

**STATEMENT OF  
GENERAL JOSEPH W. RALSTON  
THE VICE CHAIRMAN OF THE  
JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF**

**10 MARCH 1999**

Mr. Chairman, members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to appear and discuss our plans for one of the Department's most important priorities -- modernization of US tactical aviation force. With your strong support and direction, we continue to work diligently to field the right mix of technologically superior aircraft capable of deterring aggression or, if need be, achieving air dominance against potential enemies that threaten our national objectives.

Since the addition of air power to the tools of warfare, it is clear that controlling the skies is a prerequisite for effective military operations. Air superiority is the enabler that provides freedom of action across all phases of conflict. It allows our forces to deploy and establish the necessary logistic infrastructure to conduct and sustain operations on foreign territory. Ground, air, and sea commanders count on air superiority to maneuver forces to gain the advantage over an adversary. Achieving and sustaining air superiority permits offensive operations in hostile territory against the full spectrum of military targets. The objective of the Department's tactical modernization program is to ensure that future warfighting commanders will be able to operate under an umbrella of air superiority.

Our pilots are flying tactical aircraft that were designed in the 60s and 70s. Today, these pilots are engaged in combat operations enforcing no-fly zones in Iraq and Bosnia and are on alert to protect our 37,000 troops on the Korean Peninsula. While the threat to these aircraft is real and should not be trivialized, the fact is we have not faced the most advanced threat systems available. There are however, numerous air-to-air and surface-to-air threats that are formidable weapon systems being proliferated worldwide. In the air-to-air arena, there are sophisticated, state-of-the-art Russian fighters like the SU-27 and the MIG-29, along with many fighters of European design. Fighters like the SU-35/37, French Rafael, Swedish Grippen, the EuroFighter, and Japan's F-2 are emerging in the relative near term. Next generation fighters under development in Russia and China will provide enemy pilots with improved situational awareness, advanced missile systems, and low radar cross-sections. These aircraft will present a formidable challenge to present U.S. air superiority.

The surface-to-air threat is also quite significant, and growing. The so-called double-digit, radar-guided Surface-to-Air Missile (SAM) systems of Russian origin are the most visible. The Russians are heavily marketing their SA-10 and numerous countries are expressing interest in this advanced system. The SA-10 provides our potential adversaries an extremely lethal SAM system with three times the range of current systems, and the ability to shoot and relocate within minutes. Additionally, there are a multitude of very capable legacy systems that are employed around the globe. At a fraction of the cost of newer double-digit SAMs, modifications to the SA-2/3/6 are readily available to

increase the lethality, mobility, and countermeasure capabilities of these existing systems. The volume and increased sophistication of tactical level SAMs and anti-aircraft artillery (AAA) provide any potential adversary a credible air defense capability.

In light of these developments, the Department crafted an affordable, time phased TACAIR modernization program consisting of the F/A-18E/F, F-22, and the Joint Strike Fighter (JSF) program. These programs will produce a synergistic high/low mix of fighter aircraft that combine a potent combination of stealth, range, payload, advanced avionics, and maneuverability. The net result will be a TACAIR force that is highly lethal, survivable, and able to ensure air dominance well into the next century.

We must recognize the value of TACAIR in its emerging role as the weapon system of choice throughout the range of conflict. From enforcing no-fly zones and having the credibility to punish violations, to establishing a presence that keeps warring factions at bay and relieves real suffering in the Balkans, to responding to short notice taskings requiring precise timing and targeting...tactical aviation is a national asset.

While our TACAIR program requires a significant commitment of resources, I must place this in the context of our force modernization history that tends to be cyclical in nature. In the 1970s we invested in our current fleet of fighter-attack aircraft. The 1980s saw a shift in priorities toward strategic systems such as the Peacekeeper Missile, Trident Submarines, advanced cruise missiles, and B-1 and B-2 bomber aircraft. The 1990s focus is on systems that

provide strategic mobility like the C-17 and fast sealift. Now it's time to replace our TACAIR forces that were developed in the 1970s. The TACAIR assets under development today will serve our Nation to the year 2050 and beyond.

The Department's TACAIR modernization programs are affordable and will provide the operational capabilities our nation must have. Phasing and per year production buys for these new programs have been aligned within the planned budget. A great deal of effort has gone into balancing this needed increase in capability with other DOD requirements.

### **Analytical Framework**

Our TACAIR modernization plan flows from years of analysis, thought and debate. The analytical framework that supports our plan is both complex and rigorous. Each of the Services evaluates current and projected capabilities in the context of changing threats, policy guidance, and military strategy to identify deficiencies. Cost and performance trades are addressed to preserve an acceptable balance between risk and affordability. As you know, the Joint Requirements Oversight Council (JROC) has played an increasingly significant role in shaping military requirements within the Department of Defense. Let me provide some background on the JROC and describe its corresponding focus and processes.

### **JROC OVERVIEW**

In 1987, the Joint Requirements Oversight Council was expanded to institutionalize the military's role in the requirements process. The JROC was responsible for validating major system requirements prior to entering the full

acquisition process. In 1994, Admiral Owens further expanded the charter of the Joint Requirements Oversight Council (JROC) to more fully advise the Chairman in meeting his statutory responsibilities. The JROC established its attendant Joint Warfighting Capability Assessment (JWCA) process, including greatly increased involvement by the Combatant Commanders and the Services. This process, now entering its fifth year, has been successful in supporting the Chairman's military advice to the Secretary of Defense.

### **Joint Warfighting Capability Assessment Process**

The JWCA process examines key relationships and interactions among warfighting capabilities and identifies opportunities for improving joint effectiveness. Each JWCA team is composed of warfighting and functional area experts from the Joint Staff, Unified Commands, Services, OSD, Defense agencies, and others as required to conduct continuous assessments within their respective domains. The JWCA teams assess areas with capability deficiencies, unnecessary duplication, or exploitable technologies, as well as areas where we may prudently accept some risk.

The resulting JWCA findings and recommendations are presented to the JROC for consideration. The JWCA process brings increased knowledge and awareness to the "four-star" military forum. The JROC is therefore instrumental in helping the Chairman explore alternatives through more extensive, open, and candid assessments of joint military capabilities and requirements by the Unified Commands, Services, and Joint Staff.

As we look to the future and the changes that will inevitably occur in both the threat and technology, we continue an iterative process of modernization self-examination. The TACAIR programs are no exception. Studies such as the recently completed TACAIR Survivability Study outline the value of our new TACAIR fleet by showing the synergies of stealth combined with advanced jamming and their relationship to survivability and mission accomplishment. The Services are not resting, but instead are looking to squeeze every ounce of capability out of these programs while keeping a keen eye on affordability.

## **SUMMARY**

As I indicated before, there are very capable threat systems in the world today, which in some cases challenge our technological superiority. Historically, we have enjoyed great success in achieving and maintaining air superiority. In the battles of tomorrow, we must be able to achieve air dominance. The vast majority of our information sensors that provide the critical information necessary to achieve dominant battlefield awareness require unrestricted airspace access. We are not looking for an equal or a fair fight. If our deterrence fails and we must go to war with a future adversary, we want the advantage to be wholly and completely on our side. Air dominance is the leverage for all other military operations.

The TACAIR modernization program the Department is now executing will result in a technologically superior force that will ensure the air power advantage we have exploited in the past will remain into the future. There are challenges ahead as we move into the next millennium; as our vision of the future becomes

clearer, we will continue to evolve our plans as necessary. But based on what I know today and the in-depth analytical work that supports the TACAIR requirement, the only viable solution is to press ahead with our well-structured fighter modernization program. To do any less would be a breach of faith to those men and women who will follow us over the next 50 years.