**Based on the record before it, the Commission arrived at a set of foundational conclusions that became its analytical starting point. Elements of that foundation are as follows**.

• Past and current Air Force leaders have committed the resources and effort needed to allow the Reserve Components (RC) to maintain the same standards of skill and operational readiness as the Active Component (AC).

• “Part-time” force structure—that capability delivered by traditional Reservists and Guardsmen who do not serve continuously on active duty—costs less than the force structure provided by “full-time” personnel.

• Recognizing that some missions must be performed by the Active Component, the Air Force can, and should, entrust as many missions as possible to its Reserve Component forces.

• Transitioning missions from the Active Component to the Reserve Components will allow the Air Force to perform these missions with less expensive part-time Reservists while reducing the Active Component end strength, thus saving money in the military personnel accounts that can be put to use in readiness, modernization, and recapitalization accounts. In this way, all components of the force will remain more ready and mission capable, and the Air Force will retain the capacity to surge its forces when needed.

• There is an irreducible minimum below which the Air Force cannot prudently cut Active Component end strength without jeopardizing war-fighting capability, institutional health, and the ability to generate future forces.

• Although Reserve Component force structure, especially traditional Reservists, costs less than that of the Active Component, conducting operations with Reserve Component forces is not always less expensive than doing so with Active Component forces. The Commission determined the following principles of force structure and force management that will allow the Air Force to meet present and future mission requirements within the limit of resources the Commission believes will be available.

**Principles of Force Structure**

• Both the Active and Reserve Components provide unique value to the Nation. The Total Air Force cannot succeed without three strong components. Prudent reductions in the Active Component will produce meaningful cost-savings, mainly in the military personnel accounts, and can reduce the need for cuts to readiness, modernization, and recapitalization.

• The Air Force can maintain operational capacity and capability and reduce stress on the Active Component by maintaining or increasing the end strength of the Reserve Components, particularly in traditional part-time Reservists and Guardsmen, while increasing regular, periodic, and predictable use of the Air Force Reserve and the use of the Air Force Reserve and the Air National Guard.

• Greater reliance on a larger Air Reserve Component provides a quick, *reversible* way to generate manpower cost savings (see Chapter 4). It provides an ability to surge, when needed, and additional return on investment in the high cost, high-value training of Active Component Airmen. Shifting more capability to the Reserve Components also maintains a link to communities and states throughout the nation in our unique form of federalism.

• In order to gain maximum benefit from the Reserve Components, the Air Force must program sufficient operational support funding to permit utilization of individuals and units through volunteerism or under the authority of 10 U.S.C. §12304b.

• Increasing integration of Reserve, Guard, and Active Component Airmen at headquarters and units, and increasing the number of integrated or multi-component (“associate”) units will lead directly to improved processes as well as more effective and efficient employment of the Total Air Force. Further integration of the Air National Guard and the Active Component (as described in Chapter 3) is a desirable goal but will require modifications to Titles 10 and 32 of the U.S. Code before the full value of such integration can be achieved.

**Principles of Force Management**

• Removal of numerous barriers to a “Continuum of Service,” in which Airmen have greater flexibility to leave and re-enter Active and Reserve Components throughout their careers, will enable more effective and efficient utilization of an integrated Total Force. Some of those barriers are contained in law, but others reside solely in service policy, tradition, and culture.

• In addition to removing barriers to transitioning between components, Congress and the Department of Defense should modify laws and regulations that unnecessarily limit or restrict the length of service by qualified Airmen in certain career fields with high training costs. Doing so will allow the Air Force to more fully capitalize on the cost of training those Airmen.