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BEFORE THE

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Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, thank-you for this opportunity to provide you with the status of Air Force readiness. As the Air Force's Assistant Deputy Chief of Staff, Air and Space Operations, I want to thank you for your continued focus on the readiness challenges facing our airmen today. The Air Force is committed to maintaining a ready force while controlling cost growth, modernizing systems, and recapitalizing physical assets.

As we celebrate 100 years of powered flight this year, we are firmly focused on the future of air and space power. We are in the midst of more than a decade of unparalleled and unmatched air and space dominance across the full spectrum of operations--humanitarian to warfighting. We are proud of our record of success but will not rest on our past accomplishments. We have embraced the opportunities afforded by the information revolution and have marshaled the full resources of our service to leverage these technologies in the battlespace. Our airmen have met the challenges of the changed security environment, and they stand ready for the next challenge at home and abroad. Born as an expeditionary service, we remain true to those roots today, presenting our forces and capabilities through our Air and Space Expeditionary Force (AEF) construct.

Your Air Force highlights three Air and Space Core Competencies as our Service source of strength: Developing Airmen, Technology-to-Warfighting, and Integrating Operations. Together these core competencies form the basis by which we organize, train, and equip our forces as part of our military power to achieve National Security Objectives.

Developing Airmen is the heart of combat capability. A ready force is founded on its people. Developing the competence of our airmen from accessions through retirement (quality), and producing the correct numbers of skill sets (quantity) continues to evolve as our Air & Space Expeditionary Force (AEF) continues to mature. The men and women that comprise our Total Air Force--Active Duty, Guard and Reserve--are the best America has to offer. They are officers, enlisted, civilians, and contractors from every corner of the country and every walk of life. These world-class airmen are the key

ingredients to sustaining our record of success and we are dedicated to recruiting, training, and retaining professional airmen. We can make no greater investment in and have no greater resource than our people. They are our #1 priority.

The Air Force requires sophisticated airmen who are trained to leverage technology and ready to perform in a dynamic environment. They will become our future Air and Space Leaders for the 21st Century. This will require targeted investments in the next generation of airmen, from the ground up and throughout their careers. To that end, the Air Force has introduced a coordinated effort to address all aspects of an airman's career development, professional education, and assignments in sum rather than individually. This deliberate force development effort generates policies tailored to achieve Air Force requirements and address the needs of the individual airman throughout his or her career. The Air Force needs both expert specialists and broadly competent generalists; our Force Development program overhaul provides both opportunities for our airmen.

Comprehensive in scope, our training is doctrinally based and focused on three levels of development: tactical, operational, and strategic. Tactical development focuses on the individual's functional or mission skills. The AF tactical development is what we accomplish best due to our maturity as a service. Getting the correct mix of people and defining job skills are areas for future refinement.

We refer to the next echelon of development as operational. It is at the operational level where our airmen must seamlessly integrate the employment of our joint capabilities. To accomplish this development, AF senior leadership has instituted numerous efforts for the road ahead. For example, the Secretary of the Air Force has initiated a program to modify our professional military education (PME). This plan has many aspects. First, it improves the intermediate service school in summer of '03 to provide a greater depth of education for the operational level of warfare and more time to prepare students for the next assignment. It also increases advanced academic degree opportunities for officers, with special emphasis in science, engineering, and politico-military affairs. In conjunction with our standardization of the baseline

configuration for the Air & Space Operations Centers (AOC), we will standup an AOC Formal Training Unit (FTU) this summer.

At the strategic level, our development focuses on the integration and interaction between other government departments as well as other governments to achieve our national security objectives. The USAF supports establishment of the Joint National Training Center (JNTC). When implemented, JNTC will create a cooperative collection of interoperable training locations, nodes and exercises that synthesizes the Combatant Commander and Service requirements to improve our training aligned with the way we intend to fight. AF training transformation builds upon past successes and focuses on three training requirements: First, to connect our high-fidelity simulators and training devices to enable warfighters to train together practicing the integration of multiple joint missions to achieve designated operational objectives; second, to enhance existing service interoperability training by synchronizing events at major training centers to produce airmen well versed in joint operations; third, to develop a robust ability to fully measure joint training effectiveness. The accurate assessment of planning and execution will capture lessons learned and provide the cornerstone of our future improvement and innovation. JNTC, as a pillar of DoD Training Transformation efforts, will support the joint warfighter and ensure our airmen are properly prepared, and developed as competent leaders in confronting the challenges of the 21st century.

Our number one personnel challenge is adapting to the new Air & Space Expeditionary (AEF) steady state, based on a higher tempo of operations and defining the correct total force balance and a shifting skill mix requirement. With a 30 percent reduction in manpower since 1990 and a significant increase in worldwide taskings over that same period, the Air Force has experienced a dramatic jump in operations and personnel tempo. We have discovered that while the number of airmen is adequate, we must adjust the mix of skill sets and the military/civilian/contractor ratio to reflect new realities.

Recognizing the new demands placed on us by the Operations Enduring Freedom (OEF), Noble Eagle (ONE), and Iraqi Freedom (OIF) war on terrorism, we have initiated a comprehensive manpower review to determine relative stress amongst career fields

and to explore options to alleviate that stress. We have identified nearly 26 thousand military or civilian positions that potentially could be converted to civilian or contractor positions, with the goal of redirecting uniformed airmen into those positions that reflect our distinctive capabilities. Furthermore, we have realigned some new recruits into our stressed career fields and are exploring technologies to reduce the workload. We have several human capital initiatives underway to address this skill mix problem, but it will take focus, time, and funding to solve.

Technology-to-Warfighting are the tools of combat capability and the second AF core competency. Moving technology from the drawing board to the hands of the warfighter is essential to maintaining a ready force. When America sends its men and women into combat, they deserve the resources and support to guarantee victory over any adversary they face. We are determined to give them those cutting-edge tools.

The Air Force was born out of innovation, and it remains our hallmark today. With a pioneering spirit, we are dedicated to pushing technology's boundaries. We are rapidly applying recent advances to dramatic effect, translating our technological vision into required warfighting requirements seen in our unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), integrated architectures, and revolutionary capabilities.

There is no greater example than the Predator unmanned aerial vehicle. It combines the dynamics of manned aviation with the remote operations techniques of unmanned satellites and information connectivity into a single system capable not only of collecting and disseminating information, but of producing combat effects. In the midst of combat, we accelerated the Predator program to increase production and to retrofit existing airframes with improved capabilities. The use of streaming video during recent operations was critical, and we are adding Hellfire missiles to the entire Predator fleet.

Global Hawk builds on the success of the Predator system by incorporating a robust reachback capability that reduces our forward operating footprint, lowers costs, and improves personnel tempo. This long endurance, multi-role platform gives us the persistence we need to keep the Joint Force Commander (JFC) informed up-to-the-minute.

We are aggressively developing additional unmanned platforms and are exploring their appropriate future role in combat. We are eager to field these systems because of their persistence capability and capabilities in very high-risk missions. They are responsive to dynamic tasking and afford us the ability to swarm the battlespace and overwhelm enemy defenses.

The integration of these unmanned platforms seamlessly into a network of manned, unmanned, and space-based systems will dramatically shorten the find, fix, track, target, engage, and assess (F2T2EA) cycle allowing us to anticipate our enemy's moves and to defeat him on our terms. To that end, we are transitioning from a collection of independent, stovepipe systems to a horizontally integrated system of systems capable of machine-to-machine conversations.

The Multi-Sensor Command and Control Constellation (MC2C) will provide the JFC with real-time, enhanced battlespace awareness and will help alleviate the high stress on our Low Density/High Demand (LD/HD) assets such as the Rivet Joint, AWACS, Global Hawk, JSTARS, and space-based systems. In the future, the Multi-sensor Command and Control Aircraft (MC2A), the E-10A, a new wide-body platform, will complement our existing, independent C4ISR platforms. It will be a core element of the future Joint Cruise Missile Defense architecture by fielding the Multi-Platform Radar Technology Insertion Program (MP-RTIP) sensor. This next-generation sensor is capable of wide-area surface surveillance and tracking to find, fix, and track ground targets and airborne cruise missiles. Its enhanced Battle Management/Command and Control (BM/C2) will enable dynamic execution against time sensitive targets, dramatically shortening the kill chain.

We are also partnering with the National Reconnaissance Office on an innovative, creative, technology-pushing initiative known as the Transformational Communications Architecture (TCA). TCA will combine upcoming satellite communications systems such as Advanced EHF and Wideband Gapfiller with future technology-leveraging capabilities such as laser communications and internet-based protocols to remove bandwidth and access as constraints on the warfighter.

The Space-Based Radar (SBR) program will give warfighters the ability to survey as well as reconnoiter deep into denied areas. SBR will be part of a larger mix of air, space and ground-based Intelligence, Surveillance, Reconnaissance (ISR) assets; all of which, integrated together have the potential synergy to revolutionize our capability to find, fix, target, track, engage and assess.

Because we recognize the Air Force never fights alone, we are coordinating closely with our sister services to ensure full interoperability of these future acquisitions and to eliminate seams between existing systems.

We are identifying interaction and connectivity requirements of our C2, ISR, and operational programs to integrate properly for joint employment. For example, we are working to integrate AF sensor information with ground units. We are also researching the capability to integrate SIGINT collection from all services into a common joint working stations.

The F/A-22 'Raptor' is the cornerstone of the Air Force's on-going transformation. America needs the F/A-22 for 21st Century Air Dominance. It is the only aircraft capable of countering anti-access threats from Day 1 of any conflict, allowing Joint and Coalition forces to operate with impunity inside enemy territory. The F/A-22 brings stealth into the daytime for the first time, enabling persistent 24-hour operations. Its revolutionary capabilities are designed to defeat future air defense systems for decades to come. The Air Force will continue executive oversight of the F/A-22 acquisition to ensure program success.

The F-35 'Joint Strike Fighter' (JSF) also represents a revolutionary leap in technology and will complement the F/A-22. This versatile multi-role fighter is optimized for all-weather, precision air-to-ground operations and provides the persistent force required for around-the-clock operations. With a commitment to affordability, the Air Force is using the "Cost As an Independent Variable" approach to help ensure the JSF is not cost-prohibitive.

Integrating Operations is the AF third core competency and primary means to maximize AF capabilities with our sister services to create the effects, which achieve the Joint commander's objectives. The Air Force effectively focuses the power of its people

and the strength of its technology into a synergistic whole to generate immediate effects in the battlespace. We are developing effects-based capabilities rather than individual systems. We are exploring and employing innovative operational concepts to maximize our combat capabilities. Integration of effects-based capabilities is the key to success. Success in this new century requires a modern, ready force with the integrated air-space-information systems, infrastructure, and capabilities necessary to achieve the desired effects.

Capabilities-Based Force. Our emerging Air Force Concepts of Operations (AF CONOPS) are lending focus to our continuing transformation. The AF CONOPS provide focus on effects and mission vice threat. Each AF CONOPS describes capability requirements and will transition us from a platform-based garrison force to a capabilities-based expeditionary force. AF CONOPS define how we fight and drives our efforts to identify, prioritize, and define our air and space capabilities. The AF CONOPS are then assessed for system interoperability in order to integrate with other CONOPS, our joint, allied, and coalition forces, and in the case of homeland security, with other government agencies. AF CONOPS helps to define efficiencies, eliminate waste and prioritize resources for the warfighter. All defined AF CONOPS capabilities are then assessed for risk and reviewed for any program development disconnects and required end-user capabilities.

Recapitalization and Modernization. Dedicated airmen employing innovative concepts are mitigating the impact of old systems and technology. However, aging systems pose a real threat to our continued Air Dominance. The average Air Force aircraft has about 23 years in service. With some manufactured as early as 1955, our KC-135 fleet averages 42 years in service. We have never dealt with a force this old. Our aging aircraft are vulnerable to myriad problems, including technical surprise, vanishing vendors, and increased operational costs. We have enjoyed a down payment on our recapitalization but require sustained funding to maintain the force capable of supporting the National Security Strategy and JV2020. Eventually, new acquisitions will have to replace these legacy systems. In the interim, we are finding innovative means

to keep current systems operational in the near term and are taking advantage of new opportunities to employ old systems in new ways.

Current projections show all three Air Force bombers should be structurally sound for the next four decades. Through our planned bomber modernization programs, we can meet current AF requirements through the foreseeable future. The Air Force is committed to SOF modernization through fielding the CV-22 and Air Combat modernization through upgrades to precision employment and data link. The approved multi-year procurement of 180 C-17s will support mobility requirements to move 54.5 million ton miles per day, with six additional bases receiving C-17s starting in FY04.

Precision Munitions. With the advent of precision munitions, the Air Force has effectively improved the employment capability from “many sorties for one target” to “one sortie for many targets.” Today, we employ precision weapons as the preferred weapon of choice to maximize our combat capability while limiting the threat of collateral damage in any weather, day or night--they are critical to our success. Our current efforts in Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) are consuming our precision munitions at a high rate and our reconstitution plan will address weapons replenish. The Air Force will increase its production requirement for laser-guided bombs and the Joint Directed Attack Munitions (JDAM).

Budget: Today and tomorrow, our airmen deserve the resources, training, and cutting-edge weaponry to overwhelm our enemy’s capabilities. This and next year’s budgets look to build on the FY02 foundation, to accelerate modernization while maintaining gains in readiness and people. We are investing short-term and long-term across all of our CONOPS capabilities, balancing modifications of existing systems with the development of new systems. Air Force modernization efforts are supporting our transformation goals while continuing to develop and field needed systems, with nearly half of our investment in RDT&E.

The FY04 Air Force Budget is a peacetime request. Much of the increased OPSTEMPO we see today is for wartime operations. The only major wartime costs in this request are for Combat Air Patrols flying over the Continental United States. In this peacetime request, we have tried to balance the competing demands of supporting

current readiness levels, as we face aging aircraft and personnel challenges, with the necessity of developing and fielding new weapon systems to keep our Air Force relevant today and into the future. If enacted, this request would continue the positive momentum we are making for people, address increased operating costs, fund peacetime flight operations, continue critical modernization programs, and increase funding for infrastructure improvements above our FY03 request. Still, there are more things we could do to strengthen our efforts. While we have added funds over FY03 levels, much of this is required to cover higher costs such as utilities and increased maintenance and flying operations costs driven by an aging fleet and higher fuel costs. As you know, near term readiness is more than spare parts, and equipment modifications or iron on the ramp—it's the experienced men and women, military, civilians, and contractors who operate and maintain front line warfighting equipment, support equipment and infrastructure. Most of the funds we have added for maintenance are eaten up by increased costs of aging weapon systems. . The FY03 Supplemental request for the GWOT and Operations in Iraq supports the Department's best aggregate estimate of total Defense requirements in this fiscal year. Each service's portion of the supplemental are not knowable because the nature of OIF is too dynamic to adequately quantify at this time, predominately for personnel and operating costs. Without it, we go broke in our Operation and Maintenance accounts around 1 Jun 03 and 15 Jul 03 for Military Personnel. The expeditious manner that the Congress has taken up consideration of this supplemental request will allow us to continue the task at hand—defeating the enemies of peace and freedom.

Readiness: AF readiness trends have been increasing for the past few years; however, recent commitments in Operation Enduring Freedom, Noble Eagle, and now Iraqi Freedom have caused our readiness trends to level off to a current steady state. From 1996 to 1999, readiness rates for our major combat units dropped from 91 percent to a low of 65 percent. Since then, they have climbed and remained at roughly 70 percent. Shortages of personnel, higher tempo, and aging aircraft are keeping readiness below our targeted levels, which is a cause for concern. However, we have been able to hold steady in the face of increased operational demands on our force.

Our aircraft readiness has improved and will continue due to the robust support for spare parts. This is a testament to a dedicated workforce, fleet modernization efforts, and process improvements from depots to the field. In FY02, we enjoyed our highest overall readiness rates in six years--the largest improvements since the mid-80s. Sixteen of 20 systems improved mission capable rates, at a time when all of our systems were flying more hours.

In June 2002, the DOD directive 7730.65 established the DOD Readiness Reporting System (DRRS) in accordance with the Defense Authorization Act of 1999. This directive established a capability-based adaptive, near real-time readiness reporting system. Current AF readiness metrics and supporting data will be captured in the DRRS compatible Enhanced Status of Resource and Training System (ESORTS). The Air Force, in addition to measuring current readiness, is also developing a compatible and Predictive Readiness Assessment System (PRAS) to provide senior leadership with a decision tool to forecast the readiness implications on the force as it responds to taskings and absorbs changes in key input variables of funding, equipment and logistics, personnel, infrastructure, training, SORTS indicators, and the strategic environment.

Our engine readiness rates have reflected impressive gains as recent investments continued to pay dividends throughout FY02. Our U-2s sustained their mission capable rate while flying their most hours since the Gulf War, 35 percent higher than FY01. Our Predator fleet posted its best readiness rates ever while averaging almost 200 hours per month. Our C-5s posted their best readiness rates since FY96 while flying the most hours since the Gulf War. The B-1 consolidation is paying dividends, as our B-1s posted dramatic gains in readiness, with current rates at historical highs. All of our fighters are experiencing a steady decline in parts cannibalization, which is good. We have made great strides in reducing the number of aircraft in depot for maintenance, putting over 25 percent more aircraft on the ramps for the warfighter since 2000.

Space launch readiness is an area where we are moving forward. Last year was an important year for space launch. Both of our new Evolved Expendable Launch Vehicles (EELV), the Atlas V and the Delta IV, successfully reached orbit on their maiden

launches. We are encouraged by their success, but each of our launch providers is suffering due to a downturn in the commercial launch market. Since maintaining two launch providers is critical to assuring access to space for our national security programs, we will continue to grow EELV capability for near-term assured access, while evaluating longer-term alternatives such as the Operationally Responsive Spacelift (ORS) concept.

Of concern, we are at greater risk for losing ground to rising costs of aging systems. This will translate into deferred depot maintenance on engines and aircraft and ultimately affect our readiness. While maintenance readiness challenges remain, we are confident the dramatic gains we experienced last year provide the momentum the Air Force needs for continued improvements.

Our people are ready. We are sustaining our personnel readiness rates in the face of higher OPSTEMPO, manning shortages, and reduced training opportunities. Operations Nobel Eagle alerts, Enduring Freedom & Iraqi Freedom deployments deplete operational unit capability and the opportunity to train. Fortunately, our pilots are flying adequate hours. Despite uncertainty in taskings and mission profiles, the Air Force fully funded the flying program in FY02 and FY03 and will continue to fly 100 percent of the flying program. For the past three years, the Air Force has executed its budgeted O&M flying hours without requesting additional funding for contingency flying hours. Our airmen are gaining real-world experience you cannot create in a training environment. Today, over 70 percent of our rated aircrews are combat experienced!

However, many of our aircrew instructors have been pulled to fulfill priority operational requirements, making it difficult to train new aircrew to relieve the combat stress. This is especially true of our LD/HD assets which having been working at "surge" capacity. We recognize that some of the most significant detractors to unit readiness are lengthy, frequent deployments. Once airmen return from deployments they require up to a 90-day reconstitution period, primarily for personnel training. Maintaining our AEF rotation schedule helps stability and predictability, but most of our stressed career fields are exceeding the 90-day goal. While the Air Force has taken steps to mitigate the impact of lost training, sustained operations will remain a

challenge. As long as the current OPSTEMPO persists, we expect Air Force training to remain at current levels, if not decline, as training currencies and continuation training are harder to achieve.

Retention. We have found our high operations tempo and uneven workload are major determinants in an airman's decision to leave the Air Force. It was difficult to accurately determine last year's retention rates due to Air Force implementation of Stop Loss. Nonetheless, we will continue to use an array of funding tools, to include bonuses, mentoring, and re-recruiting efforts to sustain our record of retention success. Air Force quality of life initiatives will ensure a suitable standard of living for our world-class airmen and are essential retention tools. While our increased accession levels and improved retention have created a unique over strength problem, we remain committed meeting total end-strength goals.

Retention of pilots, navigators, and Air Battle Managers is of major concern. Though pilot retention is the highest in four years, we still suffer from a long-term shortage of pilots. We have increased the output of our pilot training courses, but training new pilots does not immediately solve the problem--you cannot replace the lost experience. The resulting experience shortage has detrimental effects on force management leaving us with undermanned staffs, less experienced formal flying training instructors, stressed test programs, and less mentoring opportunities.

Our flexible Aviation Continuation Pay (ACP) program is an important part of our broad-based plan to retain pilots, and we extended the program this year to include navigators and Air Battle Managers. Encouragingly, the ACP long-term initial take rate rose sharply to 49 percent in FY02 from 30 percent in FY01.

Retention for high tech specialties is also a concern as the pull from industry is strong. This draw is exacerbated by long, frequent deployments in many of our high tech career fields. In response, the Air Force this year introduced the Critical Skills Retention Bonus for highly stressed and highly skilled career fields.

The Air Force has reduced its civilian workforce by nearly 100 thousand since 1990, leaving only 10 percent of today's Air Force civilians with less than 10 years in service and over 40 percent eligible to retire in 5 years. We must revitalize our professional

occupations with new hires while minimizing the impact on the existing civilian employees.

Recent pay increases are making a difference and have reminded our airmen that we value their service. Targeted pay increases that reflect the realities of the marketplace are critical to meeting our toughest retention challenges. We must retain the flexibility to put more pay where it is needed while ensuring that entry-level pay is very competitive.

Another concern is mid-grade officer and enlisted manning levels. We have a skill level mismatch: too many new apprentices and not enough experienced journeymen. The resulting imbalance means higher expectations for our less experienced airmen and greater stresses on the remaining mid-level leaders, managers, and trainers. We cannot afford to lose this experience; it will translate into lower readiness.

While there is clearly room for improvement, we are pleased with our recent gains in equipment readiness and are proud to have maintained overall steady state readiness despite the increased operational challenge.

Reconstituting of our expeditionary forces following Operation Iraqi Freedom will be the key to our future Air Force readiness capability. The Air Force, along with our sister services are working closely to create the most effective way to reconstitute our forces without compromising our military capabilities and readiness. The Air Force is focusing its reconstitution effort towards a few main goals. First, is to establish a total force steady state battle-rhythm. This will involve the demobilization of our Air National Guard and AF Reserve forces, the cessation of our current 'stop-loss' programs, and re-deployment of our Active duty forces to resume our AEF scheduling cycle. Second, we will need to replenish our weapons expenditures with the correct quantities and qualitative mix of current and future weapons. A final major goal is to replenish our consumed War Reserve materials (WRM). The AF reconstitution effort is only a part of whole military reconstitution effort and the proper implementation will determine the quality of our future force capabilities.

Future Total Force. Like never before in the history of the Air Force, we are a Total Force. Mission success demands the interdependence of Active Duty, Air Reserve

Component (ARC), civilian workforce and contractors. ARC forces are essential to our success; they comprise nearly half of the forces assigned to AEFs and contribute the majority of forces in some mission areas, such as global strike and homeland security. We have begun to consolidate, when practicable, two or more components into a single wing with a single commander. We stood up our first “blended” wing, the 116th Air Control Wing, in October at Robins AFB, GA. This and future blended wings will leverage each component’s comparative strengths to increase efficiencies, synergies, and capabilities. We are also placing Reserve airmen directly into Active Duty flying organizations, giving us a new degree of experience and stability in these units.

Under our new steady state, the ARC will continue to assume more and more of an active duty role. As such, they need compensation, benefits, and entitlements commensurate with these increased responsibilities. We are working to facilitate seamless movement between the components by minimizing appointment and accounting burdens. We are exploring options to relieve surge stressors such as the use of civilian contractors. We are committed to using ARC volunteers versus mobilization whenever possible to allow the units and members the flexibility they need.

We are also closely monitoring ARC recruitment. Historically the ANG and AFRC gain nearly 25 percent of separating Active Duty members. Continued high OPSTEMPO may threaten this source of recruiting and force the ARC to explore alternative options to make up the loss.

Summary. The greatest testament to Air Force readiness is our continued success in on-going operations to protect America from its enemies. We have the finest airmen in the world and are the most respected Air Force in history. We enjoy the confidence of the American people and are committed to maintaining their trust. This record of success and promising future would not be possible without your support. For that, you have our deepest thanks. Our recruiting and retention success, dramatically improved maintenance rates, infrastructure improvements, and weapon system modernization are a direct result of your recent investments. We are especially grateful for your continued support for pay raises for our people. You share our conviction that adequate compensation is not a luxury but a necessity. Together, we have laid the foundation for

continued dramatic improvements and further transformation. Let me assure you, your United States Air Force stands ready, whenever and wherever we are called.