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GLOBAL REACH-GLOBAL POWER AND THE  
USAF TACTICAL AIR FORCES

BY

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GLOBAL REACH - GLOBAL POWER  
AND  
THE USAF TACTICAL AIR FORCES

AN INDIVIDUAL STUDY PROJECT

by

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ABSTRACT

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In June 1990, the Secretary of the Air Force, Donald B. Rice, issued a Department of the Air Force White Paper entitled The Air Force and U.S. National Security: Global Reach - Global Power which set the stage for the evolving role of the Air Force as a prime instrument of national security policy and strategy. As a result of dramatic and historic changes in the international environment, it is clear that defense budget reductions will significantly affect the USAF by not only cutting force structure, but also by deleting some forward basing overseas. Secretary Rice foresees a leading role for the USAF in protecting worldwide U.S. interests by projecting U.S. airpower, whenever and wherever, to fill the gaps left by these cuts. This paper will focus on one element of U.S. airpower, the USAF Tactical Air Forces and their future roles, missions, and capabilities to support the Global Reach - Global Power strategy.

## INTRODUCTION

Dramatic, historic developments in Europe and the Soviet Union over the past few years coupled with the political and domestic pressures of a growing United States (US) deficit have created a "post Cold War" atmosphere that is both conducive to defense budget cuts and military force reductions and historically parallel, in terms of the Nation's propensity to "demobilize," to America's post war defense policies, experiences, and attitudes. While the "War in the Gulf" has refocused attention on the requirement for a ready and modern force, the fiscal, political, and domestic realities facing the US make it clear that as a "peace dividend" of the Cold War "victory" over the Soviet Union, many US forces based overseas will return to the US and the total force will be substantially reduced. In response to these challenges, The United States Air Force (USAF) leadership has been doing some fresh and innovative thinking and planning about the future roles, missions, structure, and capabilities of the USAF. As the forward deployed overseas forces are deactivated, downsized, or returned home, a premium will be placed on the ability to rapidly deploy forces to meet a variety of potential contingency operations around the world - force projection. On March 1, 1990, Secretary of the Air Force Donald B. Rice went public with the USAF's theme of the future - Global

Reach, Global Power. While addressing a gathering of defense industry executives, Secretary Rice described the basics of this "new game plan" as speed, range, flexibility, precision, and lethality.<sup>1</sup> These are the inherent characteristics of airpower which are uniquely suited for this power projection theme.

Speed reduces time to respond, while range allows response over great distances. Flexibility enables USAF airpower assets to operate across the spectrum of conflict, day or night, anywhere in the world. Precision and lethality ensure that these forces hit hard and sure. These characteristics will become increasingly more important as the USAF becomes primarily a Continental United States (CONUS)-based force. Lt. Gen. Jimmie V. Adams, USAF Deputy Chief of Staff for Plans and Operations, speaking on Global Reach, Global Power at the 1990 Air Force Association (AFA) symposium on "The Air Force - Today and Tomorrow" had this to say:

As we're pulled on the one hand by a changing world and on the other by a constricting budget, a fundamental question emerges: What role will the Air Force play in a new world order? The answer is increasingly clear: a role that is the essence of airpower - the ability to react fast, far, and overwhelmingly.<sup>2</sup>

In June 1990, a Department of the Air Force White Paper, The Air Force and U.S. National Security: Global Reach - Global Power, was published to further outline the USAF objectives for its evolving role as a prime instrument

of national security policy and strategy.<sup>3</sup> The five objectives, which frame the plan to achieve and maintain global airpower capabilities, are to:

- (1) Sustain nuclear deterrence
- (2) Provide versatile combat forces
- (3) Supply rapid global mobility
- (4) Control the high ground
- (5) Build American influence

While a complement of various USAF airpower resources, such as bombers, tankers, airlift assets, helicopters, and special forces fixed-wing aircraft, is necessary to meet all five objectives, the overall purpose and scope of this paper is to focus on only one of these objectives - providing versatile combat forces. Many airpower resources make significant contributions to the overall versatility and effectiveness of the USAF, but one element of these versatile combat forces, the Tactical Air Forces (TAF), represents over seventy-five percent of the USAF's major weapons systems and is the keystone of conventional combat power projection for the USAF.<sup>4</sup> This paper will specifically concentrate on the TAF's future, in terms of force structure and capabilities, to meet the speed, range, flexibility, precision, and lethality requirements of Global Reach - Global Power.

In order to gain some insight into the TAF's future contributions to this power projection strategy, it is

essential to start with a common and fundamental understanding of where the TAF is today by briefly reviewing the following:

- (1) Background decisions, direction, and guidance
- (2) TAF roles and missions
- (3) Threats
- (4) TAF force structure

#### BACKGROUND

In March 1990, the White House published the National Security Strategy of the United States in which President Bush outlined the direction the Nation will take in protecting the legacy of our successes in the Cold War. The President acknowledged the historic opportunity of the postwar by saying:

We will not let that opportunity pass, nor will we shrink from the challenges created by new conditions. Our response will require strategic vision - a clear perception of our goals, our interests, and the means available to achieve and protect them. The essence of strategy is determining priorities. We will make the hard choices.

It is clear to Air Force leadership that the defense budget will be cut and the USAF will be significantly smaller. Shortly after becoming the USAF Chief of Staff, General Merrill A. McPeak promised that the Air Force will adapt. Indeed, while addressing the AFA symposium, General McPeak emphasized the point by stating:

Make no mistake, international events and internal

pressures will reshape the military services. The Air Force must adapt or go the way of the dinosaurs.<sup>6</sup>

In the same speech, General McPeak also discussed his concepts for reorganizing and restructuring USAF combat units and management staffs.<sup>7</sup> During his Chief of Staff nomination hearings, General McPeak told the Senate Armed Services Committee that "reorganization is my number one priority" and staying combat-ready while downsizing poses a "significant management problem for the Air Force."<sup>8</sup> General McPeak's priority for reorganization appears to comply with President Bush's "essence of strategy" criteria and the new Air Force Chief of Staff's restructuring strategy is ready for the "hard choices." Some of the difficult decisions for cuts, cancellations, acquisitions, and restructuring have already been made and are beginning to be announced and implemented. These changes in the way the TAF is organized, trained, and equipped in the 1990s and beyond will be necessarily evolutionary, but they need not be revolutionary. A viable, ready, and modern TAF structure is required to meet the versatility objectives of Global Reach - Global Power. The structure will be smaller, but the composition and readiness of these forces will be critical to meeting the challenges of this global power projection strategy.

The fiscal 1991 USAF Report to the 101st Congress highlighted the need to balance USAF investments for the

future in four major areas: readiness, modernization, combat sustainability, and force structure. Since fiscal realities and budget cuts have made it impossible to fully support each area at the levels desired, the "difficult choices" were made by the USAF leadership to give priority to a ready force with quality people and modern equipment. In order to afford these readiness and modernization priorities, combat sustainability and force structure will be, and has already been, cut. The leadership concluded that the increased short term risk inherent in a smaller, less sustainable force is justified, for the short term, in light of today's security environment - Desert Shield/Storm considered. In order to preserve critical readiness and force modernization efforts for the long term, these trade-offs seem militarily prudent. But, with all this considered, the questions still remain - How small? How ready? How capable? Before these can really be answered, a review of the TAF's roles, missions, and the future threat is essential. How have they changed?

#### ROLES AND MISSIONS

Despite future drawdowns and a dramatically changing world security environment, the roles, missions, and objectives of the TAF have remained basically intact, even though the words may have changed. The 1990 AFM 1-1 (Draft) Basic Aerospace Doctrine of the United States Air Force

defines the roles and missions of the USAF. The TAF must be organized, trained, and equipped to perform three of these conventional combat roles: Aerospace control (counterair), force application (interdiction, close air support), and force enhancement (electronic combat, recce).<sup>10</sup>

Aerospace control is the first priority of the TAF. It permits air and surface forces to operate more effectively and denies these advantages to the enemy. The missions most directly involved in control of the air are offensive and defensive counterair. The ultimate goal of counterair is air supremacy. Offensive counterair (OCA) takes the counterair campaign into enemy territory, generally at the time and place of our choosing. OCA missions include attacks against aircraft and airfields, early warning systems, command and control facilities, and both air and ground-based enemy air defenses. The objective of OCA is air superiority which allows other air or ground assets freedom of action to perform their missions in enemy territory. Defensive counterair (DCA) concentrates on detecting, identifying, intercepting, and defeating the enemy's air offensive campaign. In other words, DCA is the counter action against enemy OCA forces. DCA is the only TAF mission that is not flown within the envelope of enemy ground-based defenses.<sup>11</sup>

Force application missions for the TAF include air interdiction (AI) and close air support (CAS). Air

interdiction is the primary means used to attack the movement and supply of enemy forces. The objectives of the AI campaign are to delay, disrupt, divert, or destroy the enemy's military potential. AI can be conducted deep into the enemy's rear areas or closer to the battle area depending on the desired impact on future or current ground operations and maneuvers. Battlefield preparation and isolation are AI missions closely integrated into the plans of ground maneuver units. Close air support missions are carefully coordinated and synchronized air attacks to apply concentrated combat power at a critical juncture of a surface battle. The objective of CAS, which can be offensive or defensive in nature, is to create opportunities for ground maneuver units that are actively engaged, or will be imminently, to conduct successful ground operations.<sup>12</sup>

Force enhancement missions for the TAF include electronic combat (EC), reconnaissance, and observation. Electronic combat is offensive and defensive operations in the electromagnetic (EM) spectrum, that is, "attacking electrons." Typically, defensive EC is in the form of self-protection for individual aircraft such as radar jamming pods and chaff that are designed primarily to defeat or degrade threats that have "engaged". Offensive EC, such as early warning, acquisition, and terminal guidance radar jamming and communication jamming, includes force multiplier and force protection missions that deny the enemy the use of

the EM spectrum of warfare. Air reconnaissance for the TAF is primarily a sensor-based target location, identification, and battle damage assessment mission. The mission of the TAF's airborne observation forces is to locate targets, then coordinate, control, and direct attacks against these targets.<sup>13</sup> The forward air controller (FAC) is given this role in conduct of the CAS mission. Ground FACs are also assigned to US Army to conduct this mission when the threat or other operational considerations do not permit airborne FAC operations.

#### THREAT

Threat definition, while always the subject of much debate and analysis, is nevertheless a major, if not key, factor in force structure planning. Today, in reorganizing and restructuring the TAF, it is vital that these forces retain the capability to meet the challenges of a multipolar world. While there is certainly room for optimism, the volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity of Soviet long term political and military intentions coupled with instability and conflict throughout the Third World, cloud the issue. In general terms, future force structure planning should continue to be focused on the most dangerous threat to US national security - the Soviet Union. However, in terms of the most probable use of US combat forces, this

planning must include a vision of a "second front" that may be less dangerous, but more likely - the Third World.

As the risk of military conflict in Europe recedes and the Soviet Union retreats from Central and Eastern Europe, the United States should not forget that the Soviet Union remains the only nation that has the military force to threaten the US and Soviet military capabilities have not disappeared nor have they been fundamentally altered. In fact, the Soviets have retained and, in some cases, significantly improved their military strength and show no signs of reducing efforts to achieve a qualitative improvement in their military capabilities. For example, the SU-27 and MiG-29 are comparable both in performance and capabilities to the USAF F-16 and F-15. While they "cut" force structure, the Soviets continue to modernize with fewer, but significantly more capable aircraft.<sup>14</sup> Sound familiar?

However, in the context of today's worldwide security environment, it is no longer a very supportable and valid position to argue that US defense requirements must be based on global war against existing and projected Soviet capabilities. The US must respond constructively and responsibly to the political and military developments that have reshaped, and will continue to reshape, US-Soviet Union relationships. Although there have been some questions raised recently about Soviet compliance and intentions with

respect to the Conventional Forces Europe (CFE) treaty, the demise of the Warsaw Pact creates a situation in which the Soviet Union can no longer count on the forces of Eastern Europe to support aggression against Western Europe and the probability of the Soviets advancing into Eastern Europe, or any other region, is extremely low.<sup>15</sup> Additionally, political, ethnic, and economic unrest in the western republics of the Soviet Union has created an added "buffer" between the forces of the Soviet Union and those of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and focused attention on domestic problems. However, while the Soviet Union seems to be preoccupied with internal reform issues and have backed away from Eastern Europe, they are, and will remain, a formidable threat - both nuclear and conventional. Even though the Soviets currently appear to no longer possess the overwhelming assets or political climate to support a major, conventional force projection capability, they have certainly retained the potential to develop it should the political situation change. US forces must be adequate to deter any inclination for a "reversal" in Soviet military objectives and ready to respond accordingly, if required.

As the threat of a global war diminishes, the relative stability of the bipolar Cold War is gradually being replaced, paradoxically, with the instability and uncertainty of a multipolar world no longer threatened by

the possibility of a superpower confrontation. For example, even after the current crisis in Kuwait is resolved, religious fanaticism could erupt that may continue to endanger American lives, US interests, or the interests of other countries friendly to us in the region on whose energy resources the free world continues to depend. Also, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and the spread of military technology to Third World countries give rise to regional imbalances that might not deter the "bully" that seeks regional domination. The greater precision, range, and destructive power of these weapons now extends war across a wider geographic area and threatens to escalate "local" disputes into regional conflict. These weapons are becoming increasingly more available to smaller nations, narrowing the military gap and making some Third World battlefields in many ways as lethal as the Central Europe threats of the past.<sup>16</sup> For the foreseeable future, while all Third World countries may not have an arsenal of weapons of mass destruction or an integrated air defense system, including air-to-air and surface-to-air threats, the countries that desire these weapons can certainly acquire sufficient quantities to support regional dominance visions. The modern battlefield is no longer a superpower monopoly.

#### FORCE STRUCTURE

Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney has stated that the objectives of the US military forces are to deter war and to prevail if they have to fight. The capability to meet these objectives hinges on the requirement to bring the appropriate force, in size and composition, to bear quickly and decisively.<sup>17</sup> The TAF must be ready to provide a rapid, tailored response to a broad range of scenarios, but common to all is the requirement to hit hard, quickly, and over long distances - speed, range, flexibility, precision, and lethality. The size and composition (force structure) of this force must be relative to roles, missions, threats, and taskings in order to meet power projection objectives - deter, if not, prevail.

Although military force requirements cannot be predicted with certainty, particularly when dealing with an unpredictable world political, economic, and military environment, USAF senior leaders are planning for sweeping and, in many ways, radical changes in the TAF force structure. These leaders are planning for a smaller force that can not only be realistic in light of budget reductions, but can fulfill the objectives of Global Reach -Global Power and still meet USAF's readiness and modernization objectives.<sup>18</sup>

The TAF reached a level of 38 combat-coded tactical fighter wing (TFW) equivalents in 1988. A TFW equivalent is a programmatic term that represents 72 fighter aircraft, not

necessarily a numerically designated TFW. Operational TFWs may have more or less than 72 aircraft based on mission, aircraft type, location, tasking, and component (active or reserve). By January 1990, the number of TFW equivalents had been reduced to approximately 36, which included roughly 24 active and 12 Air Reserve Component (ARC) wing equivalents. Two-thirds (24) of these TFW equivalents were based in the Continental US (CONUS) and the remainder (12) were in overseas locations. Approximately one half of the CONUS-based forces (12) are in the ARC. Roughly seven of these 36 wings were assigned to air superiority, four to interdiction, over nine to close air support, and more than fifteen were assigned "multirole" missions with taskings for air superiority, interdiction, and CAS.<sup>19</sup> Other specialized TAF aircraft perform the electronic combat, reconnaissance, observation, and command and control missions.

Today, the TAF has approximately 33 wing equivalents. This is a very dynamic time in the restructuring of the TAF as many wings and squadrons are in process of changing either to a new aircraft or a new mission, particularly in the ARC forces. The USAF's 1992 to 1993 budget calls for an additional cut of four more TFW equivalents, reducing the TAF from 33 to 29 wings by fiscal year (FY) 1992 and this number will drop to 26 (15 active and 11 ARC) by FY 1995.<sup>20</sup> The basing and mission mix of this 26 wing structure has not been finalized and is classified due to the sensitive and

classified nature of force withdrawals, base closings, and aircraft procurement issues. However, a few basic assumptions and generalizations can be made that might provide some insight, analysis, and conclusions as to the potential concepts and capabilities of this structure.

#### DISCUSSION

General McPeak has said that fundamental changes in the USAF structure will be required as the USAF transitions from a large "garrison" force with extensive overseas basing rights to a smaller CONUS-based "expeditionary force."<sup>21</sup> These "fundamental" changes may require "evolutionary, not revolutionary" concepts. For instance, approximately 10 wing equivalents deployed to Southwest Asia (SWA) for Desert Shield/Storm including TAF assets from the CONUS, active and reserve components, and Europe.<sup>22</sup> These forces were roughly comparable in size to the force structure that will be cut by FY 1995. Also, this use of ARC forces and NATO units for SWA contingency operations may be an indication of future force projection concepts and options.

Before looking at the specifics of what capabilities and projection options that a 26 wing structure brings to Global Reach - Global Power, a "tactical" guess at the "whos" and "wheres" of this structure is required. A brief look at the current and most recent (10-15 years) TAF force structure shows "multirole" aircraft (F-4s, F-16s) make up

about 40% of the force, close air support/battlefield interdiction (CAS/BAI) assets (A-10s, A-7s, F-16s) account for approximately 25%, air superiority fighters (F-15s) are another 25% of the TAF, and about 10% of the force is dedicated to interdiction (F-111s, F-117s, F-15Es). These percentages may vary slightly depending on acquisition programs, modernization, and accounting policies (what counts for what), but, in general, they represent a realistic "level of effort" apportionment of TAF force structure. Specialized (force enhancement) aircraft such as EF-111s, F-4Gs, RF-4s, and OA-10s that are used for electronic combat, threat suppression, reconnaissance, and observation are not counted against the TFW equivalent programmatic structure.

Using the TAF mission, basing, and component composition discussed in the previous paragraphs as a baseline for comparison and discussion, a 26 wing structure with 10 multirole, 7 air superiority, 6 CAS/BAI, and 3 interdiction TFW equivalents would certainly be a reasonable mix of forces to meet the TAF's flexibility requirements of the future. With 15 active wings, an 8 wing CONUS-based force and a 7 wing overseas basing structure, coupled with 11 ARC wing equivalents, would give the TAF a reasonable "forward presence" in the European and Pacific theaters (approximately 3.5 wings each) and provide a substantial CONUS force to react rapidly to any theater or contingency.

Rapid reaction is the key to making this basing arrangement effective in supporting the Global Reach - Global Power versatility objectives, especially quick response over great distances. While mobility and deployment have long been the focus of CONUS-based TAF units, the mission tasking for these units has largely been augmentation for theater plans. Conversely, mobility and deployment have not been the "essence" of overseas unit training. With the reduction in force structure and forward deployed units, all TAF units should be trained and prepared to deploy throughout the world in small "show of force" packages or larger unit moves to support contingency or large scale operations. Desert Storm certainly validates this concept as units from Europe, the Pacific, and the US deployed to the Middle East. In the future with the threat of global war significantly reduced, it may be better to get there "firstest" with the "closest" if they are what is required. For example, air superiority F-15s from Okinawa in 20 hours might be more appropriate than CONUS F-15s in 40 hours. This approach to tactical worldwide mobility exploits the speed, range, and flexibility characteristics of tactical airpower to respond quickly in most contingency scenarios. Are the two remaining inherent capabilities of airpower - lethality and precision - being equally considered and optimized in the TAF's future force?

Lethality and precision are indicators of the quality of TAF aircraft, not the quantity. Desert Storm clearly demonstrated that the capabilities of the TAF were superior to those of Iraq in a scenario in which surprise, preparation, numbers, supplies, and intelligence were in the TAF's favor. What about the future with 10 less wings, older airplanes, and a short notice contingency? Even though F-15s are 15-20 years old, significant avionic, engine, and missile improvements give the TAF a qualitative edge in air superiority for the near term, but the Soviet Union is developing, producing, and exporting new aircraft with equal, or better, capabilities. The Advanced Tactical Fighter will restore the TAF's qualitative advantage in air superiority. The TAF's multirole F-16 and, to some extent, the F-15E can conduct air superiority, interdiction, and CAS/BAI, both day and night, well into the 21st century. The A-10 is well-suited for the CAS mission in low-to-medium air defense threat environments and demonstrated excellent flexibility and effectiveness in Desert Storm. In order to provide CAS/BAI throughout the spectrum of conflict, the TAF will replace some of the aging A-10s with F-16s that are modified and specifically dedicated and tasked for the CAS/BAI mission. Interdiction, on the other hand, is not so clear. The F-117 and F-15E have excellent capabilities, but the numbers are small and the remaining interdiction force structure, F-111s, will need to be replaced in the near

term. A new deep interdiction aircraft will be the next major aircraft acquisition priority for the TAF. All the aircraft mentioned above possess the capabilities and munitions to hit hard and sure throughout the breadth and depth of their respective taskings and provide excellent versatility to the Global Reach - Global Power strategy. The TAF has capable aircraft and worldwide mobility commitments for most of these forces is really just a matter of tasking and training, but what about the organization? Is the organizational scheme developed for 38 wings with extensive forward deployment the way to go in the future?

As General McPeak looks at restructuring to meet the challenges of the future, a variety of alternative proposals for organizational schemes are under consideration. One of these concepts that is receiving a great deal of attention is the "composite" wing structure. General Mike Dugan, the previous USAF Chief of Staff, has pointed out that the current wing structure has been primarily centered around the maintenance and logistics functions as a cost-saving measure. Today, the commonality of parts, hardware, and equipment used to maintain and repair contemporary aircraft may reduce the manpower and structure requirements. It has become easier to maintain these new aircraft because "reliability and maintainability" are requirements that are considered in the design, procurement, and production of the aircraft and its support equipment. General Dugan said,

"Reliability and maintainability have become such important elements of our modern airplanes that we don't have to take nearly as much stuff along to keep them operating."<sup>23</sup> The composite wing structure, which has been cost prohibitive in the past due to the expense of additional parts, people, and infrastructure, will certainly gain momentum if it proves to be a cost-saving measure. There is very little disagreement or discussion on the concept of operations since it closely parallels the concepts of other USAF composite force training exercises such as Red Flag and Cope Thunder - and now Desert Storm.

The composite wing concept equips a single TFW with a blend of aircraft that are organized in the way they are intended to be used in wartime, so these forces can train and operate together in peacetime. These wings can take on various forms depending on their purpose, mission, and tasking. One of them might be equipped to support special operations and low intensity conflict (LIC), while another might be designed for a classic OCA/AI "gorilla" package to be employed in a sophisticated and integrated air defense environment.

In an article written prior to his becoming the USAF Chief of Staff and published in the Fall 1990 AirPower Journal, General McPeak stressed the operational benefits and improved performance in combat of a composite wing due to economy of effort in such areas as mission planning,

command and control, theater beddown, training and mission execution.<sup>24</sup> He, along with General Dugan, point to Kadena AB in Okinawa as an excellent example of a "near" composite structure since the base has a least six different types of aircraft under the control of five different commands and have "always worked together very well."<sup>25</sup> He acknowledges that at the outset composite wings may be more expensive to operate and the cost may not be entirely offset by the savings that will come from a more efficient command and control, planning, and training structure. However, he suggests that a reorganization of the maintenance establishment to offload intermediate level maintenance equipment and manning requirements could offset much of the cost. General McPeak agrees with General Dugan that increased reliability, maintainability, and commonality of parts and equipment make this worth pursuing in the future.<sup>26</sup>

General McPeak has made it clear that the Air Force will not "run wild" with composite wings and single aircraft tactical fighter wings will continue to be the norm.<sup>27</sup> Plans for several of these composite wings are currently being put into motion as part of the planned force structure by fiscal year 1995. The details of location and composition remain classified, but in analyzing the 26 wing structure, a case can be supported that would include at least four of these wings. These would include two

CONUS-based wings with one specially structured for LIC/SOF operations and the other designed to conduct larger scale operations to include air superiority and interdiction. The remaining two composite wings would be forward deployed, one to Europe and one to the Pacific. These wings would not necessarily be stand alone fighting forces, but could rapidly deploy in a composite "show of force" and be immediately ready to fight as a force like they have trained or be augmented as the situation dictates. This concept has merit if the cost issues can be resolved, General McPeak likes it, and many composite force exercises have demonstrated that face-to-face planning, employment, and debriefings are efficient, effective, and become force multipliers if the luxury of collocated forces is an option.

#### CONCLUSIONS

A dramatically different world security environment emerged as the US entered the 1990s and more developments are shaping this environment as the US prepares for the 21st century. The diminishing Soviet threat has reduced the probability of a global conventional war to nearly zero and, even though the prospects for regional conflicts involving US forces might be higher, the requirement for a large standing military force to meet Soviet aggression has been significantly reduced. This new environment permits and dictates defense budget cuts and force structure reductions

as America's focus turns toward domestic and economic issues. Just how much cutting is militarily prudent is a difficult and complex question. The TAF leadership has decided that a 26 tactical fighter wing structure will support the goals and objectives of the US National Security Strategy if readiness and modernization (training and equipment) efforts are given priority.

As the TAF "builds down" from 38 to 26 wings and withdraws from forward deployed bases, the US strategy of forward defense will need to focus on rapid deployment and reinforcement. These 26 wing equivalents must be modern, mobile, flexible, and ready to respond rapidly to contingencies around the world and across the spectrum of conflict. Probably never before has the "Anytime, anywhere, anyhow" motto been more applicable than it will be in the future. Speed, range, flexibility, lethality, and precision are the inherent characteristics of airpower and the essence of Global Reach - Global Power. The TAF today is the "pointy end" of the Global Reach -Global Power sword and will remain such as long as the leadership provides the resources and demonstrates a willingness to explore new and innovative ideas to make the TAF better, but necessarily smaller.

## ENDNOTES

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