

5. Other Issues

Changing Experience Levels of the Pilot Force

The third task we were asked to undertake was to explore how the overall experience level of the pilot force might change in the future and whether this should be a source of concern. We computed the experience ratio using pilots with less than 11 YOS as the denominator and those with 5–11 YOS as the numerator. In essence, this is a ratio of the more experienced pilots likely to be in cockpits to all pilots likely to be in cockpits. Figure 17 shows how this changes over time. The experience ratio just after Operation Desert Shield/Storm (ODS/S) is the starting point. The reduced training of new pilots in the Air Force sharply increases the experience ratio to what might be considered untenable levels. This gradually tapers off in the earlier part of the next century. However, the gradual reduction in overall experience is not a matter for concern: We merely see returns to ODS/S experience levels after an engineered and unsustainable increase brought on by reduced UPT levels. The Navy shows a

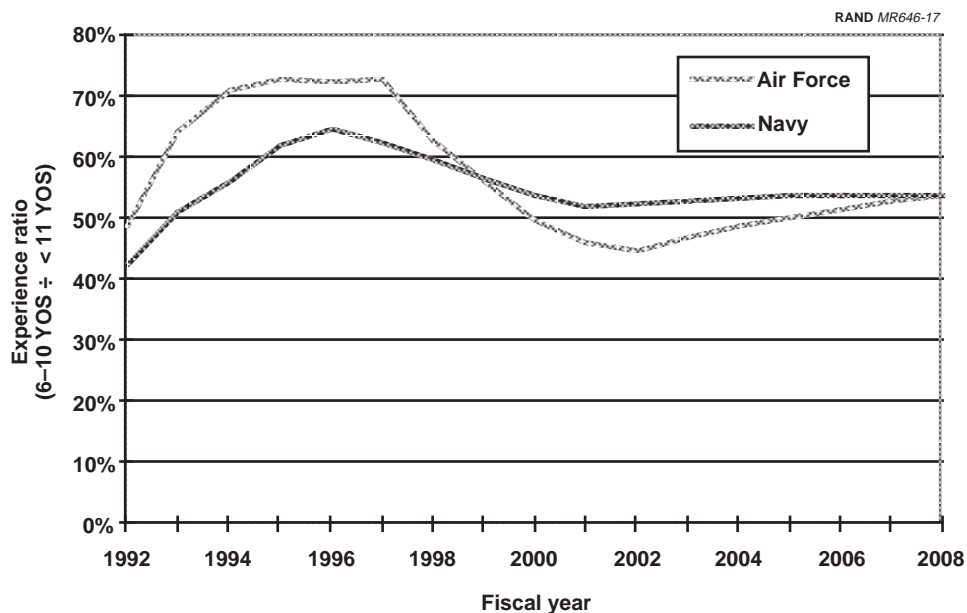


Figure 17—Experience Ratios, FY92–FY08

small increase during the late 1990s but gradually stabilizes to ODS/S experience levels after that.

Future Career Alternatives and Effects on the Pilot Force

The final task was to consider the effects on pilots' careers, flows, and experience of dramatically different career patterns (NDRI, 1994). Table 4 presents several career alternatives and our assessment of their effects on the need for UPT, experience, and flows to the ARC, relative to the status quo.

Longer active service careers would decrease UPT and increase experience but would reduce flows to the ARC. Higher continuation opportunities and selective promotion—such as fly-only careers in the active Air Force—would also have the same effects. Forced attrition to the ARC after a period of service would increase UPT to maintain the active force, would lower experience, and would obviously increase the flows to the ARC (its primary purpose). The effect of the earlier vesting but later retirement annuities alternative is much harder to predict because of changed incentives for staying or leaving. A final alternative considered in the study is that of more lateral entry from civilian life or from the reserves. This would enhance flows both to and from the reserves. Effects on UPT and overall experience are harder to model.

Table 4
Future Career Alternatives and Predicted Effects on Pilot Force

Alternative	Assessment		
	UPT	Experience	Flows
Longer active-service careers	Less	More	Fewer
Higher continuation opportunity and selective promotion (e.g., fly-only careers)	Less	More	Fewer
Forced attrition to ARC after period of active service	More	Less	Greater
Earlier vesting but later retirement annuities	?	?	?
More lateral entry (from civilian life or reserves)	?	?	Greater: two way