This is the final report for a Project AIR FORCE study entitled “Where Is the United States Air Force Post–Base Force, Post-BUR, and Post-QDR?” The research was sponsored by the Air Force Deputy Chief of Staff, Air and Space Operations, and was performed within the Aerospace Force Development Program of Project AIR FORCE.

The report summarizes a comparative historical review of the three major force structure reviews of the 1990s: the 1989–1990 Base Force, the 1993 Bottom-Up Review (BUR), and the 1997 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR). It describes key assumptions, decisions, and outcomes of these reviews, focusing on elements related to strategy, forces, and resources, and summarizes key lessons learned.

The research engendered a comparative case study of the three defense reviews, where inputs (assumptions about threats, strategy, budgets) could be compared both with outputs (decisions and other outcomes of each review) and with actual implementation experience. Wherever possible, the historical inquiry was grounded in empirical data on budgets, force structure, manpower, and other issues. Despite their inherent limitations, the primary source materials for the research were official documents, including the reports, briefings, press conferences, and other outputs of the reviews themselves, as well as planning and budget documents, testimony, memoranda and other records of the reviews, and their implementation. These were supplemented by other materials as necessary. In conducting this research, the authors considered and rejected an interview-based approach to the analysis, because many defense issues (e.g., readiness) remained contentious, and the principals involved in key decisions remained active partisans in these debates. The re-
search was conducted during fiscal year 2000, with only modest efforts made to update the material thereafter.

The report should be of interest to policymakers, planners, and others involved in the defense reviews of 2001 and to defense analysts and scholars.

**Project AIR FORCE**

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