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AIR WAR COLLEGE

AIR UNIVERSITY

CAREER DECISIONS: WALKING THE TIGHTROPE
MARRIAGE AND MOTHERHOOD ISSUES FACING
TODAY'S FEMALE SENIOR OFFICERS

by

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Abstract

To understand the role of women in the Air Force of the future it is important to look at the past and present. Factors women in the military deal with when choosing the Air Force as a career range from competing primarily in a man's world, to fighting for the sovereignty of the United States in a potential armed conflict. The role of women in the Air Force continues to evolve since the 1970s when women began to readily choose the Air Force as a career. As in the civilian work force, the arrival of women on the career scene mandated an awareness of two critical social factors which affect the majority of women—marriage and childbirth. It is important for senior officers to review and thoroughly understand these two sociological factors and why this has a significant impact on the Air Force. It is my inclination these two factors, which are in fact personal choices, have more of an impact on the progression of women in the Air Force, than that of any professional barriers such as sex discrimination. An objective analysis of this subject attempts to validate and further explain this theory, thereby providing additional insights and recommendations for Air Force leaders.

Chapter 1

Introduction

In order to understand the role of women in the Air Force of the future it is important to look at the past and present. Factors women deal with when choosing the Air Force as a career range from competing primarily in a man's world, to potentially fighting for the sovereignty of the United States in an armed conflict. The role of women in the Air Force continues to evolve since the 1970s when women more readily chose the Air Force as a career. As in the civilian work force, the arrival of women on the career scene mandated an awareness of two critical social factors which affect the majority of women—marriage and childbirth. It is important for senior officers to review and thoroughly understand these two sociological factors to better understand the background on why this has a significant impact on the Air Force.

These factors have a significant impact on how women perform, why women make the career decisions they do, and how men deal with the performance of women and how they deal with the issues. It is my opinion these two factors, which are in reality personal choices, have more of an impact on the progression of women in the Air Force, than that of any professional barrier such as sex discrimination. An analysis of this subject attempts to validate and further explain this theory; thereby providing additional insights and recommendations for Air Force leaders.

The paper will provide a background defining the issue, discussing other issues that are running concurrently with this topic and how these issues also impact the role of women in the Air Force. A brief history and chronology of the Air Force woman will be included, defining their role in military conflicts since World War I. Once a history is provided, a series of discussions will be covered, primarily focusing on marriage and motherhood, but also relating issues such as gender conflict and the problems of career progression. A parallel analogy of the civilian work force will be presented to determine if women in the civilian work place face the same choices as their military counterparts.

Once the issues are discussed, there will be several statistics provided by the Air Staff *Officer Force Management Military Personnel Plans Branch* to elaborate and substantiate these issues. As this is an Air War College (AWC) thesis, it was also useful and advantageous to query the female students to explore the validity of the hypothesis. A questionnaire was distributed to the 22 USAF female members of the class. Fifteen of the women responded to the questionnaire and these results will be expanded on in this paper. Finally, what is the future outlook for the female Air Force senior officer? What will the role of the female Air Force officer evolve to in the 21st Century? If the Air Force leaders believe this is a valid issue, recommended changes of how the Air Force should change their business practices is included.

Chapter 2

Background

Why is it important to study this issue? The society as a whole is incorporating more women into the work place, which obviates the need for more understanding of the impacts of marriage and motherhood on the career choices of today's woman. Those two sociological factors will not disappear in the future, either in the civilian or military world. All Air Force officers will be impacted by the results of this study, as it directly affects themselves, or the women they train, supervise and lead. What is new is the fact that although women in the Air Force have virtually every job open to them, the retention factors have not really altered or changed to reflect these openings after the lifting of combat exclusion for women. Although women have these career fields open to them, which in fact lead to the most critical jobs in the Air Force (rated officers and staff billets that rated officers must fill), the small percentage of women officers at the senior level almost makes it impossible for any large representation of women within these senior ranks and billet structure.

This study will only focus on the female Air Force officers. A similar study in reference to this thesis as it relates to senior non-commissioned officers would also be telling and informative for our senior leaders. This study will be of interest to other female officers, both peers and subordinates, to fellow male Air Force officers, and indeed, could

perhaps have some applicability within the civilian sector of our society. The study would also lend itself to the military establishments of other nations, as most of the other nations in the "Western" world have women officers in their forces. It is also believed that this study touches other key issues currently at the forefront in the Air Force which will have a potential impact on tomorrow's Air Force. Those issues concern the role of the homosexual in the Air Force, the impact "gender roles" have on the success or failure of the officer of today and tomorrow, the success or failure of women in combat, and the single parents in the Air Force.

Chapter 3

History

I think the more that women with children should be in wars and the military, because I think that if we sent more women into wars, wars would not last very long, because you cannot carry a child for nine months, nurture him for 18 years, and then see him slaughtered, without saying, "stop, it's enough, there is another way." (nurse in Vietnam)

—Shelley Saywel
Women in War

Women have been involved in their nations' wars since the beginning of time. They have acted as couriers, doctors, nurses, radio operators, sabotage and weapons instructors, and leaders and organizers of fighting troops. In interviews conducted by journalists, or authors during or after wars, women have proudly proclaimed their abilities to support their country during these difficult times. Many women interviewed in Shelley Saywell's book, *Women in War*, stated the military became the family for them, because during war, the family was missed. That was the hardest part for them, and these women believed that soldiers of both sexes need to be prepared for that realism. It was also hard for most of the women (interviewed after World War II) to assimilate quickly back into society after being involved in the dark side of war. They were independent for so long and responsible for their actions in the Army. They had to "go to church on Sunday, buy a hat . . . all the things a good wife did. I thought I had been thrown back into the dark ages and it took a long time to adjust."¹ An Italian female courier perhaps said it best:

They say that women have babies and so don't kill . . . at that time it was clear that each Nazi I killed, each bomb I helped explode, shortened the length of the war and saved the lives of all women and children."²

Women have been involved in conflicts in American culture as well. Their participation evolved over the last two hundred years to serving as active representatives within virtually every walk of military life. With the passage of the Women's Armed Forces Integration Act in 1948, women were no longer in auxiliary status, but there were career progression restrictions. Until 1967, women could not go higher in rank than lieutenant colonel and the female representation could not go higher than two percent of the active duty force.³ In 1971, the military rescinded its policy that involuntarily separated pregnant women; waivers were then required to be discharged.⁴ There were no uniforms for pregnant women in the Air Force until the late 1970s, which consisted of a polyester smock worn over the regular uniform blouse, unbuttoned. The Air Force has come a long way since the 1970s, as now there are maternity Battle Dress Uniforms, and enlisted women are issued a standard set of maternity clothing upon confirmation of pregnancy.

In June 1976, the service academies admitted women. Within the first class at the United States Air Force Academy (USAFA), the class of 1980, there were 157 female cadets which was eleven percent of the class. Eighty-four percent of the females in the first class coming into the Academy were in the top ten percent of their high school class. Their average college aptitude test scores were slightly above the men's average in verbal skills and slightly lower in math skills. Both male and female cadets tended to be from middle and upper middle class income families, with 80% of their parents living together.⁵ An initial survey of the entering cadets found the only significant difference between the outlook of new male and female cadets concerned the role of women in society and in the

military. The male cadets were significantly more traditional than their civilian counterparts, whereas the female cadets were less traditional.⁶ At the time of the report, female cadets envisioned a number of career and family conflicts which their male counterparts did not.⁷

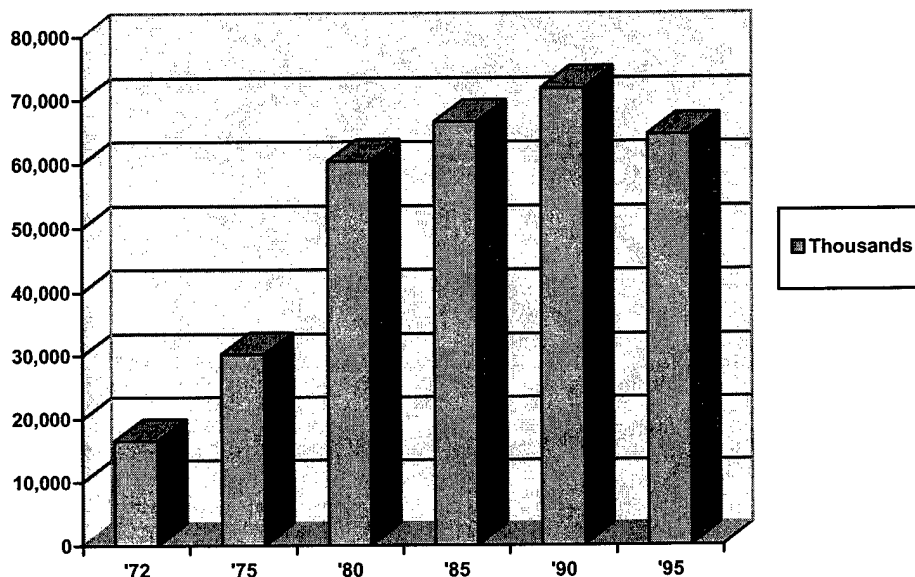
Most important, from the overall perspective, is that in 1989 the Air Force started gender neutral recruiting. Previous to 1989, females competed for a set number of jobs within each specialty, and, if they were not qualified for any of the jobs available, they had to wait for another specialty to "open up" a female slot.⁸ This process, according to Air Force Personnel, worked as intended. Women applicants (both officer and enlisted) free flowed into the system without regard to the number of women in the specific skill, for both enlisted members and officers.

Desert Shield/Desert Storm had a lot to do with bringing the women's issue within the military back into the limelight. In fact, it has been said that no event in America's history has brought home the changed demographics of the military so forcefully as did Desert Storm. The media had a big part in that event, as it appeared from watching the television that women were sought out and interviewed more frequently than their male counterparts, and specifically questioned as to their feelings, job capabilities, family concerns, etc. It appeared the major networks consistently interviewed women because viewers back home were concerned and interested as to what was happening to them, and their families.⁹ Forty thousand women served in the Gulf, compared to 500,000 male colleagues; 4,246 of those women were in the Air Force.¹⁰

One of the most public and heavily lobbied changes occurred after Desert Storm, and after much congressional debate about the women involved in that operation. In April

1993 the late Secretary of Defense Les Aspin rescinded exclusionary military policy by directing all services to open more specialties and more assignments to women. This included assignments to combat aircraft and aboard combat ships.¹¹ Within the Air Force officer corps, over 99 percent of career fields and positions are open to women. There are some career fields which are closed, or specific positions are restricted to men. These include: combat control and air liaison officers, MH-53J/MH-60G pilots, and, specified weather flying positions.¹²

Figure 1 shows the percentage of women in the Air Force since 1972. Between 1970 and 1995 the population of women has more than doubled.¹³



Source: Binkin, Martin, et al. "Women and Minorities in the All Volunteer Force"

Figure 1. Total Female Air Force Personnel (FY72-FY95)

In 1972, the female representation was 2.3% of the total Air Force, whereas in 1995, the female population was 16% of the total Air Force.

How has the American government, and society, formalized the role of women in the military? Colonel Evelyn Foote, a Women's Army Corps officer who lived through the changes associated with women in the military, described the changes as "evolutionary changes in a revolutionary time frame."¹⁴ Since the Cold War, the military remained a standing arm. The role of women evolved similarly as the military has become more of a profession than something our Nation had when needed. The increased presence of minorities and women in the military evolved since the early 1970s from external forces. These include factors such as the civil rights laws, the women's rights movement, and more women entering the labor force, as well as the creation of the All Volunteer Force. Described as "incrementalism" (slowly loosening restrictions that exclude "others") by Dunivin,¹⁵ she states the military has demonstrated its "equivocation toward social change" through the adaptation and incorporation of these "others" into the military force structure of the 20th Century.¹⁶

Notes

¹Ibid., p.36.

²Ibid., p.73.

³Deborah L. Rogers, "The Force Drawdown and Its Impact on Women in the Military," *Minerva: Quarterly Report on Women in the Military*, Vol. X, No. 1, Spring, 1992, p. 2-3.

⁴M.C. DeVilibiss, "Women and Military Service: A History, Analysis, and Overview of Key Issues." Research Report submitted to Air University Center for Aerospace Doctrine, Research and Education, November 1990. p. 14.

⁵USAF TR 85-10. "Four Years of Sex Integration at the United States Air Force Academy: Problems and Issues." United States Air Force Academy: August 1985. p. 10.

⁶Brian Mitchell, *Weak Link: The Feminization of the American Military*. (Washington: Regnery Gateway, 1989.) p. 50.

⁷USAF TR 85-10, p. 79.

⁸Air Force Directorate of Personnel White Paper prepared in response to author's questions.

Notes

⁹Patricia J. Thomas and Marie D. Thomas, "Mothers in Uniform." Article published in the book entitled "The Military Family in Peace and War," edited by Florence W. Koslow. New York: Springer Publishing Company, 1993. p. 36.

¹⁰Dorothy Schneider. *Sound Off: American Military Women Speak Out*. (New York: Paragon House, 1966, reprint 1992.) p. 256.

¹¹Karen O. Dunivin, "Military Culture: Change and Continuity," *Armed Forces and Society*, Summer, 1994, p. 532.

¹²AF/DP White Paper provided to author.

¹³The All Volunteer force after a decade and Air Force Releases Demographic "one liners" extracted from the AFPC World Wide Web.

¹⁴Charles C. Moskos and Frank E. Wood, editors. *The Military: More Than Just a Job?* (Washington: Pergamon-Brassey's International Defense Publishers, 1988.) p. 101.

¹⁵Dunivin, "Military Culture: Change and Continuity, p. 539.

¹⁶Ibid.

Chapter 4

Issues

Gender Conflict

When women first began to join the military with any regularity in the 1940s, the widespread belief was that if a woman was in the service she was a lesbian. Although there was testing for male homosexual screening, women were not screened because their presence was either temporary because of World War II, or it was deemed as having marginal status within the military and the screening system was not required. In 1942, however, there was a screening system for detecting lesbians within the structure, and in the 1950s the military instituted a strict policy banning homosexuals, including this time, women. Using women in the non-traditional manner within the military created an uproar, the government debated a lot about which jobs women could perform. As a total force the Armed Services were ambivalent about women in aviation. This was described by some as similar to the attitudes about women who wanted to learn to drive cars—aviation was a man's job. Women flew aircraft on a regular basis in the War in support of the Army Air Corps. Women also attended the same officer training school as men. The military's attitude toward women and women's role within the military remained the same until the late 1960s and the early 1970s.¹ Brian Mitchell's quote in *Weak Link* states

“Comely and confident women who perform well . . . are more successful at their jobs because they can easily elicit the cooperation of charmed men.”² What the “average” woman then faced was either to be thought of as a lesbian, or a woman who uses her beauty and charm to work her way to the top. Neither one of those descriptions are very flattering, nor are they representative. Just “doing your job” could become very difficult if you are defined through either of these stereotypes. An interesting perspective has been offered by some sociologists on this point.

One reason that men have perhaps joined the military is to demonstrate their masculinity and their ability to “defend the country from all enemies, foreign and domestic.” Maybe some men have been threatened by the arrival of *successful* women on their turf?

Karen Dunivin, again, has perhaps explained it best, as least from the standpoint of a professional Air Force officer. “There’s men, there’s women, and there’s me.”³ In her thesis she examined how military women define their role in a male-and masculine-dominant military. Her research suggested that military women lack gender consciousness as evident in three specific areas. Military women (1) don’t identify with the feminist movement; (2) don’t identify with women’s issues and women’s groups; and (3) do not network with other women. Her thesis, although dated by nearly eight years, will receive further validation through my limited research survey conducted for this paper. Of the 15 survey respondents, five had female role models. Four of the women wished they had role models available, but didn’t primarily because of their career fields (security police, aircraft maintenance, and command and control.)

To further validate these points, in 1993 Washington DC based women formed an organization for female officers and senior non-commissioned officers. Monthly meetings were held in the Pentagon during lunch hours. The meetings were, at the most, attended by 20 officers and NCOs. The organization, Professional Organization of Air Force Women, folded after the President and her staff members were up for re-election, and no one volunteered to take their places. Although this may be an anomaly, it could be indicative of women's reluctance to informally organize for the purpose of "sisterhood."⁴

Probably the strongest lobby within the Defense Department is the Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services (DACOWITS). DACOWITS was formed in 1951, comprised of prominent military and civilian leaders serving as an advisory capacity for DOD in the utilization of women. Most women Dunivin interviewed were more interested about topics that related to their professional skill, such as flying, or related to the entire Air Force population. That could be indicative that the organizations such as DACOWITS are doing their jobs because the service women can continue to perform their jobs without worrying about civil rights.

Dunivin's conclusions remain relevant today:

Gender consciousness will not increase in the future because prerequisite conditions are not present. Women accept military men as their primary work reference group. There are no network channels in which women may develop a sense of "sisterhood" identity, which is conducive to gender consciousness, and third, there are no incentives for women to identify with their gender when power and influence lie within the male structure (i.e., senior male officers.) To survive and thrive in the military, women who choose to make the military a career must develop a compatible work identity and accentuate rewarded work roles (versus gender roles). Women must accommodate themselves to the prevailing masculine world of the military, sacrificing their gender consciousness.⁵

How does this “gender conflict” relate to the sociological issues of marriage and motherhood? Specifically, if women are experiencing this feeling of “limbo” in their professional career, how do they deal with two physiological and psychological issues of marriage and motherhood? If they are trying to blend into the Air Force and just do the best job they can, what professional dilemmas do they go through every time a mobility requirement, night flying hours, joint spouse assignment, maternity leave, well-baby appointment crops up which makes them totally different and a “problem” to their (probably) male supervisor? This hypothesis has been proven time and time again and will be validated in the upcoming paragraphs.

Marriage and Motherhood

The notion of self-sacrifice is not alien to women. In their role as mothers, women understand this concept all too well.⁶

Women in the military tend to have a strong institutional attachment to their job, the people they work with, and the mission they are responsible to accomplish. That is why it is so easy for women to become attached to the military. It provides a foundation of togetherness many women, and men for that matter, tend to seek out. That is also perhaps why it is so hard for women to have to “divide” their attachments between their spouses, families and the military. The book *Sound Off*, more of an informal, anecdotal approach to this issue, documents many women’s attitudes and concern. Forefront in most of the interviewees opinion’s is the desire to be taken seriously, the concern about the conflict between work and home, and the impact their military responsibilities may have on their children. *Sound Off*, originally published in the 1980s, was updated after the Gulf War to incorporate opinions of veterans serving both stateside and in the Gulf. One

woman described her mental mindset during her mobilization which was very similar to what the women in World War II experienced. "I divorced myself from my husband, my kids, family . . . everything [related to home] . . . wrenching effort to get back into it."⁷

What does the military do to military men and women married to each other? Either the couple must sacrifice their time together to further their careers, or sacrifice their careers to have more time together. Usually the couples are asked to decide whose career will take precedence and who will simply tag along to fill a space. This is true in both the officer and enlisted corps. The problem is usually simplified if the husband is retired or a civilian, however, it is a strong man that lets his wife take the career lead. This is becoming more prevalent in the military today. It should also be noted it appears military men today are more conscientious of their civilian wives' careers. Many women today are staying behind to further their own careers, or providing a stabilizing "home of record" for their children. Military parents appear to be more concerned about the well-being, both physical and mental of their children and try to avoid moving them around every one and a half to two years. Unfortunately the military personnel system does not usually take this into account and as officers become more senior, with older children as well, the moves become more frequent. This is an added burden for both military and non-military couples in today's society.

Below are listed some other statistics which further validate the retention issue for women in the USAF.

1. Military women's turnover rates are lower than those of their civilian counterparts, who are two times as likely to leave their employees in a given year.⁸
2. Of the USAFA graduating class of 1980 (first women graduates), at their first time where they could leave the USAF, they left twice the rate of their male counterparts (21.1% versus 14.0%). The major factor affecting their decision was

their concern about balancing family responsibilities and military duties.⁹(Note: according to an Air Force Times article written in reference to this issue, researchers who interviewed some of the Academy graduates said the USAF needs to provide a career path that allows for time off to have a child.)¹⁰

3. Among women who entered in 1980, 13% left for family responsibilities, while only 2% of the men did the same.¹¹
4. Motherhood takes more time and energy because women usually organize household activities and are responsible for a majority of child care duties. Although large numbers of women chose to balance military careers and family, analysis of attrition and re-enlistment show motherhood is one of the major reasons women leave. In contrast, being a father increases a man's probability of re-enlisting.¹²
5. Women, on average, are more likely to leave non-traditional career fields, which often tend to have irregular hours when a woman's specialty has regular hours and weekends off, child care needs are similar to civilian counterpart.¹³
6. Motherhood also disrupts assimilation. This is particularly true when women work in occupations with irregular hours and extended absence from home. Women who want full careers in these fields will probably not be mothers—motherhood is less problematic when women work in jobs with more regular hours. The military has an opportunity to build institutional attachment among women (and active duty parents) by providing more family-oriented non-cash benefits—such as expanded, flexible, quality child care and dependents' quarters. Using innovative institutional methods, the armed forces could nurture institutional attachment in the modern era of working mothers-but is that a choice they are likely to make?¹⁴

Notes

¹Tracy Timmons, "We're Looking For a Few Good Men: The Impact of Gender Stereotypes on Women in the Military" *Minerva: Quarterly Report on Women and the Military*, Vol. X, No.2, Summer, 1992, p. 24.

²Mitchell, p. 191.

³Karen O. Dunivin, "There's Men, There's Women, and There's Me: The Role and Status of Military Women." *Minerva: Quarterly Report on Women in the Military*. Summer, 1988, p. 43.

⁴The author was a member of the organization. This information gathered from personal experiences.

⁵Ibid., p. 61.

⁶*The Military, More Than Just a Job?* p. 104.

⁷Dorothy and Carl Schneider, *Sound Off, 2nd Edition*, New York: Paragon Press, 1992, p. 283.

⁸*The Military, More Than Just a Job*, p.104.

⁹Arthur E. Roffey, et al. "Work and Family Issues Affecting Early Career Decisions of the First Women Graduates of the United States Air Force Academy." *Minerva: Quarterly Report on Women and the Military*, Vol. 7: 25-40, Fall/Winter, 1989. p. 25-26.

¹⁰Rick Maze. "First Academy Women Leave AF Faster Than Men," *Air Force Times*, 9 May 1988, p. 10.

Notes

¹¹*The Military, More Than Just a Job?* p. 105.

¹²Chongsoo Kim, et al., "*The All-Volunteer Force: 1979 NLS Studies of Enlistment, Intention to Serve and Intentions to Reenlist*. Columbus, OH: Ohio State University, 1982. p. 87.

¹³*The Military: More Than Just a Job?* p. 109.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, p. 111.

Chapter 5

Civilian Comparisons

Is the civilian world facing similar issues, related to the sociological impacts of marriage and motherhood on career progression of female “white collar” executives? The civilian work force originally coined the phrase “glass ceiling.” The glass ceiling is the metaphor used to describe invisible barriers responsible for excluding women (and minorities) from the highest levels of the corporate world. Original research conducted by the Pacific Research Institute (PRI) in San Francisco says the glass ceiling is a myth. Elements of their thesis suggests the pay gaps presently existing in the corporate world do not reflect discrimination, but different levels and fields of education, different career choices, and marriage. When women and men with the same levels of education, field of education, and work force experiences are compared, the gap practically disappears.¹ The PRI authors state that since women are now legally protected from discrimination, the wage gap and “institutional discrimination” is actually a factor of personal choice. Sub-titles in the document, such as B.A., M.A., Ph.D., and Mrs.—the Effects of Personal Choice, all run concurrently with the issues that are facing women in today’s Air Force. They state “. . . marriage bears significantly on a woman’s career; they shape her opportunities and are among her considerations when making commitments of time and energy.”² This was further substantiated in a recent article in *Newsweek* which also

suggested that women are opting out of the fast-track corporate jobs because they can't "reconcile the punishing schedule with family life." This was not described as a "glass ceiling," but maybe a sign of changing priorities.³ In 1975, Dr. Thomas Sowell noted in his book *Civil Rights: Rhetoric or Reality?* that:

Marriage increases a man's rate of participation in the labor force compared to single men, and reduces a woman's labor force participation rate compared to single women.⁴

This still holds true today. The largest participation gap is between married men and married women. In 1993, married men participated in the labor force at a rate 30 percent greater than that of married women.⁵ (Note that this will hold true for the ratio between female and male Air Force Colonels as shown in Table 3 listed in Chapter VI.)

There are other striking features in this briefing which further link the military and civilian world, which bear review:

- The overwhelming majority of American women (81% as of 1993) choose to marry.⁶
- A 1984 US Census Bureau study found that while only 1.6% of a man's work years were spent away from work, 14.7% of a woman's work years were spent away from work.⁷
- Women work fewer hours than men. In 1994, only 55% of women worked 40 or more hours a week compared to 75% of men.⁸
- In 1993, more than one-half of all full-time female workers were employed in administrative support; executive; managerial and administrative; teaching; nursing; and bookkeeping and accounting occupations.⁹
- In 1993, women represented 46% of the nation's labor force and held 42% of all managerial jobs.¹⁰

So what does this mean, overall, for the continued representation of women in today's corporate world. The corporate world, for the most part, is realizing how expensive it is to "organize, train, and equip" their female work force. Career interruptions, and turnover are expensive. Businesses realize they need all the talented women

they can get. In a thesis by Felice Schwartz in the January-February 1989 *Harvard Business Review*, she stated there are two kinds of women: career-primary, and career-and-family—each bringing a value to the corporation. Schwartz says these corporations and chief executive officers need to clear a path to the top for career-primary women by: identifying them early, giving them the same opportunities they give to talented men, accepting them as valued member of the management team, and recognizing the challenges they face as women.¹¹

The majority of women fall into the second category: career-and family women, who want to pursue serious careers while actively raising children. Schwartz says companies today are ambivalent at best about the women in this category. This woman is willing to trade off the pressures and demands that go with promotion for the freedom to spend more time with her family, satisfied to stay at the middle level (at least) during the child rearing years.¹² How does the corporation satisfy it's agenda, and incorporate this second breed of woman? Programs such as leaves of absence, improved and available child care, or flexible/alternate/compressed work schedules are possible solutions to keeping the career-and family women in the workforce.

This is one area where there is a strong difference between the civilian and military woman. First of all, the female officer is in the military because she is a volunteer, knowledgeable of her responsibilities and job requirements before commissioning. Secondly, the Air Force is not a profit-based organization, therefore, does not have to offer the same type of work place. Finally, the Air Force has been out in the forefront on many of these issues virtually decades before the civilian sector. The Air Force has always had equal pay for equal work. The Air Force has had a maternity leave program that

medically suits each maternity case, and the job is always there for the officer upon her return to duty.

In summary, the civilian work force is facing the same "personal choice" challenges as the Air Force officers of today however, the civilian work force has a much different end state than the military. The civilian work force is primarily employed to make a profit, whereas the military is employed to defend the country. There are some lessons or improvements the military could take from the civilian market place regarding child care, or work schedules, that some individual defense agencies are beginning to incorporate that will be discussed in a later chapter of this paper.

Notes

¹Katherine Post and Michael Lynch, "*Free Markets, Free Choices: Women in the Workforce.*" A briefing presented for the Pacific Research Institute for Public Policy. December, 1995, p. 2.

²Ibid., p. 6.

³Leslie Kaufman-Rosen with Claudia Kalb, "Holes in the Glass Ceiling Theory," *Newsweek*, 27 March 1995, p. 24-25.

⁴Thomas Sowell. *Civil Rights: Rhetoric or Reality?* (New York: Quill William Morrow, 1984.) p. 93.

⁵Post and Lynch, *Free Markets, Free Choices: Women in the Workforce.* p. 10.

⁶Ibid., p. 12.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Ibid., p. 14.

⁹Ibid., p. 16.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 17.

¹¹Felice N. Schwartz. "Management Women and the New Facts of Life. *Harvard Business Review*, January-February 1989. p. 70.

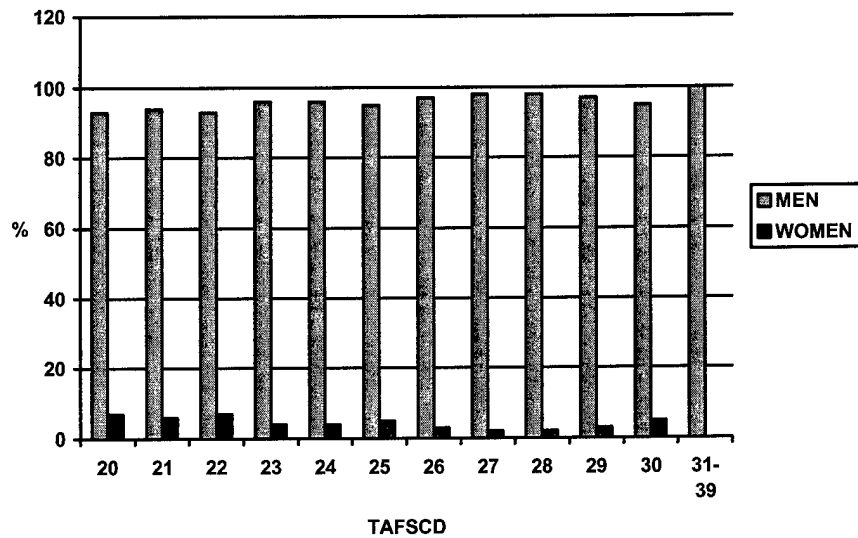
¹²Ibid., p. 71.

Chapter 6

Statistics

To back up the stated thesis statistics were incorporated to validate or invalidate the assumptions. As my primary focus was on field grade female officers, the statistics are also focused on this composition. Female flag officer statistics are not available as readily as other demographics but some are provided to put the female force in context. There are (as of 1 October 1995) six female general officers, in comparison to 276 male general officers. The female general officers are both line and non-line officers. There is one female general who is the Director of Nursing Services, however, the five line female general officers represent the acquisition, maintenance, personnel, and the intelligence career field. As of yet, there are no female general officers who are rated, therefore it is impossible to compare male and female statistics too in-depth, as female officers of those ages did not have the same career options as today's female officers.

How do we retain our female officers in relationship to male senior officers? Figure 2 provides the commissioned years for the Active Duty Air Force officer force.



Source: Chart data provided by AFPC/DPSAA, Mr. Tony Velasco

Figure 2. Total Active Federal Commissioned Service Date (TAFSCD) (%)

The numbers are based on Total Active Federal Commissioned Service Date (TAFSCD). The question to ask is what is the percentage of female officers in the Air Force with over 20 years of service as compared to their male counterparts? Numbers are shown in percentage. At 20 years of Service, only 7% of the officer force is women. As the statistics show, there are no women officers represented in the Air Force who have more than 30 years service. The percentage of women in the officer corps drops steadily from the five-year point. With five years TAFSCD, 20% of the corps is women; with ten years, 14% of the corps is women, and at 15 years, 13%. From this statistic it appears women opt out of the officer corps between the 5 and 10 year point. This statistic, however, parallels the retention for male officers as well. Most officers get out of the Air Force before the 10-year point, as they determine once they have committed to 10 years they might as well stay in until 20. The below Figures 3 and 4 display the force composition of

female-to-male officers as of 31 October 1995. As women have recently entered the rated force, their numbers are substantially lower. The significance of the non-representation in the rated force is that the rated officers reside in the key billets of the Air Force, the Joint Staff, and the unified commands.

Table 1. Force Composition Of Male-To-Female Field Grade Officers (A/O 15 October 1995) (%)

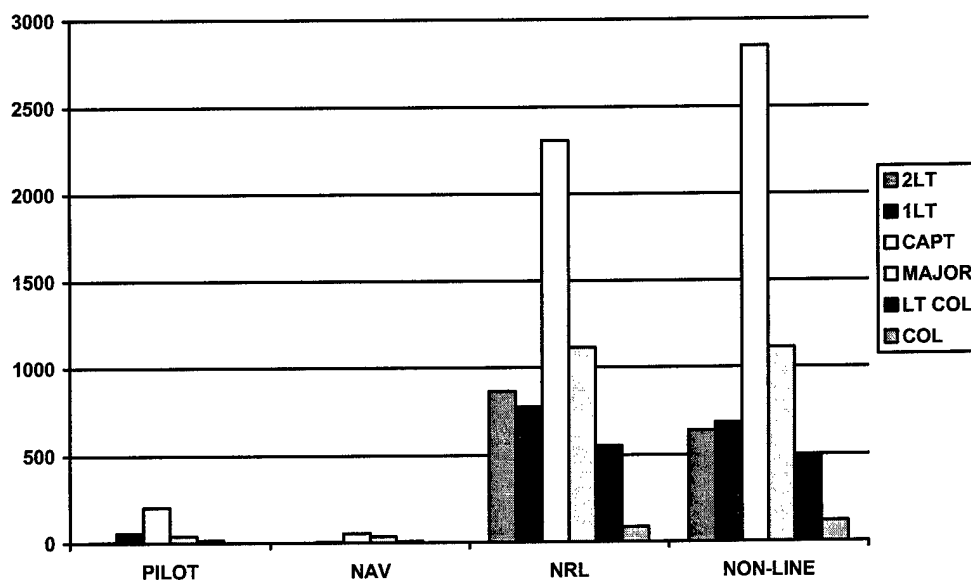
	Grade	Pilot	Nav	*NRL	Non-Line
Male	Major	20%	13%	46%	21%
Female	Major	2%	2%	48%	48%
Male	Lt Col	27%	14%	41%	18%
Female	Lt Col	1%	1%	52%	46%
Male	Colonel				
Female	Colonel	0%	0%	42%	58%

Source: Chart data provided by AFPC/DPSAA, Mr. Tony Velasco.

Four percent of the female force is rated, whereas 96% are non-rated line officers. The largest representation of female officers is in the non-line; medical and legal corps.

With rated jobs recently opening to women, statistics on where our female pilots are assigned is of value. Cross-reference with the fact women are only filling 315, or 2% of the flying billets, combined with the options of marriage and motherhood, it appears unlikely, statistically, that women will ever hold key billets in the Air Force.

Force Composition of Female Officers



Source: Chart data provided by AFPC/DPSAA, Mr. Tony Velasco.

Figure 3. Force Composition of Female Officers

Table 2. Women Pilot Assignments

Weapon System	Men	Women	Total	% Women
<i>Fighter</i>	4,776	8	4,484	>1
<i>Trainer</i>	392	12	404	3
<i>Bomber</i>	1,354	2	1,356	>1
<i>Tanker</i>	2,831	133	2,964	4
<i>Strat Airlift</i>	2,709	92	2,801	3
<i>Theater Airlift</i>	2,064	44	2,108	2
<i>Helicopter</i>	685	9	694	1
<i>Banked</i>	217	12	229	5
<i>Other</i>	44	3	47	6
<i>Total</i>	15,072	315	15,387	2

Source: Chart data provided by AFPC/DPSAA, Mr. Tony Velasco.

There are no career fields closed to women, however, there are some billets, or positions which are restricted. Over 99% of the Air Force billets are open to women. Those closed

are: Combat Control Officer, Air Liaison Officers, and Pilots on MH-53J/MH-60G. There are also some weather officer billets restrictive to women.

The marital trend is alarming in the field grade ranks. Statistics are as shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Active Duty AF Marital Status (A/O 31 October 1995)

	Marital Status	Pilot (%)	Nav (%)	NRL (%)	Non-Line (%)	Ave (%)
Men						
<i>Major</i>	Married	93.5	91.1	90.9	89.4	91.2
<i>Major</i>	Other	6.5	8.9	9.1	10.6	9.8
<i>Lt Col</i>	Married	95.7	94.4	94.0	90.9	93.8
<i>Lt Col</i>	Other	4.3	5.6	6.0	9.1	6.2
<i>Col</i>	Married	N/A*	N/A	N/A	N/A	95.1
<i>Col</i>	Other	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	4.9
Women						
<i>Major</i>	Married	66.7	66.7	63.9	68.6	66.4
<i>Major</i>	Other	33.3	33.3	36.1	31.4	33.6
<i>Lt Col</i>	Married	86.7	57.1	68.1	66.1	69.5
<i>Lt Col</i>	Other	13.3	42.9	31.9	33.9	30.5
<i>Col</i>	Married	N/A	N/A	51.8	59.8	55.8
<i>Col</i>	Other	N/A	N/A	48.2	40.2	45.2

Source: Chart data provided by AFPC/DPSAA, Mr. Tony Velasco. (*not available or not applicable)

What statistics are worth noting on this chart?

1. There are more than one-third male field grade officers married than the female. The largest gap is in the rank of Colonel where 95% of the male officers are married, whereas only 55.8% of the female officers are married.
2. The most successfully (statistically) married female officers show to be lieutenant colonel pilots. Although a very small sample size of only 15 pilots, thirteen are married and 2 are single. This would be an interesting statistic as more female rated officers reach field grade status.
3. There is an alarming difference in the divorced status between female and male field grade officers. This statistic only included people who have divorced and not remarried. Where the divorce rate for male field grade officers hovers around 3%, the statistic for female divorced officers averages 13%—a 10% difference.

In summary, while this chart shows the personal marital choices for female and male officers, it is very telling there is a substantial difference between male and female officer's marital status. The unasked question remains, is this a personal choice, or a sign of the job requirement for successful male and female senior officers?

Chapter 7

AWC Survey Results

The survey was conducted to get a very informal snapshot on how senior female officers felt about the conflict between marriage and motherhood and a successful Air Force career. The survey was conducted anonymously, however, virtually every woman who participated provided their names and offered amplifying information. My informal look at the demographics of the AWC class told me that of the 22 female Air Force officers present at AWC, 12 were married, and 10 were either single or divorced. Of the fifteen women that responded to the survey, 5 were single, 2 were divorced and 8 were married. Therefore, of the respondents, it was a 50/50 split on the marital status issue. The rest of this section will provide a recap of some of the questions asked, followed by some of the responses. Not all responses will be included for brevity, but an equal representation will be provided.

1. Were you ever counseled in your career about marriage or motherhood and how choosing those personal options could impact your career? If so, did the counseling affect your decision?

Of the 15 respondents, 8 were counseled and 7 were not. Highlights of their comments follow:

I was counseled friend-to-friend; re-emphasized the difficulties of getting joint spouse assignments and impact on career because of assignment limitations. I was already aware of the problems associated with motherhood and was not counseled about that issue.

I was never counseled; however, one time a field grade female officer mentioned to me that when we look at career paths and choices, we in the USAF never address the "right" time to have children.

Before attending War College, my husband and I were told that we would have to make a decision if we wanted to be stationed together or go for the jobs. This honest approach was startling, but told us what our options were going to be.

Yes. Marriage-counseled both would not succeed in careers, one would have to sacrifice. Seems to have "worked out" for both of us. Motherhood since "late to rate" good idea, so said the experts, until an instructor pilot. Seems to have worked again.

Yes I was counseled, but it did not affect my career.

Yes, I was counseled about my marriage by senior officers by whether or not to keep my maiden name! I have a close friend (retired colonel) who was counseled by her female general officer boss not to take so many TDYs because she was neglecting her child. After my separation, but before my divorce, the MAJCOM command and Chief of Staff were concerned about assigning both my husband and me to the same headquarters staff (amazing)!

Yes, I was counseled about both my marriage and motherhood. I was worried the USAF would be hard pressed to keep us together and some people said I'd never get promoted. It was apparent to me that my one pregnancy was politically incorrect. I was "moved" to another job.

Yes! During a counseling session with my supervisor in 1983. He asked me if I had any intention of getting married. I said no, and he said . . . "good, if you have any intention of making senior rank . . . don't. The same attitudes don't apply for men as women."

2. Have you or your spouse had to make a career progression decision to accommodate your marriage? At what point (year/grade) in you or your spouses career did this decision occur?

While married, I changed from active duty to reserve and then had to PCS due to his active duty assignment. Occurred at my 5-7-year point as a captain.

My husband (a C-130 nav with an excellent record and a USAFA grad) elected to separate. Our career fields were incompatible with joint assignments and cross training was not an option. (Occurred at spouse's 11-year point.)

I joined the reserves to be able to follow spouses active duty assignments realizing I could get a reserve medical position almost anywhere. Occurred at my 4-year point.

My active duty spouse was forced to bounce back and forth between his career fields twice in order to be assigned with my joint spouse. He passed up an opportunity to be a squadron commander at an overseas location. When the Wing commander found out that he was married to military and we were coming into the wing as a joint spouse couple, the Wing/CC said "no joint spouse officer couples in his wing" because he adamantly believed one person (the "tag along") was never as good as the "prime" choice. My spouse ended up retiring at 20 years, as we found two field-graders too hard to place together. He made this decision at the 14-year point.

My spouse is retired. We were lucky with assignments. Both of us got rewarding jobs. We were "counseled" several times along the way that one career would take "precedence"—understandably true . . . but we managed to stay flexible and got lucky despite the "advice." My spouse made this decision at the 18-year point.

After War College, I will take the lesser job and follow my husband. This decision has just occurred as I am in my 18th year.

My spouse retired at 20, he would have stayed longer if separation would not have been a factor.

Yes, for joint spouse assignment when job was a lateral move and not career enhancing. Later my husband retired to make decisions easier for us. Under the all-vol assignment system, joint spouse was nearly impossible at field grade.

Yes, separated for three years due to both taking and keeping professionally important jobs.

Yes, my spouse retired at 20 and changed careers so we wouldn't have to worry about the increasing threat of separation.

We refused to alter our careers and that's why we are assigned together maybe 2 out of 3 assignments. I didn't want either one of us to retire early or separate because we'd end up resenting each other for cutting our potential short.

Note that there are eleven responses to that question. All of the married officers responding to the survey were forced to make career decisions as a result of their careers. Even some of the women now divorced made the decisions, as well.

3. Have you ever avoided a relationship to avoid making a career decision over a personal choice decision?

Of the respondents, 5 have avoided a relationship, whereas 10 did not. There were very few comments in response to this question.

4. Have you put off motherhood in favor of your career?

Of the respondents, three have put off motherhood, for three it has not been an issue because they have never been married or could not have children, and for the majority of the women they have not put off motherhood. Of the women that have had children, the following comments are worth noting:

I never had a second child, and I wanted to.

I delayed motherhood until I became an instructor pilot.

I just never got pregnant.

I delayed it a couple of years.

One respondent has remained childless. Her response follows:

I just avoided motherhood because women in my career field are not taken as seriously if they have kids . . . they're considered less deployable, less able to devote their attention to difficult jobs.

Chapter 8

Future Outlook

This critical issue will remain on the forefront as long as the USAF educates and trains women to be a part of the organization. The United States pays millions of dollars to educate women who are exiting the service as a result of personal choices of marriage and motherhood, because they do not feel they are able to give 100 percent to the Air Force, and 100 percent to their families. The higher the rank, the larger the responsibilities require increased time devoted to the Air Force. We are seeing personal choices made by two career families, deciding on one of the careers taking a forced priority in order to stay together as a family.

This issue will continue to be a highly charged political and social issue as well. With women now clearly in combat situations such as Bosnia, increased fatalities will result and the interest level will remain in both the legislative and executive branches of the government. In fact, in November 1995, Representative Robert Dornan, (R-Calif.) requested additional hearings on women in combat and aviation. Dornan is the chairman of the military personnel subcommittee of the House National Security Committee. As the "women in combat" ruling has only been active since 1993, other members of Congress are saying we need to give it time to work. DACOWITS will remain engaged in this issue and work to ensure correct assessments are made. To do this DACOWITS recommended

to Secretary Defense Perry specific actions to take to develop these assessments, including a written analysis of the number of women and men in command and senior enlisted leadership posts. The committee also asked each of the services to provide a mechanism to track the effect of opening new assignments for women, over the next two years.¹ DACOWITS remains concerned about the effects the recent drawdown has had on the career progression of women into key positions within the USAF. Military officials cited that "women have fared about the same as men in the reduction of military forces during the drawdown, and sometimes better."² DACOWITS members have asked for a more detailed report. In fact, USAF officials did not provide a report to the committee because numbers are not tracked by gender.³

In FY95, however, HQ AFMPC/DPMY conducted a program analysis on the Voluntary Separation Incentive (VSI), Special Separation Benefit (SSB) programs. Both programs were implemented to facilitate the massive USAF personnel drawdown requirement. The results of the analysis stated that only two special interest groups, female and military spouse, applied for the exits at a higher rate than they were eligible. The military spouse category made up 9.9% of the total line officer applications with almost 65% being women. Over one third of the female applications fell into the military spouse category. Although VSI/SSB exit surveys *were discontinued* (emphasis added) in FY94, information retrieved from the FY92/FY93 surveys substantiated this correlation. This information cited the higher attrition rates for women may be attributed to societal and individual values (e.g., spouse's careers, family concerns.)

Nevertheless, will the USAF women follow their civilian counterparts in this issue? In his fascinating book, *On the Road to 2015*, the author, John Petersen, offers a very

divergent perspective on where women will be in the future. He hypothesizes that as women continue to be badgered by the “glass ceiling” syndrome, and the balancing act of family versus career, women put family values ahead of their careers and leave the labor force in large numbers. He says as women leave the workforce, they will form the social and political backbone of the communities, getting our children morally healthy again, and nurturing the community as they would their families.⁴ Is this hypothesis a far stretch of the imagination? Can women continue to do the balancing act between career and families if the family social structure continues to crumble? Or, will the Air Force, as they have in the past, work this issue to the forefront of society and provide the answer so families can have it all?

Notes

¹Karen Jowers, “Some Fear Reversal of Women’s Job Gains,” *Air Force Times*, November 13, 1995, p. 19.

²Karen Jowers, “Women Have Been Treated Equally, Military Says.” *Air Force Times*, November 27, 1995, p. 6.

³Ibid.

⁴John Petersen, *The Road to 2015: Profiles of the Future*, (Corte Medera CA: Wait Group Press, 1994). p. 312-315.

Chapter 9

Potential Courses of Action

If the Air Force leaders see this as an issue to reckon with, there are some avenues they could approach to help alleviate the "tightrope-walking" syndrome. Clearly out of the mainstream for a military organization, these ideas present a starting point for organizations such as DACOWITS to scrutinize and assess.

1. *Increase education on these issues.* Use education avenues such as AFROTC, OTS, and USAFA to educate the impact both marriage and motherhood have on an Air Force career. This would benefit all students. Include also in the SOS curriculum. Have female general officers speak to the SOS students on their perceptions as a female general in the Air Force. This could be included as part of a round table including other minorities as well. Deal with the issue up front.
2. *Advocate female senior officer mentoring/networking programs.* There is a balance required between a mentoring program and a network. Mentoring programs can sometimes be ineffective if they are perceived as being forced. Additionally, having only a mentor may eliminate the opportunities for the junior officer to meet other people. Networking allows for the ability of the junior officer to meet others outside his or her career field, but to branch out within the career field as well. Defined by Reba Keele, in her article "*Mentoring or Network*," the network lets you consciously build a large diverse "fishnet" working on different kinds of connections, one of which could be gender related.¹ This is where the importance of networking comes in. As women are now incorporated into virtually every career field, a balanced mentor/network program could prove beneficial.
3. *Re-engineer the USAF childcare program.* Of the women attending AWC this year, with dependent age children, only three have used on base care. The base childcare facilities have been struggling to meet the expanding needs of military families. Waiting lists are excruciatingly long, operating hours do not accommodate military duty days, age limits hinder usage, etc. It may be effective and efficient to eliminate the facilities and increase the base pay for members with

dependents, according to rank, or turn the program over to a national corporation such as *Kinder Care* and contract out the requirement.

4. *Support efforts to creatively get the job.* This could be through developing a compressed or alternate work schedules. The Air Force needs to look at the job requirements. Can some of the work be done from the home location? Does the job have to be done 5 days a week, 9 hours a day, or can this be altered?
5. *Examine implementation of a (unpaid) leave of absence program.* What would be the impact of losing an officer for one year if they then had to work one year longer until retirement? Would that be a choice that women or men would want to make? What would be the impact on the Air Force? For example, we have pilots leave the cockpit for years at a time, but will spend the money to re-train them to fly again after a lengthy leave of absence.

Although just a few suggestions, re-examination of these five ideas, or segments of these ideas, could be beneficial for the Air Force of the 21st Century. It is our Air Force, and we want to stay on top, balancing the needs of our people with the needs of the United States.

Notes

¹Reba Keele, "Mentoring or Networking? Strong and Weak Ties in Career Development." Ed by Linda L. Moore, *Not as Far as You Think: The Realities of Working Women*. (Lexington MA: Lexington Books, 1986), p. 68.

Chapter 10

Conclusion

The role of women continues to evolve since the 1970s when women chose the USAF as a career more readily than previously. Pivotal to this evolution has been the assignment of women into flying positions, which will put them in the contention for future Air Force leaders. The question is though if women will ever become the future Air Force leaders, as they have other sociological issues which tend to take a priority over the career choices for many of the senior female officers. Not new issues, marriage and motherhood remain relevant and prevalent in today's Air Force. Unique to the civilian world, military managers must achieve a balance between concern for mothers and their young children, and for the mission of the armed forces. I believe our current Air Force leaders need to critically review these two factors to see how it is affecting the Air Force operation today, and how it will affect the Air Force of the 21st Century.

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