

A high-angle aerial photograph showing an HC-130 Hercules aircraft in the foreground, partially obscured by a large, cylindrical fuel probe extending from the left. In the background, an HH-60 helicopter is visible, positioned to receive fuel. The terrain below is a vast, flat, brownish landscape with a winding river, set against a backdrop of rugged, snow-capped mountains under a clear blue sky.

Fresh Looks at **THE TOTAL**

The Active Duty, Guard, and Reserve are working to overcome last year's hostility.

An Alaska Air National Guard HC-130 and an HH-60 helicopter rendezvous for aerial refueling.



FORCE

By Amy McCullough, News Editor

Air Force leaders from all three components are busy working behind the scenes to map out a new approach to the Total Force.

It's a daunting challenge, they said at the Air Force Association's Air & Space Conference in September. It comes at a time of an uncertain budget environment, the likelihood of continued budget sequestration, the end of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the need to recapitalize or modernize an aging, war-worn fleet.

Today, however, is different from early 2012—when the then-Air Force leadership tried to tackle Total Force issues as part of the Fiscal 2013 budget process. Back then, the leadership presented the plan to retire 286 aircraft, more than half of them in the Air National Guard. The leadership also proposed cutting 9,900 personnel across the Total Force, with the heaviest reductions also falling on the Guard.

At the time, many in the reserve components said these proposals blindsided them; they felt they deserved to have a voice in the discussion. Congress also was not happy, resisting these moves and ultimately authorizing the Air Force to retire far fewer airplanes and reduce less than half the personnel positions, with most of the personnel cuts coming from the Active Duty component.

The Air Force still faces the same difficult decisions, and leaders say they can still feel the bruises left from the political backlash following that overhaul attempt. What's different now is that players across the three components are at the table, and there's good communication between the Air Force and National Guard Bureau.

In fact, NGB Chief Army Gen. Frank J. Grass said at the conference he couldn't ask for a better partnership than the one he has with Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Mark A. Welsh III.

"General Welsh and I are committed to being full partners and to [doing] the best we [can] to try to bring together the Air Guard and the regular Air Force," said Grass during a roundtable discussion with reporters at the National Harbor, Md., conference venue.



An F-22 on the runway at Wake Island. Air National Guard and Active Duty members teamed up to perform a “rapid Raptor” deployment in June to the Pacific island.



SrA. Matthew Hunter and TSgt. Jonnedi Paule, aerial porters, shove a shipping container into a C-130 at FOB Salerno, Afghanistan.

USAF photo

Air National Guard Director Lt. Gen. Stanley E. Clarke III echoed that sentiment, though he alluded to some lingering differences as well.

“I have a great relationship with the regular Air Force and the Air Force Reserve,” said Clarke. “Now, I have a great relationship with my wife also, but that doesn’t stop us from having heated discussions ... about things.”

Mitigate Damage

What’s more important, added Clarke, is that the dialogue remains open, the discussions continue to take place, and then everyone shakes hands afterward and continues on with the mission.

As of mid-September, Grass said he had testified alongside Welsh five times. The two leaders “see each other several times a week,” and Welsh has included a couple of the adjutants general in all budget-related senior leadership deliberations, including discussions on whether to divest entire fleets of aircraft—a move that will no doubt have a significant impact on the Air Guard.

During the conference, Welsh and other senior Air Force leaders said single-mission aircraft, such as the A-10 Warthog, B-1B Lancer, and MC-12W Liberty, are the most vulnerable to vertical cuts. Many of the A-10s and MC-12s are Air Guard-operated.

Welsh knows there are “certain systems we can’t maintain,” said Grass. “Our position is that if he has to divest, at least mitigate that in the States, which he has done in every case. I couldn’t be more positive.”

Clarke said vertical cuts actually make “a lot of sense” from a “business case analysis.” Like Grass, he said he would be on board with the decision to divest certain fleets as long as the Air Force softened the blow “by moving some airplanes around or doing something that supports not closing any of our bases.”



Maintainers from the 8th Fighter Wing ready F-16s on the line at Kunsan AB, South Korea. Below: Air National Guardsmen SSgt. Brian Fielhauer (left) and SrA. Otto Kelly service the engine of a KC-135 at Selfridge ANGB, Mich.

That’s the one way to get everyone to support any Total Force approach, he said.

Grass said Welsh also has personally visited many of the units that may be affected by upcoming force structure changes and talked to them about what that could mean for them. “So I’m totally comfortable,” said Grass, when asked if the National Guard Bureau supports the possibility of vertical cuts.

“In fact, [in September] I hand-delivered him a letter that was drafted by two adjutants general who work force structure problems. ... It basically said, ‘Thanks for your great partnership and, yes, we are concerned about modernization. We’re concerned about recapitalization, but we want to look like whatever the Air Force looks like, so you let us know where you want us,’” he added.

At least for now, Grass said he is confident the Air Guard will be able to maintain a flying mission in every state. However, that doesn’t necessarily mean it will be a manned mission.

He highlighted a recent “unique” situation when the California Air National Guard’s 163rd Reconnaissance Wing at March Air Reserve Base deployed an MQ-1 Predator in support of firefighters battling the Rim Fire near Yosemite National Park in the central part of the state.

The Predator began its mission on Aug. 28, taking off from Victorville, north of San Bernardino. Grass said the MQ-1 was able to hover over the fire for 23 straight hours, searching for hot spots. That allowed the US Forest Service to direct teams or aircraft to the fire more quickly.

“That RPA [mission] flown by the California Air National Guard was a huge success,” noted Grass, who said the National Guard Bureau is now looking at how to “take that capability [to] the homeland.”

The Air Guard also is fighting for a piece of the cyber mission. Clarke said the Air Force must take an “enthusiastic, yet measured, approach” to growing its cyber force. He said



that cyber requirements for combatant commanders are still being “developed and solidified.”

“However, I’m confident that as this weapon system matures, the Air National Guard will be a significant contributor and partner,” said Clarke.

Many Air Guardsmen already possess the high-demand skills that the Air Force and industry seek. Bringing those Air Force Specialty Codes into the Guard would allow USAF to capitalize on that talent, while partnering with industry—rather than competing—as it builds its cyber force.

The Air Force Reserve is contemplating similar questions as it tries to shape its force for the future fight, said Lt. Gen. James Jackson, Air Force Reserve chief, during his conference speech.

“There are a lot of mission areas that the Air Force Reserve and Air National Guard are involved in, but [are they] the right amount and [are they] the right mission areas for us to go ahead and make the best choices for the nation?” he asked.

Taking a Breather

During Welsh's speech, the Chief acknowledged the difficulty of integrating and balancing the Total Force, saying there are still many questions to answer. For example, how much can the Air Force push into the reserve components without affecting operational capability or responsiveness? What kind of force can the Air Force "reasonably afford" in five, 10, 15, and even 20 years? How should that force be organized? And how can the Air Force leadership keep a force engaged and challenged when aircraft are grounded due to sequestration?

Those are just some of the questions leadership will hash out at the next Corona meeting, the periodic gathering of Air Force four-star generals and senior leaders, said Welsh.

"There's nothing easy about what we are trying to do here, but I think the idea of moving forward in a way that's constructive is really going to be helpful for us," he said. "Everybody's working this really hard."

After the Air Force presented its initial Fiscal 2013 force structure proposal and Congress rejected it, lawmakers essentially halted any major movements in the Total Force and urged the Air Force instead to "take a couple-year breather and let this settle," said Acting Air Force Secretary Eric Fanning.

Now, two reports—slated for release in the coming months—will move the debate back into the spotlight. The Air Force's own Total Force Task Force, or TF2, is expected to deliver its findings by the end of November. A second set of recommendations, expected in February, will come from the congressionally mandated National Commission on the Structure of the Air Force.

Established for similar purposes, the internal task force and the external commission are operating independently, though they do share some information. They also have the same goal: to conduct an open, transparent debate that will determine "solutions that make sense for the states and make sense for the nation," said Welsh.

Fanning said neither TF2 nor the national commission are structured in a way that would allow them to significantly influence Fiscal 2015 budget planning decisions. The national commission won't even release its findings until the President's Fiscal 2015 budget request is submitted to Congress. However, because TF2 is expected to release its report by the end of this month, it will have some effect internally, said Fanning.

Still, the fiscal environment remains highly uncertain. The Budget Control Act that brought on sequestration is law—though just about everyone agrees it's a bad idea and lawmakers on both sides of the aisle are trying to repeal it. That means the Air Force must put together two separate budgets: one that builds off the President's Fiscal 2014 request and another budget at lower spending levels that assumes sequestration will continue for at least another year. Both will affect whatever Total Force decisions are made.

The Air Force, said Fanning, has a two-fold objective. First, it doesn't want to alter the overall balance too much as its end strength draws down. Second, leaders want to take the analysis from TF2 and ensure whatever rebalance is proposed crosses all three components while "still taking us in the direction of what we want to do" in Fiscal 2016 and 2017, said Fanning. Ultimately, the Air Force needs to make sure it's not "taking any steps in '15 that will ... unwind in the '16 budget," he said.

Air Force Reserve chief Jackson said budget issues are the biggest challenge for the Reserve today. All three components, he said, are striving to remain "tier one-ready," even though they continue to battle a readiness decline brought on by sequestration.

"Right now, we're in the hole. We're trying to dig our way out of it and I don't see a lot of money to allow us to do that," said Jackson.

Adding more associate units into the Air Force's force structure may be one way to bolster the Total Force and improve readiness, said Lt. Gen. Stephen L. Hoog, assistant vice chief of staff and Air Staff director, during a Total Force panel discussion with Clarke and Jackson.

The problem is that the lack of funding threatens the success of such partnerships.

"If you are a [Total Force integration] unit [and] you don't know if you have the man-days for the following tiers to step up, it changes the overall dynamics," said Hoog.

Right: Lt. Gen. James Jackson, chief of the Air Force Reserve, speaks at the Air Force Association's Air & Space Conference in September. Far right: Lt. Gen. Stanley Clarke, director of the Air National Guard, is a Total Force airman who has served on Active Duty, in the Reserve, and in the Air National Guard.

Airman Development—a Top

Training and developing airmen to be the best professionals must continue as a top Air Force priority despite today's austere economic environment, senior leaders stressed at the Air Force Association's Air & Space Conference in September.

Gen. Edward A. Rice Jr., commander of Air Education and Training Command, said the looming contraction of the force requires USAF to consider switching from specialized pilot training back to a generalized training program.

Because the Air Force is shrinking, AETC must "look at future requirements and make adjustments to how we train," said Rice. The generalized training course—similar to one used in the 1990s—would channel all pilots through the same broad courses, making more economical use of resources and pipelines. Under today's specialized training curriculum, after basic pilot training, pilots go through a customized advanced training course specific to the operational aircraft they have been selected to fly.

Air Combat Command also plans a paradigm shift in its training, said its commander, Gen. G. Michael Hostage III.

America's adversaries have spent "buckets of money" trying to disable the technology "that makes us truly unique," Hostage said at the conference. During fiscally constrained times, ACC is "looking at every possible innovative way to accomplish what we need to accomplish."

Not All Bells and Whistles

That includes training for contested environments. Hostage said pilots need to get used to regularly flying with disrupted technology, so they will be ready for the future fight.

Adversaries believe "that if they can [shutter our technology], we'll turn around and go home because we don't know how to fly without it," he said. Although Hostage said that will never happen, he acknowledged the skill set has atrophied after more than a decade of fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan.

"The God's honest truth is [that for] the youngsters today, the comms always work. The data link's always up. The radar, you can see forever. And the GPS is like the lights—they're always on," said Hostage. "I want my adversary to know that all that



USAF photo by Andy Morfelaya



US ANG photo by MSgt. Marvin R. Preston

Priority

By June L. Kim

magic he spent all that money for is not going to stop us. It's going to upset us. It's going to piss us off, but we're still coming."

Airmen need to get to a point where they can fly instinctively without such technology to aid them, said Hostage. The challenge lies in making sure those opportunities exist despite budget uncertainties.

Gen. Janet C. Wolfenbarger, head of Air Force Materiel Command, said sequestration, and the resulting furloughs, delivered an especially harsh blow to AFMC.

"This was ugly for my command," said Wolfenbarger on Sept. 18. AFMC comprises 77 percent civilians and it "hit us hard," she said. "I do believe that we have broken faith with that portion of our team."

Some good, however, did come out of it: Airmen were forced to innovate. When Air Combat Command had to shut down some of its formal training units, airmen began "creating local training procedures [and] policies, . . . trying to overcome some of those formal training venues," said ACC Command CMSgt. Richard A. Parsons during a forum Sept. 16.

At the conference, Air Force senior leaders repeatedly praised airmen for their innovation, describing it as a critical part of helping USAF discover the "new normal."

Keeping Airmen in the Force

Figuring out how to retain airmen when they return home from Afghanistan also will be key, said CMSAF James A. Cody. The new normal needs to be "dramatically different," he said at a media event Sept. 18. As the US military draws down after 12 years of war, USAF leaders worry that airmen will lose the sense of adventure they found in the war zone.

Though the demand for airpower will be significantly reduced compared to wartime demands, the collected Air Force leadership assured conference goers there remains a great need for what airmen bring to the fight. USAF needs them trained and ready, but "bored airmen will go somewhere else," warned Cody.

During his Sept. 17 conference address, Gen. Mark A. Welsh III, USAF Chief of Staff, stated that this is already a concern, and the sequester has the potential to create a retention problem

for the Air Force. A maintenance airman at one base—idled by sequester—told Welsh his maintenance job was boring.

"They're sitting around looking at airplanes on a ramp," Welsh said. Having long since accomplished all the needed maintenance on his aircraft, "he's bored as a two-striper. That's a little scary."

Airmen will "walk" if they aren't challenged and allowed to be fully capable in their mission, Welsh said, and this will be a problem reaching far beyond maintainers. "Expect the airlines to start hiring at the end of this year. Our rated force has options."

Cody also announced at the conference that he is bringing back "Roll Call" for the enlisted corps. The once weekly bulletin launched by CMSAF Rodney J. McKinley in 2006 endeavored to keep airmen informed on current issues and to promote communication between superiors and subordinates.

Those efforts, however, soon "petered out," said Cody, who hopes that restarting the publication and its attendant meetings will reinvigorate the corps.

The first Roll Call was released Sept. 18. This time, Roll Call will be monthly, but it will be up to squadron or flight leaders to determine whether airmen will gather daily or weekly to discuss issues it raises.

Cody emphasized the importance of face-to-face communication and noted the service loses that personal touch by communicating more and more through social media.

"I have Facebook . . . and Twitter, [but] I don't consider that my mechanism of communicating with you," he told airmen.

The enlisted corps will have another significant change coming its way in the form of developmental special duties. Before, airmen volunteered for these duties. Cody told conference attendees the Air Force wants to reform its process by having supervisors and commanders nominate the airmen before placing them into special duty assignments.

"There are lots of questions [and concerns] because they used to be able to volunteer," he said during the media event. Cody said he believes the change will drive communication and good behavior. "We are investing in these folks because we want them to stay in and help lead the force."



A C-17 ascends over JB Lewis-McChord, Wash., as Mount Rainier towers in the distance.

That leaves the Air Force with three options. The first—full TFI mobilization—clearly is preferable. Plan Two is to have volunteers step up for certain missions. The third option is an Active Duty-only plan.

“Anytime you put a unit into a position where all three of those need to be contemplated, it just fundamentally changes the nature of this conversation,” said Hoog. “That’s part of the sand in the gears, if you will, about the TFI units out there.”

It’s also just one more issue on an institutional level that the Air Force must take under consideration.

A Starting Point

Jackson compared the Total Force debate to balancing the Reserve triad of civilian employment, military employment, and family.

“You can’t have them all happy at once, so I won’t stand ... here and tell you everyone will be totally happy with everything the Total Force Task Force has recommended, but it’s a starting point,” said Jackson. “It’s a good starting point with some good analysis that we can talk about.”

The Air Force gave the Total Force Task Force—which includes a major general from each of the three components—a daunting mission and a short period of time to complete its work. As such, task force members were only able to touch on 50 percent of the Total Force mission areas and roughly 55 percent to 60 percent of Air Force Specialty Codes, said Daniel B. Ginsberg, assistant secretary of the Air Force for manpower and reserve affairs.

“There is still another 50 percent of the total Air Force that probably should be looked at to see if there are opportunities here to find a place that can be more efficient,” he stated. “I think it worked out pretty well given the timeline.”

Welsh agreed. He said the Air Force’s emphasis on the Total Force would not go away when TF2 wraps up its work this fall. Although the task force itself might cease to exist, its lessons and the work will continue.

“We want to integrate [Total Force] into the whole Air Staff,” said Welsh. The idea is that officers in all three components will be “groomed over time, almost like a joint designator.”

Eventually an airman’s Total Force knowledge will play a significant role in certain career progressions, though Welsh acknowledged this wouldn’t happen overnight.

ANG Director Clarke’s career path could be an example of how this new Total Force mindset might play out. Throughout the three decades he’s been in uniform, Clarke has served on Active Duty, in the Air Force Reserve, and in the Air National Guard. He’s also been a wing commander in peacetime and during conflict.

Not once, said Clarke, did he ever question what authority he was operating under. “I was an airman. Period,” he said.

Welsh said it’s important for airmen to understand what that really means. More importantly, each of the three components needs to understand how it fits into the larger Air Force puzzle.

The TF2 review has caused some to ask whether the Air Force should consider merging the two reserve components. It’s an issue that rears its head every few years and is always shot down. This time is not likely to be different.

Jackson said he was asked that very question while testifying before the national commission. His answer was an unequivocal no.

“We need to look for efficiencies and better integration between the three components, not assimilation,” said Jackson. “In order to do that, you’re going to [lose] combat capability for the nation for a long time and you may never get it back. So three components, in my mind, is still the best way to do business.”

Despite the challenges, Welsh said he is not concerned about the future of the Air Force. In fact, he’s looking forward to it.

“It’s a great time to lead in our Air Force at whatever level you’re at. We’ve got some things we’ve got to figure out. We’ll figure it out. Have you talked to these guys yet?” Welsh asked the audience during his address, referring to airmen pictured in a slideshow. “They can figure anything out as long as we don’t get rid of them. So we’ve got to be worthy of them staying. If we do that, we win. If we keep these guys on the job, the mission will get taken care of. We’ve just got to figure out how to get them the tools they need to get the job done. We can do that.” ■