

DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
PRESENTATION TO THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON PERSONNEL
ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
UNITED STATES SENATE

SUBJECT: Air Force Personnel Overview

STATEMENT OF: LIEUTENANT GENERAL ROGER A. BRADY
DEPUTY CHIEF OF STAFF, MANPOWER & PERSONNEL
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INTRODUCTION

We are America's Airmen. Our mission is to deliver sovereign options for the defense of the United States of America and its global interests—we fly and we fight—in air, space and cyberspace. For the past 15 years, our Air Force team has proven its mettle and skill every day. Since the days of DESERT STORM, we have been globally and continuously engaged in combat. We will continue to show the same ingenuity, courage and resolve and achieve success in our three most important challenges: winning the Global War on Terror (GWOT); developing and caring for our Airmen; and maintaining, modernizing and recapitalizing our aircraft and equipment.

To ensure we have the right sized and shaped force to face the challenges of the new century, the Air Force is transforming itself to meet the threats of the future security environment by recapitalizing our force to develop capabilities across a range of sovereign options for our nation's leaders. However, we must judiciously balance our transformation with the ongoing global demands of the GWOT; hence, transforming the Air Force of the 21st Century will require reductions in our legacy force structures; bold, new thinking to derive process efficiencies and development of innovative organization structures to facilitate our recapitalization efforts.

Our people have been the key to our success. We will continue to look for ways to maintain and improve their training, their personal and professional development and their quality of life, so they may continue to meet the commitments of today while preparing for the challenges of tomorrow.

Force Shaping

For the past 18 months, the Air Force has reduced our active duty end strength to Congressionally authorized levels and taken action to relieve some of our most stressed career fields. The 2004-2005 Force Shaping Program allowed officers and enlisted personnel to separate from active duty service earlier than they would otherwise have been eligible. In addition to voluntary force shaping measures, the Air Force significantly reduced enlisted accessions in 2005 to help meet our Congressional mandate.

While we met our 2005 end strength requirement, we began 2006 with a force imbalance: a shortage of enlisted personnel and an excess of officer personnel, principally among those officers commissioned from 2000 to 2004. This imbalance created several unacceptable operational and budgetary impacts. Consequently, we took several actions to ensure our force is correctly sized and shaped to meet future challenges and to reduce unprogrammed military pay costs. First, we increased our enlisted accession target for 2006 to address the enlisted imbalance. Second, we continued to encourage qualified officers, especially those commissioned in 2000 and later, to consider voluntary options to accept service in the Air National Guard, Air Force Reserve, civil service, or as an inter-service transfer to the Army.

Additionally, we are institutionalizing the force shaping authority granted in the 2005 National Defense Authorization Act to restructure our junior officer force. Only after exhausting all efforts to reduce officer end strength by voluntary means, we will convene a Force Shaping Board in 2006 to consider the performance and potential of all eligible officers commissioned in 2002 and 2003. This board will be held annually

thereafter, as required, to properly shape and manage the officer corps to meet the emerging needs of the Air Force. Essentially, the Force Shaping Board will select officers for continued service in our Air Force. Current projections indicate that we need about 7,800 of these eligible officers (2002 and 2003 year groups) to continue on active duty. Approximately 1,900 officers will be subject to the force reduction. Exercising this authority is difficult, but our guiding principle is simple—we must proactively manage our force to ensure the Air Force is properly sized, shaped and organized to meet the global challenges of today and tomorrow. To this end, we will continue to look at legislation necessary to properly shape our total force of active duty, civilian employees, Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve Airmen.

Balancing the Total Force

In addition to maintaining and shaping the active duty force, we must continue to focus on the balance of forces and specialties between Regular, Air National Guard and Reserve components, as well as our civilian employees and contractor partners—the Total Force. We are diligently examining the capabilities we need to provide to the warfighter and to operate and train at home. We continue to realign manpower to our most stressed areas and are watchful for any new areas that show signs of strain.

As we look to the future in implementing Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) and Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) decisions, we must ensure a seamless transition to new structures and missions while preserving the unique capabilities resident in our Regular Air Force, Air National Guard and Reserve communities. Examining functions for Competitive Sourcing opportunities or conversion to civilian performance will

continue to be one of our many tools for striking the correct balance of missions across the Total Force.

Force Development

The Air Force's Force Development construct is a Total Force initiative that develops officers, enlisted members, and civilian employees from the Regular Air Force, the Air National Guard and the Air Force Reserve. The fundamental purpose of force development is to produce leaders at all levels with the right capabilities to meet the Air Force's operational needs by leveraging deliberate training, education and experience opportunities.

To succeed internationally, as an Aerospace Expeditionary Force, and in the Global War on Terrorism, it is essential to breakdown the barriers of culture and language and set new patterns of thinking. This necessitates understanding and successfully using knowledge of language and culture to enhance mission success. Our goal is to rigorously educate our force, as well as, provide additional learning opportunities that will enable Airmen to become internationally savvy. In our Continuums of Learning and Education, additional emphasis is being placed on language and culture. Officers at the AF Academy and ROTC will receive a foundation in a foreign language. As our officer and NCO Corps progress through their career they will receive additional education to develop cultural understanding and awareness as a foundation for building relationships. For example, at our intermediate level education we are instituting courses to develop regional cultural awareness and study of a corresponding language such as Spanish, French, Arabic, or Chinese. At our senior level education we will continue that depth of knowledge emphasizing cross-cultural

communication and negotiation skills as a foundation for planning and executing military operations.

In addition, today's dynamic security environment and expeditionary nature of air and space operations require a cadre of Air Force professionals with a deeper international insight, foreign language proficiency, and cultural understanding. The International Affairs Specialist Program is a Force Development initiative that offers Airmen the opportunity to fully develop these key military competencies. Officers will receive more in-depth formal training and education with an appropriate follow-on assignment. Many officers will do this as a well-managed, single-career broadening opportunity to gain international political-military affairs experience. But, for some this will be a more demanding developmental opportunity creating a true regional expert possessing professional language skills. These officers will be carefully managed to remain viable and competitive. To ensure all these efforts are synchronized in our development of the force, I established a Foreign Language and Culture office under the Air Force Senior Language Authority within the Directorate of Manpower and Personnel.

To operationalize Force Development, the Air Force Personnel Center created a division dedicated to supporting corporate and career field development team needs. Development teams have now been incorporated into the officer assignment process and they now guide assignment of all officer career fields. Additionally, development teams recommend officers for special selection boards and developmental education opportunities.

The Air Force is also deliberately developing our enlisted Airmen through a combined series of educational and training opportunities. We are exploring new and

exciting avenues to expand our process beyond the current system in place today. Each tier of the enlisted force will see changes to enlisted development. Airmen (E-1 to E-4) will be introduced to the enlisted development plan, increasing their knowledge and solidifying future tactical leadership roles. The noncommissioned officer (NCO) tier will be encouraged and identified to explore career-broadening experiences and continuing with developmental education. Our Senior NCO tier will see the most dramatic changes as we explore the use of development teams in conjunction with assignment teams to give career vectoring and strategic level assignments. Institutionalizing the practice of development as a part of enlisted Air Force culture is paramount for supervisors, commanders and senior leaders.

On the civilian side, the Air Force is making significant progress in civilian force development as we align policy, processes and systems to deliberately develop and manage our civilian workforce. We have identified and mapped over 97% of all Air Force civilian positions to career fields and have 15 Career Field Management Teams in place with three additional management teams forming this year. Additionally, we manage various civilian developmental opportunities and programs, with our career-broadening program providing several centrally funded positions, specifically tailored to provide career-broadening opportunities and professionally enriching experiences.

Recruiting/Retention

After intentionally reducing total accessions in 2005, the Air Force is working to get the right mix of officer and enlisted Airmen as we move to a leaner, more lethal and more agile force. We will align the respective ranks to get the right person, in the right

job, at the right time to meet the Air Force mission requirements in support of the GWOT, the Joint Force and the Air Force's expeditionary posture.

A key element for success is our ability to continue to offer bonuses and incentives where we have traditionally experienced shortfalls. Congressional support for these programs, along with increases in pay and benefits and quality-of-life initiatives, has greatly helped us retain the skilled Airmen we need to defend our Nation.

Personnel Services Delivery

To achieve the Secretary of Defense's objective to shift resources "from bureaucracy to battlefield," we are overhauling Air Force personnel services. Our Personnel Services Delivery initiative dramatically modernizes the processes, organizations and technologies through which the Air Force supports our Airmen and their commanders.

Our goal is to deliver higher-quality personnel services with greater access, speed, accuracy, reliability and efficiency. The Air Force has been able to program the resulting manpower savings to other compelling needs over the next six years. This initiative enhances our ability to acquire, train, educate, deliver, employ and empower Airmen with the needed skills, knowledge and experience to accomplish Air Force missions.

National Security Personnel System (NSPS)

Our civilian workforce will undergo a significant transformation with implementation of the DoD NSPS. NSPS is a simplified and more flexible civilian personnel management system that will improve the way we hire, assign, compensate and reward our civilian employees. This modern and agile management system will be

responsive to the national security environment, preserve employee protections and benefits, and maintain the core values of the civil service.

NSPS design and development has been a broad-based, participative process to include employees, supervisors and managers, unions, employee advocacy groups and various public interest groups. We plan to implement these human resource and performance management provisions in three phases called “spirals.” NSPS is the most comprehensive new federal personnel management system in more than 50 years, and it’s a key component in the DoD’s achievement of a performance-based, results-oriented Total Force.

Caring for Airmen

Combat capability begins and ends with healthy, motivated, trained and equipped Airmen. We must remain committed to providing our entire Air Force team with world class programs, facilities and morale-enhancing activities. Our “Fit to Fight” program ensures Airmen remain ready to execute our expeditionary mission at a moment’s notice, and our food service operations further complement an Air Force healthy lifestyle.

Through various investment strategies in both dormitories and military family housing, we are providing superior living spaces for our single Airmen and quality, affordable homes for our Airmen who support families. Our focus on providing quality childcare facilities and programs, on and off installations, enables our people to stay focused on the mission, confident that their children are receiving affordable, quality care. The Air Force is a family, and our clubs and recreation programs foster and strengthen those community bonds, promoting high morale and an esprit de corps vital to all our endeavors.

Additionally, we are equally committed to ensuring that all Airmen in every mission area operate with infrastructure that is modern, safe and efficient, no matter what the mission entails—from Depot Recapitalization to the bed down of new weapon systems. Moreover, we must ensure Airmen worldwide have the world class training, tools and developmental opportunities that best posture them to perform with excellence. We also continually strive to provide opportunities and support services that further enable them to serve their Nation in a way that leaves them personally fulfilled, contributes to family health, and provides America with a more stable, retained and capable fighting force.

CONCLUSION

As we continue to develop and shape the force to meet the demands of the Air Expeditionary Force, we continue to seek more efficient service delivery methods, opportunities to educate our future leaders, and make the extra efforts required to recruit and retain the incredible men and women who will take on the challenge of defending our nation well into the 21st century. While doing so, we will remain vigilant in our adherence to our core values of Service, Integrity, and Excellence which make ours the greatest Air and Space Force in the world.