



PROJECT AIR FORCE

CHILDREN AND FAMILIES
EDUCATION AND THE ARTS
ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT
HEALTH AND HEALTH CARE
INFRASTRUCTURE AND
TRANSPORTATION
INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS
LAW AND BUSINESS
NATIONAL SECURITY
POPULATION AND AGING
PUBLIC SAFETY
SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
TERRORISM AND
HOMELAND SECURITY

The RAND Corporation is a nonprofit institution that helps improve policy and decisionmaking through research and analysis.

This electronic document was made available from www.rand.org as a public service of the RAND Corporation.

Skip all front matter: [Jump to Page 1](#) ▼

Support RAND

[Purchase this document](#)

[Browse Reports & Bookstore](#)

[Make a charitable contribution](#)

For More Information

Visit RAND at www.rand.org

Explore [RAND Project AIR FORCE](#)

View [document details](#)

Limited Electronic Distribution Rights

This document and trademark(s) contained herein are protected by law as indicated in a notice appearing later in this work. This electronic representation of RAND intellectual property is provided for non-commercial use only. Unauthorized posting of RAND electronic documents to a non-RAND website is prohibited. RAND electronic documents are protected under copyright law. Permission is required from RAND to reproduce, or reuse in another form, any of our research documents for commercial use. For information on reprint and linking permissions, please see [RAND Permissions](#).

This product is part of the RAND Corporation technical report series. Reports may include research findings on a specific topic that is limited in scope; present discussions of the methodology employed in research; provide literature reviews, survey instruments, modeling exercises, guidelines for practitioners and research professionals, and supporting documentation; or deliver preliminary findings. All RAND reports undergo rigorous peer review to ensure that they meet high standards for research quality and objectivity.

R E P O R T



Balancing Rated Personnel Requirements and Inventories

James H. Bigelow, Albert A. Robbert

Prepared for the United States Air Force

Approved for public release; distribution unlimited



PROJECT AIR FORCE

The research described in this report was sponsored by the United States Air Force under Contract FA7014-06-C-0001. Further information may be obtained from the Strategic Planning Division, Directorate of Plans, Hq USAF.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Bigelow, J. H.

Balancing rated personnel requirements and inventories / James H. Bigelow, Albert A. Robbert.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN 978-0-8330-5094-6 (pbk. : alk. paper)

1. United States. Air Force—Officers—Rating of. 2. United States. Air Force—Officers—Supply and demand.
3. Air pilots, Military—Rating of—United States. 4. Air pilots, Military—Supply and demand—United States.
5. United States. Air Force—Personnel management. I. Robbert, Albert A., 1944- II. Title.

UG793.B54 2011

358.4'10332—dc22

2011012225

The RAND Corporation is a nonprofit institution that helps improve policy and decisionmaking through research and analysis. RAND's publications do not necessarily reflect the opinions of its research clients and sponsors.

RAND® is a registered trademark.

© Copyright 2011 RAND Corporation

Permission is given to duplicate this document for personal use only, as long as it is unaltered and complete. Copies may not be duplicated for commercial purposes. Unauthorized posting of RAND documents to a non-RAND website is prohibited. RAND documents are protected under copyright law. For information on reprint and linking permissions, please visit the RAND permissions page (<http://www.rand.org/publications/permissions.html>).

Published 2011 by the RAND Corporation

1776 Main Street, P.O. Box 2138, Santa Monica, CA 90407-2138

1200 South Hayes Street, Arlington, VA 22202-5050

4570 Fifth Avenue, Suite 600, Pittsburgh, PA 15213-2665

RAND URL: <http://www.rand.org>

To order RAND documents or to obtain additional information, contact

Distribution Services: Telephone: (310) 451-7002;

Fax: (310) 451-6915; Email: order@rand.org

Summary

For more than a decade, the Air Force has experienced shortages of rated officers. Since the early 1990s, force structure has declined over 50 percent, reducing the capacity to produce and absorb new rated officers. Requirements for rated officers have declined as well, but the Air Force has not been able to reduce nonflying rated billets (most of which are staff positions) in proportion to the force structure reductions. As a consequence, the Air Force has attempted to produce and absorb rated officers at the maximum possible rate.

The effort has not been enough. At times, the overall inventory of rated officers has been sufficient to fill overall requirements, but there have always been specific categories—fighter pilots, in particular—in which large shortages have been a way of life. Even the overall picture has deteriorated in the past year or two, as new requirements have emerged for categories such as unmanned aircraft systems (UASs), new special operations forces aircraft, and the creation of Air Force Global Strike Command.

In February 2009, the Vice Chief of Staff of the Air Force chartered the Rated Staff Requirements Integrated Process Team (IPT) to recommend courses of action for (1) balancing rated staff requirements with rated inventory and (2) subsequently maintaining them in balance. Because the inventory has been made as large as possible, the IPT had to reduce the number of positions to which rated officers are assigned. However, because rated staff positions have been reviewed repeatedly and found to be valid requirements, the IPT rejected the notion of eliminating requirements. Instead, it directed the owners of rated positions—major commands, field operating agencies, direct reporting units, joint agencies, Headquarters Air Force, and the Secretary of the Air Force—to recategorize specified numbers of staff positions. The owners, in other words, were instructed to find people other than active rated officers to fill those positions. The replacements could be civil servants or contractors (particularly individuals with prior rated experience in uniform), members of the Air National Guard or Air Force Reserve, active nonrated officers, or enlisted personnel.

Owners were able to recategorize 836 positions, enough that requirements and inventory projected for the end of fiscal year (FY) 2010 are nearly in balance, and progress is being made in filling the recategorized positions.

The remaining task, and the primary focus of this report, is to devise a process that will maintain the balance between rated requirements and inventory over the long term. This process should include the following five actions:

1. The Air Force should institutionalize a version of the recategorization process pioneered by the Rated Staff Requirements IPT. Owners currently conduct an annual review of all rated positions to ensure that they require rated expertise and are necessary for accom-

plishing the Air Force mission. But the review takes no notice of possible inventory shortages and should therefore be changed to account for such shortages. Each owner should be given a rated authorization quota for each category of rated officers (i.e., separate quotas for fighter pilots, bomber pilots, etc.) and should be prohibited from labeling a position “authorized” unless it falls within the quota. Owners could trade quotas among themselves and could recategorize positions that do not fall within their quotas. (See pp. 9–12.)

2. The Air Force must streamline the processes for converting the recategorized positions. The IPT arranged to include funding in the current program objective memorandum for 572 civilian positions by the end of FY 2013. Some analysis has also been conducted to identify Air Force specialty codes that could have some of their members assigned to formerly rated staff positions. But work remains. (See pp. 13–15.)
3. The Air Force should plan for the effects of major actions on rated requirements. Major actions are, for example, the reorganization or formation of a major command (e.g., Air Force Global Strike Command) or a major acquisition program (e.g., growth of the UAS force structure). We recommend requiring that a new appendix on rated requirements be included in each Program Action Directive, the standard planning document for a major action. (See pp. 15–16.)
4. Some of the actions the Air Force can take have primarily long-term effects on the balance between rated inventory and requirements. The recent creation of new career fields for UAS operators and nonrated air liaison officers will eventually alleviate the shortage of rated officers and will provide a substantial increase in the number of people who have sufficient experience to fill rated staff billets, but this will take time. The Air Force could also redesign positions to concentrate tasks that require rated expertise in fewer rated positions and could spin off tasks that do not require rated expertise into new, nonrated positions. (See pp. 16–18.)
5. Projections, especially of requirements, can change rapidly and unpredictably. The aircrew management system must be responsive to avoid having changes throw it out of balance. The system would gain much in responsiveness if it could meet rated requirements while producing and absorbing rated officers at rates below capacity, on average. Maintaining some spare capacity would also help to prevent backlogs of students awaiting training and overmanning of operational units. (See pp. 18–20.)

Logically, spare capacity could be established by either increasing capacity or reducing production and absorption. Options for increasing capacity are generally beyond the scope of this report (but see Taylor, Bigelow, and Ausink (2009) for a discussion of how Air Reserve Components assets—especially highly experienced pilots—could be used to increase absorption capacity). Reducing production may seem unpalatable, as it would reduce future rated inventories, but the process itself will provide ways to cope with those inventory reductions and thus will reduce the problems of doing so. It may be possible that modest reductions in production and absorption could even show a net benefit.

These elements, we feel, could be implemented in the current aircrew management system with little disruption. Various organizations would acquire new responsibilities and/or face changes to some existing responsibilities. But existing responsibilities would not be shifted from one organization to another.

The five actions recommended here do not include an enforcement mechanism, which we feel is needed. It would be advantageous for each owner of rated positions if all owners embraced the process. But individual owners might feel that they could have extra rated officers assigned to them if all other owners embraced the process while they refused to do so. An enforcement mechanism would ensure that all owners live within their rated authorization quotas. (See pp. 21–23.)