



Highlights of [GAO-06-232](#), a report to congressional requesters

Why GAO Did This Study

The Air Force is in the process of transforming its force to meet today's new and emerging threats. Its "Future Total Force" concept is intended to maximize future capabilities by integrating its active, National Guard, and reserve components to a greater degree. While the Air Force was making force structure decisions and developing its 20-year plan, the Air National Guard embarked on its own "Vanguard" transformation initiative to ensure its role and relevance in the new Air Force.

This report discusses (1) the processes and events that surrounded the Air Force's development of its 20-year force structure plan, including the involvement of key stakeholders and the development of the Guard's Vanguard initiative, and (2) the extent to which the Air Force is utilizing key results-oriented management tools to guide its effort to identify new missions for the Air National Guard and integrate active and Guard forces as part of its Future Total Force effort.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that the Secretary of the Air Force take steps to fully develop a management framework, accelerate its approval, and establish an evaluation plan to assess its test initiatives. DOD agreed with the recommendations in this report and has begun implementing them.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-06-232.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Janet St. Laurent at 202-512-4402 or stlaurentj@gao.gov.

DEFENSE MANAGEMENT

Fully Developed Management Framework Needed to Guide Air Force Future Total Force Efforts

What GAO Found

The Air Force used an iterative process to develop its 20-year force structure plan with periodic review and oversight by senior-level Department of Defense (DOD) and Air Force officials; however, stakeholders have different views on the extent to which the Air Force sought and addressed input from process participants. The plan included a reduction in the legacy fighter fleet—residing largely within the Air National Guard—and the acquisition of new aircraft such as the F/A-22 and the Joint Strike Fighter. In late 2004, a departmentwide shift in funding priorities reduced the number of F/A-22 aircraft to be acquired and resulted in changes to the Air Force's plan. Perspectives on how well this process worked vary depending on the role and level of involvement of each organization. For example, Air Force Air Staff officials viewed the process as fully participatory and noted that the Air National Guard Bureau and the Air Force's major commands had direct representation on the force structure development team. In contrast, Air National Guard officials expressed concerns about their ability to influence decisions and 7 of the 10 adjutants general whom GAO contacted believed that they did not have sufficient opportunity to influence the decisions. Because documentation of the proceedings of key meetings was limited, GAO was unable to evaluate the extent to which stakeholders influenced the process. During the same period, the Air National Guard began a separate effort—the Vanguard Engagement Strategy—to solicit input from the states on future roles and missions for the Guard and to prepare its units to respond to anticipated force structure reductions.

The Air Force has taken steps to identify new missions for the Air National Guard and test ways to integrate the active, Guard, and reserve components as part of its Future Total Force transformation, but it has not fully developed a management framework to guide its efforts or a plan to evaluate its progress. In December 2004, the Air Force announced initiatives for six states to test its transformation concepts. In March 2005, the Air Force established a new directorate to guide implementation of the Future Total Force concept. The new directorate has taken steps to identify new missions and implement new constructs to integrate components. As GAO has previously reported, organizations undergoing transformation increase their likelihood of success if they adopt a results-oriented management framework to guide their efforts. Although the directorate has drafted a strategic plan that directorate officials said includes such tools, as of November 2005, the plan had not been approved and there is no requirement that it be used to guide implementation efforts. Moreover, while the Air Force has some metrics to use in evaluating its test initiatives, it has not developed a comprehensive evaluation plan to measure results. By moving ahead to implement the Future Total Force concept without such a framework and evaluation plan, the Air Force may be unable to successfully transform its culture, evaluate initiatives and program results, determine the most cost effective mix of active and reserve forces, and ensure transparency of the implementation process.