Boost in Air Force Reserves: Dr. Janine Davidson, a commissioner of the National Commission on the Structure of the Air Force on growing the Air Force Reserves
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One of your most controversial proposals is to shift these 36,000 some odd jobs from the Active Duty force to the Reserves. Why is that a good idea operationally and financially?

Well it's a great idea for a number of reasons. It saves money, it reduces risk, and it allows Airmen to serve. So, compared to the Air Force's plan that they just came out with that cuts 27,000 off of the total force (and those people just go away), we started with the premise that we wanted to save endstrength. So we save all 509,000 Airmen, and we save the same amount of money by instead rebalancing to have more in the Reserve component. So it saves money on - part-time forces are cheaper than full-time forces, basically – but it saves money in another way too, and that is that we have invested in these people, it's a return on investment. Instead of just saying "thank you for your service, go find another job," we're saying you can continue to serve, and you can do so in a variety of flexible ways by staying in the Reserve Component, that's the first thing. The second thing is about risk; instead of downsizing our whole entire force, we keep the entire force, and they're ready, and it's what we call reversible. You need to call them back up if there's a surge or a war, they're there and they're ready.

One of the criticisms is, well you know, is the report as empirical in some of these cost assumptions because there were folks who say well, you know, how do you actually know that, what are the actual costs. What is the actual cost difference between an Active Duty and a Reserve Airman, for example?

Generally speaking, what we look at is not so much that is we look at mandays or manyears, right, and so one of the recommendations that we have is, if you're going to shift, you need to add 15,000 manyears and fund for that into the Reserve component in order to get the same amount of capability. And by doing that, you're going to save $2 billion, which is the same amount that the Air Force says they're going to save by just getting rid of those people.

So you're saying you have greater operational capability and you save the money in order to reinvest it in capability.

That's right, and I think it's really important to understand that you're going to reduce strategic risk. Our Air Force will still be capable of surging for a big problem.

And when you looked at what are the capabilities that you require or would rather see in the Reserve, you're saying that it's intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance, cyber, and missile. What's the rationale, especially on those three, to shift them to the Reserves?

I think the Air Force is going to need to go through component by component; we already have 46%, for instance, of our capability of air refueling in the Reserve component, we have a similar number already in cyber. Now cyber, of those three cyber is a great example. The private sector is just well in front of us and we want to be able to leverage that expertise. And I saw this in action – I went to a cyber wargame, it was amazing, and we had people that were in the Guard, in state Guards, and they also worked for places like Google and Microsoft, so they could bring that knowledge into the wargame. And it was pretty amazing, and the Guard is able to operate across the national security and homeland security legal spectrum, and that's very important. It's hard to understand, but they have Title authority, which is really important because the cyber threat is a weird, hybrid threat, so we need a weird, hybrid solution. And, you know, having cyber experts from the private sector that are both in the Guard and also working as experts is a great way to do that.

One of the things that you recommended was also eliminating the Air Force Reserve Command headquarters. Why get rid of that, because it is a fairly large organization, almost 90,000 people. What's the rationale for getting rid of that?

Okay, so this is a very misunderstood part of our report, and this is about integration. Now the Air Force has been amazingly innovative over the past twenty years of further integrating the Total Force and they have these things called associate units, and when we looked at that, we said this is awesome. And when we talked to people, they wanted to do more, and what we recommend overall is to do more of that, more integration, and when you unpack the integration, that's the logical step. We want to empower the unit-level commanders to lead and manage their troops, their Airmen, while also getting the mission done. And the way you do that is by removing the friction; remove the multiple dual-statuses, you streamline the statuses (not the dual- statuses, the duty statuses), you streamline the chain of command. Once you've got squadron-level, wing-level, group-level totally integrated where there is an active commander and a reservist deputy commander, you don't need that extra parallel structure.

What are some lessons for the Army as the Army looks at a similar sort of a problem?

I can't really speculate on the Army. I can say that the reason this works for the Air Force is because they are a total force and because, and this is very important, the Reserve component is as ready as the Active component. If the Army can do that, and it's going to be harder for them to do that because they have to train as units, so that's why it may not be a good model for the Army.