



# ROLL CALL



## Force Shaping – Explaining the Numbers

Week of 12 Jan 07 – 16 Jan 07

The story about the Air Force cutting thousands of people has been all over the news and I am sure you have heard about it. While it is true that we have to cut our force, here is the real story on the numbers.

Let's start with some definitions. "Balancing the force" is about having the right number of Airmen doing the right kinds of jobs. "Force shaping" means using personnel programs to achieve a balanced force. And "end strength" refers to the total number of Airmen allowed by law to be wearing a uniform.

After the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, the Air Force and other services were allowed to exceed their end strength so we could meet the immediate demands of fighting the war on terror. Congress later withdrew its support for extra people so we had to work to get back to our authorized end strength. Through attrition (retirements and separations) and adjustment of the recruiting numbers, we were back down to our authorized end strength by the end of Fiscal Year 2005 (FY05).

Even after meeting our authorized end strength, we faced two challenges: aging aircraft and equipment and unbalanced manning. To recapitalize our aircraft, we need money. And to balance the force, we need personnel programs to get the right Airmen doing the right jobs.

In order to get the money to recapitalize, we have decided to reduce our authorized end strength by about 40,000 authorizations and use the money to re-build our fleet and equipment so it will be viable to fight the wars of today and tomorrow. This is happening through Program Budget Decision 720 (PBD 720).

At the same time we are making changes to the end strength, we are using personnel programs like re-training, the Career Job Reservation program and service commitment waivers, to balance the force. This means that we are moving people from over-manned career fields to under-manned career fields and ensuring we have the right grade levels in each career field.

A cut to the Air Force this large sounds scary to everyone, but the truth is that we've already achieved about 15,000 losses using primarily voluntary programs. We need to reduce by about 30,000 more people in order to meet our current planned end strength of about 315,000 by FY09.

Over the course of the next few years, thousands more people will voluntarily leave the Air Force through separations and retirements unrelated to force shaping. While we will still recruit thousands of new Airmen per year, many of those leaving will not be replaced. Also, many more will take advantage of the voluntary force shaping programs such as Voluntary Separation Pay (VSP) and Limited Active Duty Service Commitment (LADSC), which allows for time-in-grade waivers for retirement. For the enlisted side, while Congress has granted us the authority for enlisted voluntary separation pay it will not likely be implemented because we will reach our needed numbers through other programs and normal attrition. Currently, voluntary separation pay is only being offered to officers.

The bottom line is that of the about 30,000 more losses we need through FY09, we expect only about 10% (3,000) of those to be involuntary losses. Through this process, we will gain a smaller, more efficient force. With the savings that come from a smaller force, we will realize money that can be used to recapitalize the force now, so that Airmen 10 to 20 years from now will be able to meet future threats head on.

Know that we are planning carefully when making these decisions. We realize that it is difficult to imagine the amount of work we do now being accomplished by fewer Airmen. Last week's Roll Call was about Air Force Smart Operations for the 21st Century (AFSO21), a program which puts you in control of finding smarter, more efficient, ways to do your job, which should help you realize that we can do it.

The road is tough, but I have confidence that you will persevere and continue our tradition of being the world's greatest Air Force.

### For more information:

#### Website:

More information on force shaping programs can be found on the Air Force Personnel Center website located at: [www.afpc.randolph.af.mil](http://www.afpc.randolph.af.mil).

#### Senior Viewpoints:

CMSAF on Force Shaping: <http://www.af.mil/tv/index.asp?showid=1834>