

The U.S. Air Force Should Take Steps to Balance Manpower, Skill Levels, and Personnel Tempo

During the latter 1990s and early 2000s, many U.S. Air Force organizations were finding that their manpower authorizations and the number of people assigned were inadequate to sustain both deployment and in-garrison missions with normal levels of military manpower availability. During deployments, non-deploying personnel assigned to many functional areas within wings and commands were severely stressed and could not perform their normal home-base missions without working long hours. This problem stemmed in part from constrained military end strengths and other system constraints that restrict the ability of Air Force organizations to adequately adjust military manpower and personnel levels to meet changing mission requirements. Moreover, both manning shortages and imbalances in skill levels further exacerbated the problem.

To help the Air Force better understand these issues and their policy implications, RAND Project AIR FORCE (PAF) studied the cumulative effect of the Air Force human-resource system on wing-level manpower, skill levels, and personnel tempo (PERSTEMPO). The study's major findings are as follows:

- A comprehensive, systems-oriented human-capital perspective is essential. Many of the issues identified during this study appear to be rooted in a lack of strategic direction compounded by fragmented approaches to human-resource management.
- The Air Force's manpower requirements determination process needs resuscitation. The data examined in the study raise serious questions about the adequacy of published manpower determinants, especially given the expeditionary nature of today's Air Force.
- The Air Force needs one set of manpower books. Because of legacy computer systems, the Air Force has at least three sets of manpower requirements. This has contributed to discrepancies between the manpower authorized for wing-level missions and the actual number of people available.

Key findings

- Implement an integrated architecture for manpower requirements
- Make greater use of dynamic simulation models
- Develop internal feedback loops among components of the human-capital system
- Implement the Capability Based Manpower Determination process
- Field the Manpower Programming and Execution System
- Establish and track metrics to compare planned and actual training burdens

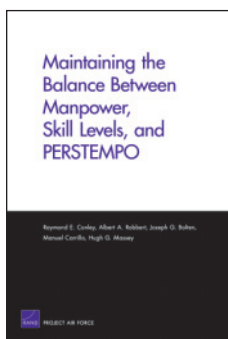
- Skill-level imbalances affect productivity and contribute to workforce stress. If there are too many personnel in the lower three grades relative to the number of trainers in the middle grades, the on-the-job training load can become a burden and interfere with other mission activities.
- Poor internal feedback between components of the human-capital system impedes system performance.

PAF recommends that the Air Force take the following steps to address these issues:

- Implement an integrated architecture for manpower requirements that considers workload, workforce sustainment, and workforce competencies.
- Make greater use of dynamic simulation models to better understand the intersections of the manpower, personnel, and training subsystems.
- Develop internal feedback loops among components of the human-capital system for identifying gaps in capabilities and/or misalignments between the manpower, personnel, and training activities.
- Implement the Capability Based Manpower Determination (CBMD) process as quickly as possible.
- Field the Manpower Programming and Execution System (MPES) as a means of eliminating multiple sets of books, and explore ways to improve integration of MPES data into the personnel assignment and training systems.
- Establish and track metrics that compare planned against actual training burdens imposed on wing-level personnel. ■

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