a rotational basis. AWACS and Joint Stars are two that we would like to do that. We don't know whether we can yet because of the demand that is put on them for the worldwide deployment. There are other assets that don't necessarily have to be associated directly with the AEFs such as the U-2. As an example, if we could we would, but because the airframe itself is not, except for force protection, integrated into the operation, the information that comes from the U-2 is downloaded back to cars and back to the theater. So that's not an integral part of the AEF.

We are going to look at every one of our low density, high demand systems and see how we could fit them in.

E-3s. If we can't do it with airframe associated, but at least with crew associated.

Q: How about EA-6Bs?

Ryan: That's another question, and I'm going to be talking to my naval buds. But they are a high demand across the spectrum. Any time you have an operation going on you want to have EA-6Bs associated, just as we did in Bosnia and Southwest Asia. We would like to integrate those, too, but we haven't taken that step yet.

Q: You mentioned having AEFs that are specifically tailored to the particular mission. How do you do that and then not keep calling on the same AEF since.... The AEF designed for Bosnia, how do you have them come over to Bosnia then go back home for 15 months?

Ryan: I don't think that will be a problem. We've been doing it all along. What this does is give us a systematic way of doing it. We have used all manner of aircraft in Bosnia from all manner of locations. We've done the same thing in Southwest Asia. We spin up the units individually to be able to fit into the optempo. This would have us spinning up the organization in an integrated way. So we don't have a problem doing that. That's not an issue.

Q: If these are tailed to a specific CINC or theater and you only have two at a time, what if you've got the wrong ones on call?

Ryan: We will have across the board capability.

Peters: I think maybe you're misunderstanding the concept slightly here. Basically, as the unit comes up to its 90 day window where it will be deploying, you will be trained for whatever it is that it's going to do. If that's Southwest Asia and Bosnia, those pieces that are going to Bosnia will be trained for Bosnia; those pieces that are going to be going to Southwest Asia will be spun up again for Southwest Asia. Those who are staying at home may be spun up for either one of those or simply be spun up for counter-drug or African humanitarian, or whatever people think may be what's going to happen in the next quarter.

Q: So any AEF can handle any job...

Peters: Exactly.

Q: ...assets for this...

Ryan: And the train-up period that we have that is before their in the bubble to either forward deploy or be on call, we will take care of those issues of theater specific tasks, ROE, etc. So when they hit the ground they're ready to go.

Q: Is there any connection between this and, I know next month the Air Force has an expeditionary force experiment going on. Can you tie those two together? Will some of this be tested in this exercise?

Ryan: Yes. We are going to look at some concepts in our EFX that's coming up the beginning of next month. Actually we're beginning it right now. It looks at some of our command and control capabilities, rapid targeting. We're looking at on the fly planning.

We're looking at moving information around. We're looking at reach back capabilities. It all applies in some way to this or the command structure above the EAF. But it is our way of looking at how to do this with a lighter, leaner force and with better command and control.

Peters: This basically builds on a lot of work that's been ongoing on how to do an AEF, and which we have planned and continue to plan. This is not at this point the end all and the be all.

There's lots of additional work that can easily be done.

Q: To use an upcoming example, a potential upcoming example. If NATO moved ahead with plans to have some small scale bombing in Kosovo, would you have to spin up an AEF for that, or would you just use some existing planes over at Aviano?

Ryan: It would depend on how big it was.

Q: Bosnia style selective strikes.

Ryan: Again, when you say selective, how big are you talking about? Are we talking about plinking one tank, or are we talking about taking down the command and control system? I can't answer that. But if the forces are not available in theater, this would help to bring forces forward very rapidly.

Q: Can you put this into an example, an Iraq scenario? In January/February you deployed an AEF to Bahrain. Give us a sense of some of the capabilities that brought and the way that was organized versus maybe a year or two from now under your new construct how that AEF would be deployed over to Bahrain.

Ryan: Actually our deployment to Sheik Isa and the replenishment of that was kind of a mini-AEF trial for us, and it worked pretty darn well. We went forward with a substantial capability there including our B-1s, bedded them down very rapidly, and we were ready to go very quickly.

We brought forward what we would call the core base and had that command element work, the base force protection response and operational tasking. So that was an example, a very good example, of how we will do this across the Air Force.

Q: In the development of this over the past year or more I'm sure you must have solicited some feedback from the field, particularly the pilot community. What indications have they given to you about how this will affect their decision to stay in or get out?

Ryan: We know that our pilots, and all of our forces for that matter, are asking that on a day-to-day basis we give them some stability to their lives so that they're not rapidly moved. This gives that stability.

We know that there is great unit cohesion that occurs and great morale that comes out of expeditionary aerospace forces that go together forward to do these kinds of jobs. Unit cohesion and mission focus is just as important to our folks as the stability issue. So we think it addresses lots of issues.

Q: Pilots had been deploying to Southwest Asia for 45 days, and you're talking about 90 days now. Is the 45 day deployment going to remain and you're going to shift people over, or will they go for 90 days?

Ryan: The force, the Total Force, will be available for the 90 day period.

Whether we roll forces over within that period, say a 45 day timeframe, we're looking at. That will depend, if we're in situations like we are in today where the training is not of the standard that keeps the force up to the fine, the keen edge that we want, we will rotate within the AEF which is not a problem, because we've done that before. To put ones back on call, in training, and others forward for the other 45 day period.

Peters: That's a fairly key point from the Guard and Reserve standpoint as well. We don't intend at this point to ask our traditional Guardsmen and Reservists, those who have jobs outside the Air Force to stay for a full 90 days. We will do what we've done already, which is have "rainbow" forces, that is forces from multiple Guard and Reserve units, who have pilots come in and rotate in whatever their duty cycle is—two weeks or a month or whatever they can give us, along with some of our full time Guard and Reserve people in those units to provide stability.

So what we're providing here is not necessarily longer deployments for Guard and Reserve, it is simply a 90 day window in which they can expect to be called so they can get their employers on notice and get their affairs together so they can come and join us.

Q: I'm not sure on the scheduling of this. You said you want to be fully operational by January 1, 2000. What's kind of the transition period? When do you start your first AEF?

Ryan: Between now and December we will flesh out the concept in a detail that will give us some of the answers to those questions. Because we have to go right on down to the unit level to do this, and we haven't done that kind of work yet, so we'll know by about December what that schedule will look like.

We need to do a transition from the scheduling kind of activity we're doing today and give enough notice, and that's about a year notice, to our Guard and Reserve forces, so they'll be ready to enter the first AEF. So December's kind of a critical time for us.

Ryan: Most of our ranges and exercises are already booked in Fiscal '99.

We know kind of where things are going to happen and who's going to be doing what. So the real question we have is at what point can we start moving into the new organization? Our guess is it will be at the end of fiscal '99 at the earliest.

Q: How is the command of this going to work? Is there going to be an AEF commander appointed for each one? How long does he hold it? Who is he when the AEF is not out there?

Ryan: We are looking at conceptually how we will spin the AEF up. Given that one AEF may have a Southwest Asia focus that would almost entirely take that AEF's capabilities as we discussed before, we would probably have the lead base commander as the integrating function for that particular AEF. We're also looking at using our numbered air forces stateside to be able to give the command and control above wing level for the buildup period for these AEFs. Say we took them to Red Flag, bedded them down, put them in tents, flew them at Red Flag, got them ROE, all of the different pieces that you put together to integrate the force put it together.

We'd have a numbered air force over the top of them helping them get through that particular piece.

For others, say we have a rotation into Ramstein of 130s that we have going right now. We would have the unit commander who was going to lead that and be with it the whole time work up those particular smaller elements under his command and we would help them at a numbered air force level set up the training and scheduling for it.

So each AEF will have some bit pieces in it that may be going different directions. That's how we plan to do it.

Q: This looks a little bit like carrier battle group structure. Is that an overdrawn analogy? Could you pick up any tips or reject any advice from your Navy counterparts?

Ryan: I will take all the advice that we can get from any faction that will help produce better forces, better trained forces, and take care of our folks.

It's probably a stretch on the analogy in that the carrier battle groups go into a bathtub when they come home and then are down for a certain long period of time before they come back up.

We will not be doing that, so that's not analogous.

What is analogous is that when the carrier battle group leaves Norfolk, they do not strip Norfolk of its support capabilities to fill the ship. Norfolk continues to perk along and the families and the forces that remain behind to train are fully supported. We have not been doing that, and the Navy's got that figured out. They are an expeditionary force just as the Marines are, and we take that concept, embrace it fully, and want to flesh out our bases so we don't do that to them.

But I don't think, it's not analogous to a carrier battle group directly, I don't think.

Q: Generally you said this is not super bases, but you've got ten lead bases you talked about. Wouldn't this lend itself in the future to perhaps going in that direction?

Peters: I think the answer is we probably don't need to. What we're doing here I think is sizing the force for the contingencies we've had that we've known about for the last five or six years which we expect to be the level of operations for the future. Once we have done this shift, and again, I emphasize it as a shift from non-deploying specialties to deploying specialties.

Ultimately we'll have no net increase. It may increase for awhile as we create the structure, but no net increase. Once we do it, we've done it. From there on what a BRAC would do is allow us to consolidate squadrons, to build bigger squadrons, to do more efficient infrastructure things which will reduce the cost of doing this.

Ryan: But we would still do this the same way.

Q: If you can once again talk about, you said this concept hasn't passed the major theater war litmus test yet, or it hasn't been applied to the Op plan.

Ryan: We think it has some advantages for FDOs in the front end of our time-phased force deployment. We haven't worked our way through how we would integrate it into the CINCs' plan. No matter, in doing it, we're doing it today in kind of a more ad hoc basis than an organized basis that we presented here. We would still have the same challenges that we have today. But we think it may have some real applicability.