The Air Force's Individual Mobilization Augmentee Program

Is the Current Organizational Structure Viable?

Col Robin G. Sneed, USAFR
Lt Col Robert A. Kilmer, PhD, USA, Retired

The Air Force's individual mobilization augmentee (IMA) program provides trained, equipped, and ready reservists when the service needs them to support an operational requirement. A significant change to the Reserve brought about by Operation Desert Storm continues to affect this program. These reservists are assigned to active duty rather than Reserve units, so their program's organizational structure is unique and often confusing. Since an organization's configuration can significantly influence its ability to support the mission, one may reasonably inquire about the viability of the command

structure of the Air Force's current IMA program. This article uses Stafford Beer's viable system model as an analytical tool to examine that structure.[1] The evaluation presented here focuses on optimizing the management of IMA forces to ensure increased operational readiness in times of crisis; it also addresses the need to meet reservists' reasonable expectations that the Air Force use them in roles for which they are well suited and well trained, as well as roles consistent with an integrated All-Volunteer Force.

The Individual Mobilization Augmentee

The IMA program immediately augments active duty units in time of war or national crisis by assigning reservists to them for training prior to such events. Instead of spending weeks or months trying to understand a unit's unique personalities and relationships, the IMA who has experience with the unit can step in and provide seamless support. This concept of Reserve support has been part of the Air Force since activation of the Reserve in 1948 when Lt Gen George E. Stratemeyer, commander of Air Defense Command, assigned reservists to key command positions for training as understudies and availability in case of general mobilization.[2] Although often questioned in peacetime, the concept effectively supported the active duty service during Operation Desert Shield / Desert Storm, the last time the president activated IMAs under title 10. Currently, by volunteering for activation, IMAs offer critical active duty support to deployments of air and space expeditionary forces and other missions through man-day tours.[3]

The Air Force defines an IMA as "an individual filling a military billet identified as augmenting the active component structure of the Department of Defense [DOD] or other departments or agencies of the U.S. Government."[4] The perception of the IMA role remains one of backfill capacity, but the validation process has expanded to include mobilization, contingency operations, specialized or technical requirements, and even economic considerations.[5] Like most other reservists, IMAs serve part-time, typically 30 days annually, having the primary

military responsibility of meeting the Air Force's mobilization needs. For reservists and their supervisors, this translates into meeting and documenting compliance with the service's fitness, medical, dental, security clearance, and specialty code training demands. Command and unit training requirements may also come into play.

For active duty supervisors and commanders, the integration of part-time reservists presents unique challenges. Some aspects of these reservists, such as their flexible participation dates and unique civilian skills, prove beneficial, yet mastering different paperwork and writing performance reviews of part-time Airmen create issues even for the most conscientious supervisors. Given the primary emphasis, appropriately, on the unit mission, the prioritization of tasks can often lessen the importance of training and supporting IMAs. Therefore, they must frequently take the initiative—schedule their own training, identify their duty activities, and manage their own careers. The understanding that IMA is an abbreviation for "*I'm a*lone" does not seem amusing to the reservist.

Despite such difficulties, the IMA program continues to exist because commanders find ways to integrate these reservists into the unit in a manner that ensures appropriate training and supports unit goals. When used effectively, senior personnel with the appropriate training can offset deficiencies in the active duty realm. The Air Force can exploit particular civilian skills and experiences to address unit issues. Moreover, fresh perspectives and unconventional viewpoints—the result of periodic unit participation—can combat groupthink and identify new solutions. Oftentimes, successful IMAs are also exceptional performers and people since they continue to support national defense as citizen-Airmen and have learned to balance their military duties, civilian careers, and family commitments. As the number of active duty members continues to decline, IMAs also become the face of the Air Force to their communities and businesses.

Organizational Structure of the IMA Program

Because IMAs are reservists assigned to active duty units, neither the Reserve's nor the major commands' (MAJCOM) hierarchical organization can effectively manage the program. Therefore program responsibilities have been split—MAJCOMs responsible for operational control (OPCON) and Air Force Reserve Command (AFRC) responsible for administrative control (ADCON).[6] OPCON—the authority to designate objectives, assign tasks, organize units, and employ forces in direct support of the mission—may be delegated to subordinate units but not to entities outside the command.[7] ADCON covers support and administrative functions such as pay, logistics, and personnel management. Though logical, this structure is not without problems because two separate data systems document IMAs: the Reserve databases and those of the active duty service. Notwithstanding attempts to harmonize the systems, they do not always interface smoothly, commonly generating errors and inconsistencies.

The activation of IMAs for Desert Shield / Desert Storm identified some of the tracking system disconnects and highlighted areas needing improvement to increase AFRC's visibility of reservists. A subsequent audit by the Government Accountability Office noted the IMA program's compliance with public law and concerns about DOD and Air Force regulations. To address these issues, Gen John Bradley, AFRC commander, created the Readiness Management Group (RMG) in 2005 as a direct reporting unit to the deputy commander of the Air Force Reserve. This organization seamlessly integrates wartime-ready Reserve forces into the Air Force mission, supporting both steady-state and contingency operations.[8] The RMG tracks the readiness of the 8,000 IMAs in the Air Force through 19 detachments led by an IMA program manager (a colonel) (fig. 1). Due to the incompatibility of the Reserve's and regular component's tracking and management systems, many ADCON functions have become shared responsibilities, the MAJCOM implementing the action and AFRC tracking it. These commitments include readiness, mobilization, training, discipline, and personnel management.[9]

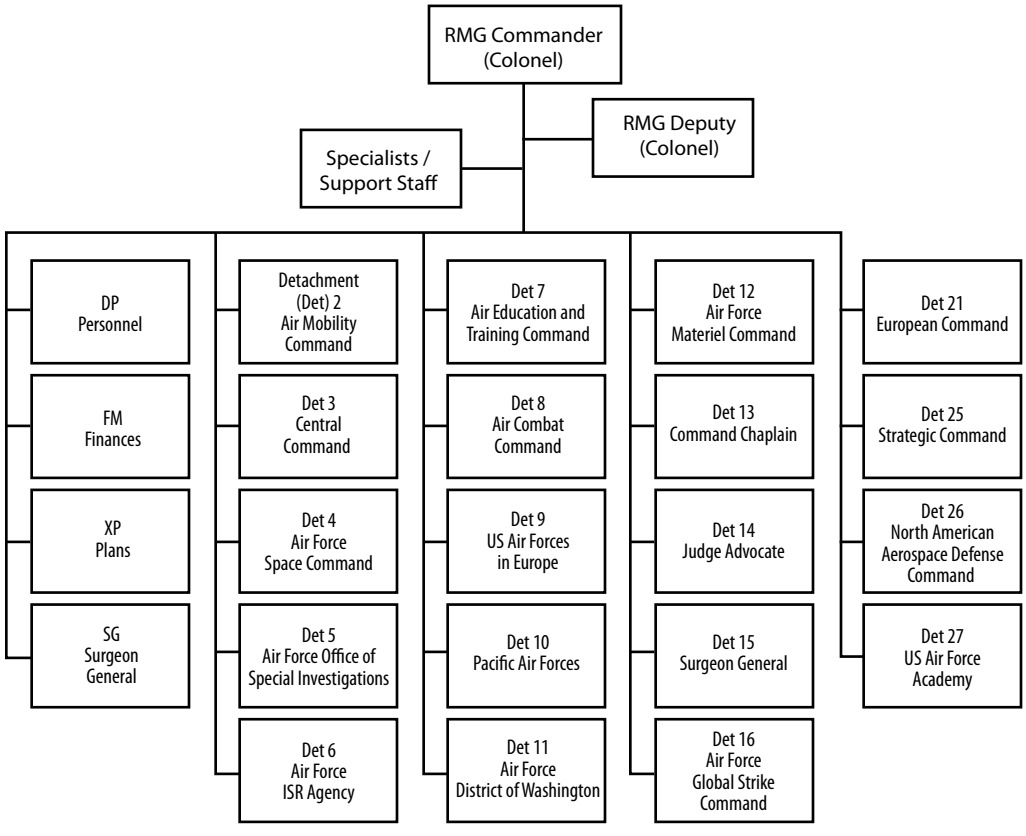


Figure 1. Organizational structure of the Readiness Management Group. (Adapted from CMSgt James R. Pascarella, "Readiness Management Group Overview," PowerPoint presentation [Robins AFB, GA: Air Force Reserve Command, 19 October 2011], 23.)

Viable System Model

Used to evaluate and diagnose organizational structures, the viable system model, developed in the 1980s by Stafford Beer, facilitates the understanding and optimization of a wide variety of business entities.[10] Employing organizational cybernetics, Beer created a detailed and elegant model that tracks the interactions and relationships of a complex enterprise, identifying the necessary and sufficient subsystems of an

organization that make it self-regulating and able to exist independently.[11] An examination of these systems—designated System 1, System 2, System 3 and 3*, System 4, and System 5—allows managers to determine an organization's viability and detect organizational deficiencies (fig. 2).

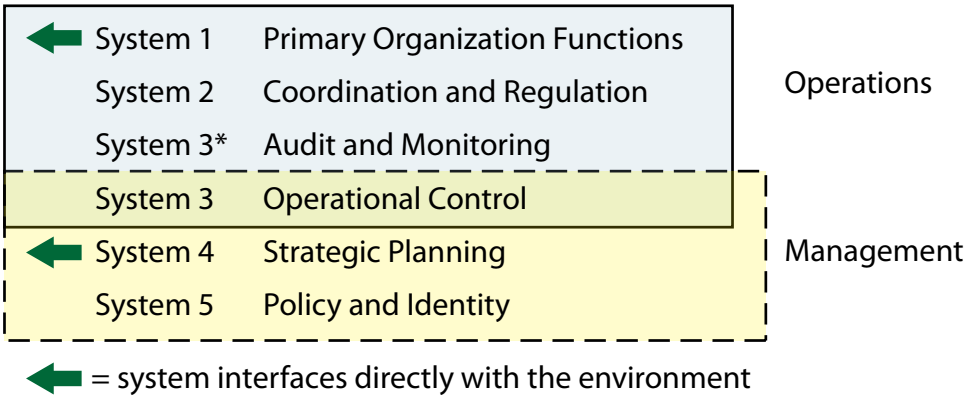


Figure 2. Required components of the viable system model.

The following definitions apply:

- System 1 implements the purpose of the organization. Directly providing the good or service, such systems represent the primary organizational unit, interfacing daily with the environment and creating the value of the organization.[12]
- System 2 coordinates between the System 1s, balancing the output, implementing consistency, and minimizing any oscillations.[13] An administrative function, it ensures that operations run smoothly and serves as the information conduit that allows System 3 to manage the component systems.
- System 3, the operational planning and control of the current organization, integrates the System 1s into a coherent business by establishing rules, balancing resources, and optimizing situations.[14] With Systems 4 and 5, System 3 also supplies the supervisory management function.

- System 3*, a selective audit and monitoring function, assists System 3 in managing the system.[15] This operation supports System 3's need for specific, detailed information not available on an ongoing basis from System 2.
- System 4, the organization's strategic planning element, is responsible for long-term program development as well as the "outside and future" interface of the organization. It interacts directly with the environments to anticipate future trends and plan the integration of current and future states.[16]
- System 5 provides overall organization policy, balances current and future operations, and determines the identity and culture of the organization.[17] It does so by balancing System 3 and System 4 plans.

Another fundamental aspect of the viable system model involves its repetitive and nested nature—the idea that any viable system contains, and is contained in, a viable system.[18] This feature allows managers to target each recursive layer of an organization using the same methodology and tools. Without affecting the inherent complexity of the enterprise, the researcher can target and simplify an organization for analysis in a way that increases the practical value of the model.

Using the model to analyze an organization entails three steps:

1. Identify recursion levels and select level for analysis (the system-in-focus).
2. Define purpose and identity of the system-in-focus.
3. Analyze the system-in-focus for required subsystems 1 through 5, the necessary and sufficient elements.[19]

Applying these steps to the IMA program will determine whether it remains viable in the face of changes that have occurred and will point to actions that may optimize the program and have a beneficial effect on both the reservists and the Air Force.

Application of the Model

Following the steps highlighted above and drawing on Air Force regulations, organizational and mission briefings, publications by senior leaders, and the 20-year experience of this article's lead author in the Air Force IMA program, we used the viable system model to evaluate the IMA organizational structure. The first step called for determining the system-in-focus for analysis. We selected the Air Force level as a reasonable boundary since it addresses the shared responsibilities of the MAJCOMs and AFRC and would best encompass the scope of the program. We rejected examining the DOD's IMA program as too broad, just as we rejected targeting the IMA supervisor—the System 1 element—as too narrow for an insightful analysis at this stage.

At the Air Force level, the purpose and identity of the IMA program deal with raising, training, and sustaining reservists to immediately augment the active duty component. By means of regulation and the support of senior leaders, the IMA has become an important reserve manpower resource that gives the Air Force wartime capability, specialized skills, and continuity at active duty units during mobilization.[20] The *Readiness Management Group Individual Reserve Guide* instructs IMAs that their primary mission in peacetime is readiness—meeting the Air Force's training, fitness, and medical requirements to allow for mobilization.[21] Based on these sources, the service's IMA program seeks to ensure that IMA reservists have the organization, training, and equipment that allow them to activate and support and defend the United States in times of crisis, national emergency, and war.[22]

Continuation of the analysis demanded a review of the necessary and sufficient systems of the system-in-focus. The following sections describe the results (see the table on the next page), making use of examples to illustrate the findings and note any deficiencies.

Table. Systems of the viable system model identified for Air Force Reserve Command's IMA program

System 1 Primary Operations	*System 2* Coordination and Regulations	*System 3* OPCON	*System 3** Audit / Monitoring	*System 4* Strategic Planning	*System 5* Overall Policy
IMA Supervisor	Active duty reporting systems Reserve reporting systems DOD instructions / Air Force instructions	MAJCOMs	RMG (AFRC)	none	AFRC

Primary Operations: System 1

The IMA supervisor directs the primary activity of the Air Force IMA program by preparing reservists to support the Air Force when required and by ensuring the fulfillment and documentation of all mobilization requirements.[23] Members of the regular component, either military or civilian, these supervisors manage a limited number of IMAs—typically one or two—as an additional duty. Because very few of them are familiar with the differences between regular and Reserve documentation, they rely on the reservist to teach them the detailed requisites of the IMA program.

As professionals, IMA supervisors take their responsibilities seriously and try to meet all requirements.[24] However, obstacles abound since the typical reservist is present in the unit for only 30 days each year and supervisors must concentrate on the day-to-day mission. Additionally, the tools and reminders that exist for active duty Airmen, such as timely officer/enlisted performance report shells, may or may not exist for the IMA. A number of resources assist supervisors with their task. Often a reservist at the supervisor's command level—sometimes called the senior IMA—may be assigned the additional duty of supporting IMAs and their supervisors with IMA program issues. The unit may also assign an individual to manage IMA paperwork. The RMG detach-

ment and the base IMA administrator are also available to answer questions and offer guidance to the supervisor and IMA.[25] However, due to the unique aspects of the IMA positions, the IMAs themselves must frequently resolve such issues. IMAs who are not proactive, organized, and able to educate others on the program often prove ineffective and remove themselves from the program. Figure 3 highlights the multiple, complex organizational structure of the IMA.

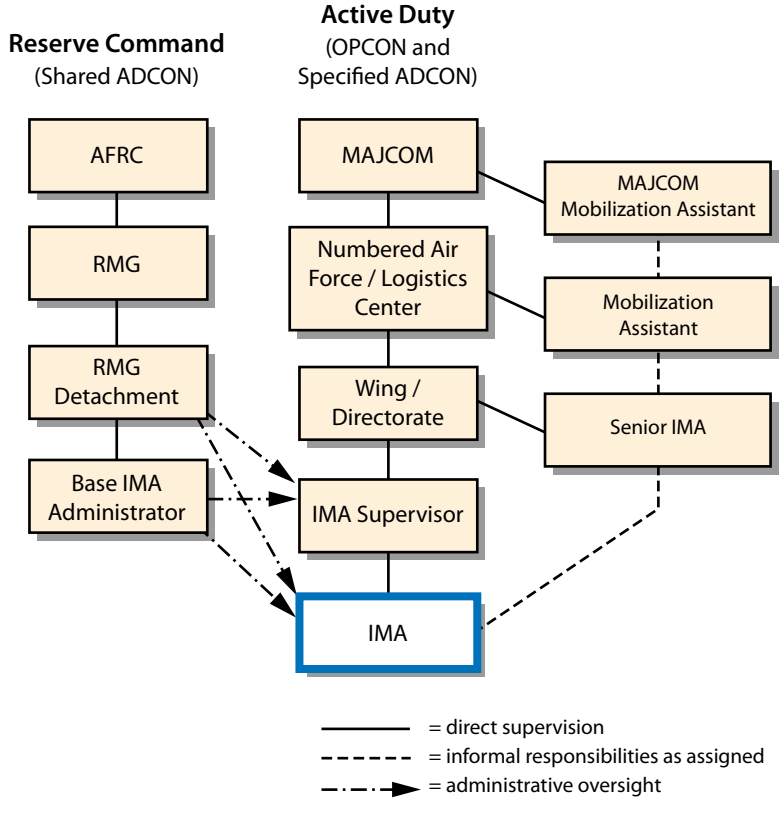


Figure 3. IMA organizational chart. (Data from Air Force Instruction 36-2629, *Individual Mobilization Augmentee Management*, 10 December 2001, http://www.e-publishing.af.mil/shared/media/epubs/AFI36-2629.pdf; and Readiness Management Group, *Readiness Management Group Individual Reserve Guide* [Robins AFB, GA: Air Force Reserve Command, March 2008], http://www.afrc.af.mil/shared/media/document/AFD-080408-050.pdf.)

Coordination and Regulations: System 2

The coordination channels for IMAs consist primarily of tracking systems for medical, dental, fitness, security clearance, and training status. Additional systems that require access from both IMAs and their supervisors include orders generation systems (Air Reserve Order Writing System) and duty scheduling (Unit Training Assembly Participation System). Since IMAs are assigned to active duty units, billet identification (unit manning document) and supervisor assignments are also important. Air Force regulations that implement the IMA program make up a component of System 2 as well.

Due to the division between the systems of the regular and Reserve components, the available coordination and tracking tools repeatedly prove ineffective. System disconnects and entry errors, caused by users' limited experience with the systems, delay the identification and resolution of issues. Additionally, slowdowns occur because data tracked by AFRC must be redistributed to the MAJCOMs and then down to the supervisors. Furthermore, two trends affect coordination systems: IMAs' self-reporting of data and the RMG's oversight of readiness. Most IMA electronic systems upgrades require the IMA to input readiness data directly, without coordination with the assigned unit. At the same time, the RMG attempts to correlate master system data to track IMA readiness. Leading to two different end states, these two processes are thus diametrically opposed. Additionally, both trends remove the IMA supervisor and operational unit from the information channels, resulting in inefficient management and coordination.

These trends have factored into recent coordination failures. In May 2010, for example, AFRC updated the process for authorizing IMA duty, supplying information to the detachments for distribution. However, because that data dealt with OPCON, the detachments did not communicate it to the IMAs or their supervisors. Consequently, on the transition date, two-thirds of the IMAs were not in compliance, primarily because they had no knowledge of the change. Similarly, the Air Force recently directed that all active duty and Reserve Airmen

undergo training in the repeal of the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy, an operational requirement levied on the supervisor. Unfortunately, due to time constraints, IMAs not on duty were often overlooked, or those who had the training could not enter this information into the active duty tracking system. The status of IMA training became a priority just days before final reports were due, when the operational Air Force realized that the lack of training for these IMA reservists would adversely affect its compliance metrics.[26] Failures and disconnects in the readiness tracking systems add to the pressures on supervisors and can influence the Air Force's impression of the competency and value of the IMA program.

*Operational Control: System 3 and System 3**

The relatively small number of IMAs allows most of the MAJCOMs to exercise their OPCON of them at the headquarters level through a Reserve adviser's office. The MAJCOM mobilization assistant, an IMA assigned to the MAJCOM commander, assists in this process. These assistants also work together as part of their executive-level responsibilities to coordinate the IMA programs among the MAJCOMs. Additionally, since IMAs are included in the administrative documentation systems used by the regular component, not the separate systems used by the Reserve component, AFRC must share ADCON with the active duty service. These shared responsibilities, involving implementation by MAJCOMs and tracking of compliance by AFRC, include readiness, mobilization, training, discipline, and personnel management, mentioned previously.[27]

Ambiguity in both regulation and practice of the MAJCOMs' IMA program managers has adversely affected OPCON. Prior to the advent of the RMG, the program manager—assigned to the MAJCOM—resided in the OPCON chain of command. When Air Force Manual 36-8001, *Reserve Personnel Participation and Training Procedures*, became Air Force Instruction (AFI) 36-2254, *Reserve Personnel Participation*, in 2010, this position converted to an RMG program manager, an adjustment that

moved the authority of the position to the ADCON chain of command. Unfortunately, the update and resultant changes have not been clearly identified or incorporated. Sections of the regulation assign tasks to "Commander / RMG program manager," implying that either may authorize a specific action (i.e., based on either OPCON or ADCON authority).[28] This is ambiguous, confusing, and a clear violation of the OPCON and ADCON construct.

Another component of OPCON, the System 3* audit and monitoring function, is identified as AFRC's RMG and its detachments. The base IMA administrators, base-level IMA support (part of the RMG), serve as advisers on personnel and readiness for the assigned unit, AFRC, and the IMAs. They also train commanders and supervisors in the appropriate use and management of reservists.[29] As noted earlier, the RMG primarily deals with the shared ADCON responsibilities that it monitors and tracks. Having direct interaction with IMAs and their supervisors, the RMG organizational structure—specifically colonels serving as program managers—implies an autonomy inconsistent with the authority of the organization and its administrative mission.[30] Moreover, the fact that a colonel serves as deputy in the RMG violates AFI 38-201, *Management of Manpower Requirements and Authorizations*, which prohibits this practice.[31] Although one can waive Air Force policy for legitimate reasons, the negative interpretations ascribed to this practice in a support organization judged by the regular component can diminish joint operations. Perception of the program could improve if the RMG organizational structure complied with Air Force policy.

Strategic Planning: System 4

This analysis could not identify a System 4 function, a strategic planning element, in the Air Force IMA program. The chief of reserves, Headquarters Air Force, is responsible for overall IMA management policy, but AFI 36-2629, *Individual Mobilization Augmentee Management*, does not mention a subordinate organization for IMA long-term planning. Headquarters AFRC has explicit responsibility only for IMA re-

cruitment, pay, and lodging reimbursement. Although the mobilization assistant to the chief of reserves is designated the IMA program advocate, the concept of long-range strategic planning does not exist.

Similarly, the MAJCOMs and agencies have no strategic planning element for the IMA program. AFI 36-2629 requires these organizations to support the IMA program manager, now part of the RMG detachment, and participate in the validation and funding processes concerned with command-level management to ensure the availability of trained and ready reservists. MAJCOM manpower offices handle IMA position requirements, based upon requests from subordinate units that AFRC must approve. AFRC's adviser offices implement the IMA program and do not deal with Air Force–level IMA program planning. Having no centralizing function to identify or implement long-range IMA program goals, the commands and agencies offer operational but not strategic program support. Therefore, based on this review, no System 4 element exists for the Air Force's IMA program.

Overall Policy: System 5

According to AFI 36-2629, AFRC—the policy organization for the IMA program—has responsibility for the overall management policy for the total Reserve resources, including IMAs. The chief of reserves, Headquarters Air Force, also serves as the AFRC commander. Additionally, AFRC considers the IMA program one of its responsibilities and includes that program in formal mission briefings. Finally, the typical Airman associates the IMA program with the Air Force Reserve since the participants are members of the latter, not the regular Air Force.

However, as a practical matter, the IMA program and the official status of the IMAs themselves are not well understood. IMA supervisors and commanders consider IMAs unit assets because of their assignment to the unit. AFRC considers them a Reserve asset since they are reservists. Regulations support this fractured identity by directing the MAJCOMs to request and justify IMA billets but leaving the final authority to approve/deny and fund them with AFRC. Most active duty

Airmen do not consider the official status of IMAs at all because they do not have significant interaction with them or because the IMAs have become so integrated into the force that their coworkers do not recognize their unique status. Meanwhile, the DOD's *Comprehensive Review of the Future Role of the Reserve Component* (2011) identifies individual reservists as important components of the future Reserve force.[32]

Therefore, in the desired Air Force transition to an operational Reserve, a major question remains: who determines the skills and contributions needed from IMAs? Should the Reserve assess overall Air Force needs and allow the MAJCOMs to train and operationally manage the assets? Or should the MAJCOMs determine their requirements and have AFRC continue to provide tracking and administrative support? In the current environment, marked by changes in the nature of warfare and by ominous political and economic forecasts, this fundamental identity issue may impinge upon the long-term viability of the IMA program.

Relationships, Connections, and Insights

Our analysis indicates that the organizational structure of the Air Force's IMA program is not viable because it does not include all of the necessary subsystems in Beer's model. Specifically, without System 4, a strategic planning element, System 5 collapses into System 3, and the organization simply reacts to environmental changes instead of anticipating and planning for structured transformation.[33] The analysis also identified two other significant issues. The first, a functional deficiency dealing with identity, a System 5 matter, concerns the ill-defined, ambiguous nature of the IMA program. Furthermore, incompatibilities between the Reserve and regular component systems and the proclivity of data systems to move in divergent directions render management information channels fragmented and ineffective. Without organizational remediation, the IMA program will devolve to a point that it can no longer support the Air Force mission.

Recommendations

Our examination of the structure of the IMA program has identified issues that may erode its future success and value to the Air Force. The viable system model produced insights that can prove useful in addressing these concerns and implementing four key actions: (1) determine and communicate the IMA identity (System 5), (2) create a strategic planning element (System 4), (3) align the RMG's organizational structure with its mission (System 3), and (4) improve the communication and information channels (System 2). Implementation of these recommendations would benefit the IMA supervisor (System 1) even though this analysis identified no specific actions for this aspect of the program.

Headquarters Air Force must take the lead in addressing deficiencies in the IMA program's identity and strategic planning. First, it needs to determine and document the role of reservists in the Air Force of the future. Since the future role of the Reserve component has been analyzed recently, the service need only review and identify what it expects of IMAs specifically.[34] Second, Headquarters Air Force should add the IMA program's strategic planning mission to the responsibilities of the chief of reserves. The final step, communicating the information to all involved—AFRC, the MAJCOMs, operational units, IMA supervisors, and the IMAs themselves—would prove more time consuming but not difficult. Given the part-time nature and distribution of IMAs, the effort to communicate an Air Force program should cover a longer time frame than typically required (e.g., two to three years). An effectively communicated, consistent, and long-term message would revitalize the IMA program and increase its contribution to the Air Force. A strategic planning element would support ongoing efforts by Lt Gen Charles Stenner to transform the Reserve into the operational, cost-effective, enhanced force that he envisions.[35]

Adjusting the rank structure for the 19 detachments by assigning lieutenant colonels to the program manager role instead of colonels would effectively align the RMG with its ADCON mission. This change will have little effect on office management since lieutenant colonels are quite capable of managing groups of this size, but it will transform

both active duty personnel's and the staff's perception of the mission. Unlike lieutenant colonels, colonels—considered autonomous officers—create, not simply implement, policy. Since the RMG seeks to manage and track Reserve readiness, standardization across the detachments would prove beneficial. Lieutenant colonels also have sufficient rank to act as effective representatives of the Air Force Reserve; therefore, any missteps would not appear as flaws in the IMA program but as personnel issues. The RMG deputy could then move to detachment management, removing the negative perception caused by assigning a colonel to the deputy position, in violation of Air Force policy.

Finally, the Air Force should identify, prioritize, and modernize the information systems and communication channels used by the IMA program. Although issues with operations and expenses will prevent total upgrades or replacements, understanding and documenting the systems would have value. Once identified, obvious disconnects could be flagged for improvement during the next upgrade of systems, and operational work-arounds could make do in the meantime. Project managers and contractors should ensure that they change their perspective when considering communications related to the IMA program. Since both regular and Reserve data systems document IMAs and since their coworkers may not identify them as such, all aspects of planning and implementation should recognize and consider the unique requirements of these reservists. Employing IMAs who have served significant time in the traditional part-time role would enhance any information technology project team. Implementing these recommendations would address the issues identified by the viable system model analysis and improve the organizational structure of the IMA program, thus continuing support of the Air Force mission.

Though not designed as an operational reserve, the current IMA program, with minor changes, could easily become one, as have other organizations when the flexibility of current regulations comes into play. Take, for instance, the Air Force Reserve Ammunition Team (AFRAT), an IMA organization implemented in the early 1990s as a unique solution to a difficult problem. In 1993 the Wholesale Ammunition Stockpile Program re-

port found 25 percent of the Air Force's ammunition stockpile in less than serviceable condition and the go-to-war munitions readiness posture in decline. Air Force leadership determined that this situation arose from the transition to consolidated DOD munitions depots and the unrecognized reality that, unlike bullets and dumb bombs, Air Force munitions demanded periodic inspections and upgrades. Since this task called for special munitions skills but not full-time support by either the regular component or the Reserve, the service developed an IMA structure. Air Force Materiel Command's munitions sustainment directorate received authorizations, and IMAs went to geographically separated depots for training. Driven by the team nature of munitions work, IMAs supervised other IMAs and underwent training on unserviceable depot munitions, directly benefiting the war fighter and the Air Force.

Over time, the skills and capability of the AFRAT organization became one of the options routinely accessed by the Global Ammunition Control Point, the active duty organization responsible for Air Force–wide munitions distribution and availability. Since the creation of AFRAT, its volunteers have been activated to support ammunition needs during Desert Storm, the nuclear inventory effort, and other munitions tasks as man-days became available. AFRAT's size and organization enabled it to meet the Air Force's peace and wartime contingency demands while complying with IMA regulations.[36] Over the last 20 years, AFRAT has returned in excess of $3 billion in munitions to the war fighter, and in 2009 it documented a return on investment of 230 percent. The ability to activate these reservists for premobilization tasks such as munitions distribution and their support of current operational needs have created unique value for the Air Force. Adapting the standard view of an IMA backfill mission has enabled AFRAT to offer significant, cost-effective support to munitions sustainment throughout the Air Force. Other IMA programs, including contracting or air battle damage engineering, could easily adopt AFRAT's organizational structure. By using this proven structure, AFRC and MAJCOM leaders could realize General Stenner's vision of an operational individual Reserve program.

Conclusion

The DOD is counting on reservists to assist in addressing the national security challenges of the future. Faced with economic and political issues, the armed forces need to optimize all programs in order to realize maximum benefit. The IMA program continues to support the mission of the Air Force despite finding itself in an environment transitioning from a strategic to an operational reserve. Using the viable system model to analyze the Air Force IMA organization, we found that it lacks a long-term, viable structure, reflected in the program's ambivalent identity, the absence of a strategic planning element, and ineffective information channels. However, with the help of senior leaders and minor course corrections, the functions of the IMA program should improve, ensuring that 8,000 citizen-Airmen remain ready and available to support the Air Force effectively in times of war and national crisis. ✪

Notes

1. Stafford Beer, "The Viable System Model: Its Provenance, Development, Methodology and Pathology," in *The Viable System Model: Interpretations and Applications of Stafford Beer's VSM*, ed. Raúl Espejo and Roger Harnden (Chichester, UK: J. Wiley, 1989), 11–37.
2. Roma K. Simons and Lyn Hellwig, *History of the Individual Mobilization Augmentee Program* (Lowry AFB, CO: Air Reserve Personnel Center, 1991), 5–6.
3. Lt Gen Charles E. Stenner, *Total Force Policy 21: A 21st Century Framework for Military Force Mix Decisions*, Air Force Reserve White Paper (Washington, DC: Air Force Reserve Command, 15 July 2010), 3–4, http://www.afrc.af.mil/shared/media/document/AFD-101202-018.pdf.
4. Air Force Instruction (AFI) 36-2629, *Individual Mobilization Augmentee Management*, 10 December 2001, 17, http://www.e-publishing.af.mil/shared/media/epubs/AFI36-2629.pdf.
5. AFI 38-201, *Management of Manpower Requirements and Authorizations*, 26 September 2011, 36, http://www.e-publishing.af.mil/shared/media/epubs/AFI38-201.pdf.
6. AFI 36-2629, *Individual Mobilization Augmentee Management*; and Readiness Management Group, *Readiness Management Group* [*RMG*] *Individual Reserve Guide* (Robins AFB, GA: Air Force Reserve Command, [March 2008]), 7, http://www.afrc.af.mil/shared/media/document/AFD-080408-050.pdf.
7. Readiness Management Group, *2010 AFRC Readiness Management Group Strategic Plan* (Robins AFB, GA: Air Force Reserve Command, April 2010), 13.
8. CMSgt James R. Pascarella, "Readiness Management Group Overview," PowerPoint presentation (Robins AFB, GA: Air Force Reserve Command, 19 October 2011), 2.
9. Readiness Management Group, *Strategic Plan*, 13–14.

10. Benjamin Gmür, Andreas Bartelt, and Ramon Kissling, "Organization from a Systemic Perspective: Application of the Viable System Model to the Swiss Youth Hostel Association," *Kybernetes* 39, issue 9/10 (2010): 1627–44, doi:10.1108/03684921011081204; José Pérez Rios, "Models of Organizational Cybernetics for Diagnosis and Design," *Kybernetes* 39, issue 9/10 (2010): 1529–50, doi:10.1108/03684921011081150; and Markus Schwaninger, "Design for Viable Organizations: The Diagnostic Power of the Viable System Model," *Kybernetes* 35, issue 7/8 (2006): 955–66, doi:10.1108/03684920610675012.

11. Beer, "Viable System Model," 21–26.

12. Dr. S. M. Burnett and Col G. A. Durant-Law, "Applying the RAAAKERS Framework in an Analysis of the Command and Control Arrangements of the ADF Garrison Health Support," *Journal of Military and Veterans' Health* 17 (2008): 24–25; and Rios, "Models of Organizational Cybernetics," 1531–32.

13. Burnett and Durant-Law, "Applying the RAAAKERS Framework," 24–25; and Schwaninger, "Design for Viable Organizations," 955–56.

14. Allenna Leonard, "The Viable System Model and Its Application to Complex Organizations," *Systemic Practice and Action Research* 22, no. 4 (2009): 227–29, doi:10.1007/s11213-009-9126-z.

15. Gmür, Bartelt, and Kissling, "Organization from a Systemic Perspective," 1630.

16. Beer, "Viable System Model," 22–23; Gmür, Bartelt, and Kissling, "Organization from a Systemic Perspective," 1630; and Leonard, "Viable System Model," 228–29.

17. Burnett and Durant-Law, "Applying the RAAAKERS Framework," 24–25; Leonard, "Viable System Model," 229; and Rios, "Models of Organizational Cybernetics," 1532.

18. Beer, "Viable System Model," 34.

19. Rios, "Models of Organizational Cybernetics," 1534; and Schwaninger, "Design for Viable Organizations," 955–66.

20. Stenner, *Total Force Policy 21*, 3–5.

21. Readiness Management Group, *RMG Individual Reserve Guide*, 8–9.

22. Ibid.; and Stenner, *Total Force Policy 21*, 5–6.

23. AFI 36-2629, *Individual Mobilization Augmentee Management*; and Readiness Management Group, *RMG Individual Reserve Guide*, 7–12.

24. AFI 36-2629, *Individual Mobilization Augmentee Management*, sec. 1.16.

25. Readiness Management Group, *RMG Individual Reserve Guide*, 7.

26. Maj A. R. Rutkowski, executive officer, Ogden Air Logistics Center, to center units with IMAs, e-mail thread, 29 June 2011.

27. Readiness Management Group, *Strategic Plan*, 13–14.

28. AFI 36-2254, *Reserve Personnel Participation*, vol. 1, 26 May 2010, 34, http://www.e-publishing.af.mil/shared/media/epubs/AFI%2036-2254V1.pdf.

29. Readiness Management Group, *RMG Individual Reserve Guide*, 7.

30. AFI 38-201, *Manpower Requirements and Authorizations*, 22.

31. Ibid., 20 (see 4.4.4.1.1).

32. Office of the Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs, *Comprehensive Review of the Future Role of the Reserve Component*, vol. 1, *Executive Summary and Main Report* (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, 5 April 2011), 35–41, http://ra.defense.gov/documents/publications/Comprehensive%20Reserve%20Review%20(5Apr11)%20Ver26h%20-%20Final.pdf.

33. Beer, "Viable System Model," 28.

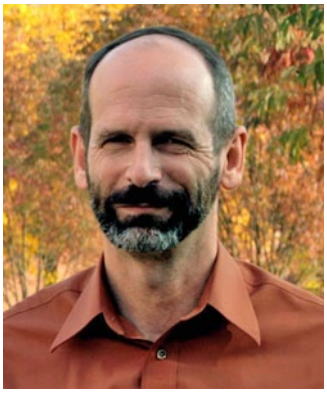
34. Office of the Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs, *Comprehensive Review*.

35. Stenner, *Total Force Policy 21*, 1–6.

36. AFI 36-2254, *Reserve Personnel Participation*, vol. 1; and Department of Defense Instruction 1235.11, *Management of Individual Mobilization Augmentees (IMAs)*, 24 May 2007, http://www.dtic.mil/whs/directives/corres/pdf/123511p.pdf.

Col Robin G. Sneed, USAFR

Colonel Sneed (USAFA; MBA, University of Phoenix) is the individual mobilization augmentee (IMA) to the director of the Aerospace Sustainment Directorate, Ogden Air Logistics Center, Hill AFB, Utah, where she supports the sustainment of A-10, F-16, and legacy aircraft; space and command, control, communications, and intelligence systems; and the Air Force munitions stockpile. An IMA reservist for 22 years, she has previously served as director of engineering, 84th Combat Sustainment Wing; deputy director for plans and programs, Aerospace Maintenance and Regeneration Center; and scientific manager, Air Force Office of Scientific Research. In her civilian career, Colonel Sneed manages clinical studies of medical devices.



Lt Col Robert A. Kilmer, PhD, USA, Retired

Dr. Kilmer (BS, Indiana University; MS, Naval Postgraduate School; PhD, University of Pittsburgh) is an associate professor of business information systems and management at Messiah College and a faculty mentor in the doctoral program of the School of Management at Walden University. After serving in the US Army for 22 years, he now works with talented students and faculty members in finding long-term solutions to difficult real-world problems. He previously taught systems engineering at the US Military Academy, West Point, New York, and artificial intelligence at the US Army War College, Carlisle, Pennsylvania. Dr. Kilmer's research areas of interest include operations management, information systems, artificial intelligence, and nonprofit organizations.

Let us know what you think! Leave a comment!