

# GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-20-90](#), a report to the Committee on Armed Services, House of Representatives

## Why GAO Did This Study

Over the past decade the Air Force has increasingly relied on the ARC to meet operational requirements. The ARC is composed of two entities—the Air National Guard (ANG) and the Air Force Reserve (AFR)—which together comprise a substantial part of the total Air Force capability. AFSOC relies on either volunteerism or involuntary mobilization to activate ARC units.

House Report 115-676, accompanying a bill for the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2019, contains a provision for GAO to assess ANG and AFR involuntary mobilization plans to support special operations. GAO evaluated the extent to which (1) AFSOC's mobilization process provides the ARC with timely and reliable forecasts of planned utilization of units and personnel; and (2) the ARC identifies and communicates information to AFSOC on the units and individuals available for mobilization or on voluntary deployments.

## What GAO Recommends

GAO is making three recommendations, including that the Air Force should ensure that AFSOC has the organizational capacity to effectively initiate, coordinate, and execute ARC mobilizations; and should develop a method for providing AFSOC with consolidated information regarding units available for mobilizations. DOD concurred with one of these recommendations and partially concurred with two, stating that some information is being shared and a planned initiative could improve the information flow. GAO believes this initiative, if implemented, could address the intent of its recommendations.

View [GAO-20-90](#). For more information, contact Cary Russell at (202) 512-5431 or [russellc@gao.gov](mailto:russellc@gao.gov).

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## SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES

### Additional Actions Are Needed to Effectively Manage Air Reserve Component

## What GAO Found

The Air Force Special Operation Command's (AFSOC) mobilization process does not fully support Air Reserve Component (ARC) needs for timely and reliable information. While AFSOC has established mobilization processes in line with Air Force guidance, the command faces difficulties, as follows:

- consistently providing ARC units and personnel with timely notifications regarding anticipated demand for their capabilities;
- coordinating with ARC commands on potential requirements for ARC capabilities; and
- sharing reliable information about mission requirements and resources with ARC units and personnel.

According to AFSOC officials, these difficulties stem from AFSOC's limited organizational capacity to conduct the planning, coordination, and execution of involuntary mobilizations (that is, ARC units or personnel ordered to active duty). Other Air Force entities that provide ARC capabilities to meet Air Force-wide requirements have established the capacity within their operations departments to coordinate with the ARC when implementing the involuntary mobilization process. AFSOC officials stated that because AFSOC did not, until recently, regularly use involuntary mobilizations to access the ARC, it was not considered necessary to have an organizational entity dedicated to managing involuntary mobilizations. AFSOC officials stated that the command's operations center has submitted requests to its headquarters for additional resources toward creating such organizational capacity, but the requests were not funded in fiscal years 2018 or 2019, as other requests received higher priority. According to officials, AFSOC is currently exploring possible short-term solutions. In the absence of the organizational capacity to conduct the planning, coordination, and execution of involuntary mobilizations, AFSOC will continue to be impeded in providing the notice required to access the ARC in support of requirements.

The ARC does not provide AFSOC with complete information regarding which of its units could be used to support AFSOC requirements for special operations activities. The Air Force uses a model that captures and organizes Air Force-wide requirements, but the model does not include special operations requirements, and AFSOC is expected to develop its own processes for its unique requirements. According to AFSOC and ARC officials, the ARC has not developed a method for capturing and organizing special operations requirements because it has historically supported special operations activities using volunteerism, which is more flexible and requires less up-front planning. Consolidated information on potential unit deployments would provide units with advanced notification, facilitating deployment preparation activities and helping personnel make arrangements with civilian employers or in their personal lives. Without a method to provide consolidated information on reserve component units available for deployment, the ARC will not have the information it needs to successfully plan its deployments, or to easily identify which of its units will be available for mobilization.