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TECHNICAL
R E P O R T

Computer Simulation
of General and Flag
Officer Management
Model Description and Results

Peter Schirmer

Sponsored by the Office of the Secretary of Defense

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The research described in this report was prepared for the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD). The research was conducted in the RAND National Defense Research Institute, a federally funded research and development center sponsored by the OSD, the Joint Staff, the Unified Combatant Commands, the Department of the Navy, the Marine Corps, the defense agencies, and the defense Intelligence Community under Contract W74V8H-06-C-0002.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data is available for this publication.

978-0-8330-4737-3

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Published 2009 by the RAND Corporation
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Summary

The Duncan Hunter National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2009 introduced the joint pool rubric, which provides for the designation of up to 324 general and flag officer (GFO) positions by the Secretary of Defense. Once designated, the services will be allocated a number of these joint officer requirements as their fair share. These positions will not be counted against service GFO grade- and end-strength ceilings. The revised strength accounting rules were designed to increase competition for joint positions and to encourage greater use of reserve component (RC) GFOs in joint positions, but they will add to the complexity of managing active component (AC) and RC end and grade strengths. The RAND National Defense Research Institute (NDRI) was asked to apply its computer simulation models to assess the complexity and feasibility of managing the new grade- and end-strength accounting rules.

The modeling results presented in this report support the conclusion that GFO end-strength management is a tractable challenge. There is no single number or result that leads to this conclusion; it is based on an examination of the frequency, magnitude, and duration of end-strength violations. The simulation model schedules assignments, holds positions open when needed, forecasts retirements, forecasts promotions, and generally operates under a fairly sophisticated set of business rules and model procedures similar to real-world processes. With these processes, the model manages end strength, grade pyramids, and limitations on officers serving in external positions. End-strength violations do occur, but they appear to fall within the admittedly amorphous standard of “acceptable.” The active and reserve components will have to work closely with one another to manage end strength, and they will have to work closely with the Joint Staff Office of General/Flag Officer Matters as well.