In August 1998, General Michael E. Ryan, the U.S. Air Force Chief of Staff, announced that the service would begin transforming itself into an Expeditionary Aerospace Force (EAF). The EAF reflects the Air Force vision of how it will organize, train, equip, and sustain itself in the 21st Century. This transformation is intended to meet the challenges of a new strategic environment, one that differs from the Cold War environment that shaped the Air Force as an institution for 50 years. The Air Force emerged from the Cold War with an organization and basing structure that was focused on the mission of containing the Soviet Union. Although there was a large permanent overseas presence, deployments of forces from the continental United States (CONUS) to overseas bases were rare, and when they occurred, as in exercises, large units of aircraft were moved from one well-stocked main operating base to another. The new security environment is placing quite different demands on the Air Force. There have been many deployments—some of them large, some of them small. The deploying forces are never able to rely on long-standing operations plans, but must rapidly tailor themselves to the demands of specific crises. These new security challenges are occurring in places that are distant from the Air Force structure of permanent bases, requiring long deployments of forces to relatively austere locations. Finally, the deployment burden has fallen unevenly, with some segments of the Air Force much more in demand for temporary overseas service than others. It has become clear to the Air Force leadership that the service needs to reshape itself to successfully operate in this new environment.
The Air Force has a history of reengineering itself to meet evolving strategic challenges, and the EAF concept is how the service will meet the latest challenges. The Air Force has made substantial progress in defining the command and control arrangements and organizational structures of the new EAF. However, these initiatives are not by themselves enough to make the Air Force expeditionary. This report focuses on another requirement—the need for a strategy to deploy and employ forces in the face of considerable uncertainty regarding overseas operating locations. The report proposes that this uncertainty can be managed by actively pursuing an overseas presence strategy based on maintaining high levels of logistical and operational flexibility, and outlines a number of far-reaching actions that the Air Force could take to leverage the advantages of aerospace power to gain overseas presence. These actions chiefly involve the establishment of a global logistical support system and provision of full-spectrum force protection for deployed forces. With the logistical wherewithal to deploy to a wide range of locations and a robust ability to protect itself, the Air Force will have the flexibility it needs to establish a global presence.

The research described in this report was conducted within the Aerospace Force Development Program of Project AIR FORCE, as part of a project entitled “Implementing an Effective Expeditionary Force.” It was cosponsored by the Air Force Deputy Chief of Staff for Air and Space Operations (AF/XO) and the Deputy Chief of Staff for Installations and Logistics (AF/IL). The research should be of interest to Air Force leaders, operators, and planners who are implementing the EAF concept within the Air Force, as well as those in the field who are interested in understanding the strategic and historical background behind the movement to an EAF.

**Project AIR FORCE**

Project AIR FORCE, a division of RAND, is the Air Force federally funded research and development center (FFRDC) for studies and analyses. It provides the Air Force with independent analyses of policy alternatives affecting the development, employment, combat readiness, and support of current and future aerospace forces. Re-
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