

**Staffing for Unmanned Aircraft Systems\***

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**Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) are an integral part of joint military operations.** Each military Service has rapidly adopted the technology, leading to Service-unique staffing methodologies. Department of Defense (DOD) civilians are not currently part of any UAS staffing plan, and the Services vary significantly in the numbers of enlisted personnel used. **Since civilians and enlisted personnel are more cost effective than officers, there is the potential to substantially reduce costs by their well-reasoned utilization.**

We analyzed the missions performed by each type platform in each Service and, where appropriate, distinct phases (take-off/land, transit, combat operations) of mission profiles to identify tasks associated with these missions. We distilled force-mix guidance into three overarching questions.

**We used a decision tree to identify the categories of staff permissible for each UAS mission task.**

Where military incumbency is required, enlisted operators offer savings—when permitted—by system complexity, risk assumed, and the operational environment. More demanding missions require an officer’s skills and judgment.

Our analysis highlighted several opportunities for manpower cost savings through use of DOD civilians to conduct some UAS missions, phases of missions, or tasks within missions. **Using government civilians, where permissible, for the Air Force MQ-1/9 launch and recovery force saves approximately \$25.6 million across the Future Years Defense Program (FYDP). If government civilians are integrated into CONUS-based operations, the Air Force could save another \$68.3 million across the FYDP.** Although these savings are unique to the Air Force, they highlight the potential savings within similar operations in the other Services. In addition to the monetary benefits, civilian (or enlisted) solutions could ameliorate the mission critical challenge of satisfying manpower demands with adequate numbers of qualified personnel.

DOD has sensible policy\*\* on which personnel should do what jobs:  
 Choose the least expensive, *suitable performer*  
 Subject to being able to execute missions with low-to-moderate risk

*Sounds easy. Answer these questions:*

- Is the position **military essential**?  
 Yes: military performer
- If not, is the position **inherently governmental**?  
 Yes: cheaper of military performer or government civilian  
 Otherwise, cheapest of military performer, government civilian, or contractor

Selection criteria provide flexibility—and loopholes

<b>Military essential</b> Direction and control of combat and crisis situations	<b>Inherently governmental</b> Making decisions for the government
Military-unique knowledge and skills	Discretionary reasons e.g., career development, management decision, esprit de corps
Discretionary reasons e.g., needed for rotation base	

\*\* DODI 1100.22



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