In early 1995, the Chief of Staff of the Air Force (CSAF) determined that the Air Force needed to strengthen its corporate planning capabilities. The planning function had to link strongly to critical Department of Defense (DoD) resource allocation and management processes, such as the Planning, Programming, and Budgeting System (PPBS); Joint Warfighting Capability Assessment (JWCA); and the Joint Requirements Oversight Council (JROC). In addition, Air Force planning had to complement and enhance existing Air Force planning and programming processes. To meet these goals, the CSAF established a special assistant for long-range planning; in 1997, a formal organization was established (AF/XP) to link Air Force planning and programming.

In late 1996, the AF/XP determined that having a single corporate strategic planning process required developing a common planning framework. A single framework could enable Air Force planners to identify corporate Air Force requirements and ensure their eventual resourcing. A framework, if developed and implemented, could enable the Air Force to articulate and justify its near-, middle-, and long-term requirements to the external community—the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD), the Joint Staff (JS), and the other services.

PROBLEM

Historically, the planning function has been centralized in the Deputy Chief of Staff for Plans and Operations. The dilemma that the Air Force faces in defining and implementing a common plan-
ning framework is that current Air Force planning is a highly decentralized process that is conducted within the individual major commands (MAJCOMs) away from the Air Staff. The common thread among the current processes is that they are based on a strategy-to-tasks (STT) concept, in which all tasks and their associated capabilities are derived from the national security strategy and support commander-in-chief (CINC) missions. Although all the MAJCOMs use a STT framework, no single, common framework exists throughout the Air Force. The current planning process is built around each MAJCOM developing its own STT framework based on those missions for which it provides Air Force capabilities. The sets of capabilities are aligned under a list of Air Force–identified core competencies. For instance, Air Combat Command (ACC) oversees all requirements and proposed resourcing for tasks associated with the Air and Space Superiority core competency. Air Superiority primarily supports the major theater war (MTW) mission.

As a consequence of decentralization, the number of parallel planning documents grew, fueled by MAJCOMs acting in isolation. Where responsibility for a program area was not clear-cut or the function cut across multiple areas, the MAJCOMs developed their own Mission Area Plan (MAP). Although there was only one plan for what were perceived as core MAJCOM missions, the number of supporting plans grew to (in some cases) one per command. As a consequence, there was no vantage point from which to make Air Force–wide strategic decisions. This issue surfaced as a major concern at the first MAJCOM working group meeting hosted by RAND. Planners felt that important initiatives were being lost in the process if the option cut across functional areas. Early in the project, a survey of planning documents produced several that treated Information Operations as a separate MAJCOM activity. None of these documents was coordinated outside the authoring command, although the Air

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1The Air Force has nine MAJCOMs, which are responsible for conducting all phases of various missions and functions. Appendix A describes the MAJCOMs’ missions.

2The STT framework, developed by RAND, defines objectives in a comprehensive hierarchy extending from fundamental national goals to tasks performed in combat.

3The Air Force’s core competencies are Air and Space Superiority, Global Attack, Precision Engagement, Rapid Global Mobility, Information Superiority, and Agile Combat Support.
Force Information Warfare Center provided some informal integration of those plans it reviewed.

Many of the MAJCOM frameworks are redundant and operate at different levels of aggregation. For instance, Air Education and Training Command’s (AETC’s) activities are focused at a much lower level than those of ACC. AETC oversees all nonoperational training, some operational training, and education; thus, it is interested in classroom time and career training. On the other hand, ACC is responsible for the higher-level, operational development of future fighters to meet future mission requirements. To further underscore the dilemma, each MAJCOM has developed command-unique processes to support its own STT processes. ACC and Air Mobility Command (AMC) have mature processes with many levels of analyses and databases; AETC and Air Force Space Command (AFSPC) have less-developed processes and few, if any, supporting analytical capabilities.

The current STT process focuses primarily on program planning, with an emphasis on modernization. Often, critical institutional functions, such as nonoperational training, leader development, and quality-of-life issues, are not given full visibility in the resourcing process. Because the MAJCOMs are working from command-unique STT processes, there is little or no consistency in the terminology. A mission area to one MAJCOM might be a function to another.

The individual MAJCOM’s requirements and resourcing strategies are adjudicated within their assigned resourcing stovepipe, which is aligned primarily along the core competencies. The Board of Directors (BoD) of AF/XP decided that the core competencies were too broad to establish meaningful priorities (Murdock, 1998, p. 8). Although the Air Force’s core competencies are useful in shaping its vision and planning initiatives, they cannot be used independently to determine resource requirements. For example, core competencies do not contain sufficient details to link programming and resourcing, nor do they provide insights into how well you are doing in competing for resources across DoD.

The stovepiped approach hinders the development of corporate Air Force options and affects total Air Force resourcing because there is little horizontal integration. The most powerful MAJCOMs drive the
resourcing priorities. Because the resourcing requirements and recommended allocations are developed within the MAJCOMs, the corporate Air Force has few mechanisms for viewing all Air Force requirements and setting institutional priorities. The stovepiped approach also inhibits the identification and achievement of long-term institutional goals. The inability to make strategic trades across functional areas when these functional areas became identified with a specific MAJCOM was recognized by some of the MAJCOMs.

Horizontal integration was possible only after the matter became a part of a MAJCOM MAP. What was needed was a single MAP or some other planning document in which the trades could be made prior to formalization in a command MAP. Integration of MAJCOM plans needed to happen at a much lower level to ensure that trade-offs were made. For example, the planning documents in Air Force Space Command could address migrating a system for aerospace command and control (e.g. AWACS) to space-based platforms, but did not address the more probable outcome from an operational perspective of an integrated space and air system that would rely on ACC platforms for contingency coverage. As a result, the MAJCOM plans were focused only on solutions well within the command’s stovepipe functional areas. Also, space applications were slow to be included on ACC aircraft. This may have been a consequence of not having the means to look across the Air Force for new capabilities, only across a single command. AF/XP felt it needed the means to identify areas whereby cross-cutting innovative solutions and strategic trade-offs could be made before entering the more structured Air Force programming process.

The other problem, which the team tried to address for the Air Force, was the need to go beyond the Air Force for the objective demand. In the original project description, the planning framework was to be linked to joint processes. The team discovered that there also seemed to be institutional demand as well, so we broke demand into two sources. One collected external demands and the other collected internal demands. The Air Force had made little progress in documenting the necessity to resource in a manner that met long-term goals as well as the short-term immediate needs of the CINCs. The in-place system of MAPs and quality planning tried to place the need within major force programs that were essentially unchanged
from pre-Cold War structures. Again, the emphasis was on programming and not planning.

**PROJECT OVERVIEW**

AF/XPX requested RAND’s assistance in the development and implementation of a common Air Force STT framework that would complement and enhance existing Air Force planning and programming processes and would better link the Air Force vision to planning and programming. The client specifically wanted a structure and process that captured the totality of Air Force resources (e.g., operational, operational support, and institutional functions).

The proposed project contained four tasks to support the development and implementation objective of a common planning framework:

1. Identify and assess current Air Force STT efforts. The client wanted to apply the positive elements of existing processes to the corporate structure.

2. Assist XPX in the organization of a working group that would help develop and implement the framework. The client requested that the working group’s membership be composed of operational and functional representatives from each of the MAJCOMs and the Air Force Staff.

3. Ensure that the proposed framework linked to the Air Force Long-Range Plan (LRP) and the Air Force Planning and Programming Guidance (APPG).4

4. Assist the Air Force in the implementation of the framework. XPX asked RAND to assist in assessing and proposing alternative implementation strategies to ensure that the framework would be iteratively implemented. The first phase would consist of gaining a consensus within the working group on the structure and at-

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4The Air Force Strategic Plan (AFSP) replaced the LRP. The AFSP will extend out to three Future Years Defense Programs (FYDPs), or 17 years. The APPG spells out how the Air Force’s various planning initiatives will be resourced in its Program Objective Memorandum (POM) and across the FYDP.
tributes of the framework. The working group members would then be responsible for assisting in the implementation within their respective organizations.

5. Work with XPX and the MAJCOM representatives to establish the ground rules for implementation of the framework across the Air Force.

The client wanted the framework developed and ready for implementation by late summer 1997. Although the client later decided not to implement this framework, the debate that it engendered has facilitated Air Force recognition of the need both to identify and to assess cross-functional issues.