More today than ever before, the Air Force relies on daily support from its Guard and Reserve personnel. The air reserve components, Air National Guard and the Air Force Reserve Command, comprise about one-third of the Air Force. Given the current size of the active duty force, the Department of Defense is increasingly looking to the ARC for help in meeting mission demands and holding down operations and personnel tempo.

Going to the Guard

An interview with Colonel Janice M. Stritzinger, The Civil Engineer, Headquarters Air National Guard, Andrews Air Force Base, MD.

The CE: As someone who has served the Air Force in both enlisted and officer positions, active duty and reserve, and worked as an engineer in private industry, what is your perspective on the Guard's role in helping the Air Force achieve its worldwide mission?

Col Stritzinger: We have highly skilled individuals who not only provide and apply their Air Force skills training, but they also provide skills honed and learned in the private sector. We have enlisted personnel in my old Air Force specialty of site development who are registered professional engineers and architects. We have fire protection individuals who are members of very active local fire departments. We have officers who are production designers and project managers for architectural and engineering firms playing an active role in the everyday construction business across the United States and overseas. This depth of knowledge provides a synergistic, experienced, cost-effective method of adding value to the Air Force mission.

Col Janice M. Stritzinger took the reins as The Civil Engineer, HQ Air National Guard, Andrews Air Force Base, MD, in July 2000.

The CE: What percent of the Air Force's total civil engineer capability does the Guard currently provide?

Col Stritzinger: The ANG provides about 29 percent of the total engineering force in the Air Force. The Reserve has about 17 percent and the active has the remaining 54 percent. About 10 percent of our ANG civil engineer force is comprised of full-time personnel. The remaining 90 percent are drilling Guardsmen who dedicate their weekends and free time to serving their country through augmentation of our total force missions. Combined with the Reserves, we are a very economical avenue for fulfilling wartime requirements, AEF [Aerospace Expeditionary Force] missions, construction deployments through our Deployment for Training program, active duty volunteer support and homeland security issues. The ANG as a whole provides a good amount of force structure for approximately 7.2 percent of the Air Force budget.

The CE: The growing threat of nuclear, chemical or biological weapons against U.S. targets has caused homeland security to become an increasingly important DoD mission. What role do you see ANG civil engineers playing in that arena?

Col Stritzinger: Our ability to provide assistance in the homeland security arena is a by-product of our wartime construct. The equipment and personnel skills available for utilization in Chemical, Biological, Radioactive, Nuclear, and Explosive (CBRNE) events are a direct and inseparable result of the training provided by the Air Force. Our dispersed locations in every state and territory position us well to respond quickly.

The ANG will continue in its constitutional role as an avenue for state governors to provide relief to on-scene local responders. We will also continue to provide support to planning and exercise activities of local and state communities while providing AEF support to the Air Force. This can all be done in addition to our historic role — augmenting the total force warfighting capability.

As the Air National Guard Civil Engineer, Colonel Stritzinger oversees civil engineer and services force structure, administering a force of more than 11,000 personnel. She directs all ANG readiness training, facility planning, programming and construction, environmental activities, and the negotiation of land leases and airport joint use agreements for 170 ANG installations with a combined plant replacement value of $12.6B.

The CE: Is it difficult to balance federal readiness requirements with individual state concerns?

Col Stritzinger: It is as difficult as balancing federal readiness requirements for individuals with CINC [commander-in-chief] and MAJCOM [major command] concerns. States have unique issues that can and have been addressed with the Guard force structure currently provided. Our federal mission is typically our primary mission, with the exception of emergency response. It is this federal mission that allows us to use our skills to benefit states and local communities in times of need. These federal opportunities help us to further hone our skills for support of the state mission and are a highly visible demonstration to the local community of the military capability this nation possesses.

Without our participation in state exercises and missions, the total force would have a harder time recruiting our young men and women into the profession of arms. As a shrinking number of the nation's population have any direct military experience, this exposure in local communities can strengthen the connection that the country as a whole feels toward our military, so we have their support when we need it for broader missions.

The CE: Has ANG civil engineering's culture changed as a result of the increase in real world deployments?

Col Stritzinger: After my recent trip to Southwest Asia, I found that real world deployments have offered our personnel an opportunity to put to use the training and equipment provided by the Air Force. I was refreshed to find that our culture is still healthy. In general, our personnel look forward to accomplishing real world missions. Utilized properly, they come back from deployments with a sense of accomplishment and contribution to the Air Force mission.

Our folks are not in the Guard for the money, but for a patriotic sense of duty to country, accomplishment of national and world missions, sharing experiences with brothers and sisters in arms, and continuing military service while pursuing a civilian career. The caution is that when our total force military folks get bored or are not used as they have been trained, they will take their expensively attained skills and do something else that they do find challenging.

Our other concern is to not overuse this resource. The culture within the Guard must always remember that our troops answer to civilian employers as well. The support of these civilian employers is critical to the success of the Air National Guard and, in turn, the Air Force.

The CE: The 554th RED HORSE Squadron is on its way to being a full-up, total force squadron, combining the strengths of active duty and air reserve component civil engineers. Do you expect to see the number of total force civil engineer squadrons increase in the future?

Col Stritzinger: I would hope that we could find additional areas to partner in total force squadrons. I think that it is unavoidable and desirable. The National Military Strategy, operations tempo, Quadrennial Defense Review, Total Force Assessment and other comprehensive reviews must and will drive unique and innovative partnering for mission accomplishment.

We need to do a better job of understanding Air Force issues, strengths and weaknesses, and the active force needs to do a better job of understanding Guard and Reserve issues, strengths and weaknesses. The ultimate difficulty will be finding the resources for mission requirements that will allow the special talents we each bring to the mix to be used to provide the most cost-effective solutions to the Air Force of the future.

Colonel Stritzinger has achieved several historic firsts in both the Air Force and the Air National Guard. When she enlisted in the Air Force in 1971, she was among the first group of women selected to enter the newly opened career field of site development specialist, serving with the 44th Civil Engineering Squadron at Ellsworth AFB, SD, and the 21st CES at Elmendorf AFB, AK. She was the first woman to be assigned to an engineering specialty in Alaskan Air Command.

She joined the ANG in 1977, and was assigned to the 176th CES at Kulis ANGB, AK. While at Kulis, in 1987, she became the ANG's first female base civil engineer and base fire marshal. Colonel Stritzinger later moved to Headquarters ANG at Andrews AFB, MD, becoming the first female to serve as The Civil Engineer in the ANG and the first female major command CE.

Colonel Stritzinger with total force firefighters on an AEF rotation in the United Arab Emirates. Standing opposite Colonel Stritzinger on the P-19 is the ANG Chief Support Officer, Col Terry Scherling.