

**OPENING STATEMENT OF U.S. SENATOR JACK REED  
CHAIRMAN, SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE**

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*To conduct a hearing on the Air Force budget posture in review of the Defense  
Authorization Request for Fiscal Year 2023 and the Future Years Defense  
Program*

*(As prepared for delivery)*

**REED:** Good morning. The committee meets today to receive testimony on the plans and programs of the Department of the Air Force in review of the Fiscal Year 2023 President’s defense budget request.

I would like to welcome our witnesses: Mr. Frank Kendall, Secretary of the Air Force, General Charles Brown, Chief of Staff of the Air Force, and General John Raymond, Chief of Space Operations. We are grateful to the men and women of the Air Force and Space Force for their service, and to their families for their continued support.

President Biden’s defense budget request for Fiscal Year 2023 includes approximately \$234 billion in funding for the Air Force – an increase of \$13.5 billion from the FY22 enacted budget. In preparing this budget request, the Air Force faced difficult decisions in balancing the need to modernize and keep technological advantage over near-peer competitors against the need to support ongoing operations around the world. The budget before us aims to maintain that balance by increasing funding to address readiness concerns while also funding technologies for the future fight and modernizing our strategic deterrent capability.

The budget request for the Air Force would include additional investments in capabilities such as Next Generation Air Dominance, the B-21, Long-Range Stand-Off Weapons, hypersonics, and Air and Ground Moving Target Indication. These changes are part of continuing to implement General Brown’s strategic vision of “Accelerate Change or Lose.” During today’s hearing I hope we will hear more on the programs that have received increased emphasis under the Chief’s vision.

The budget request also proposes to retire or realign various elements of the Air Force, with a net reduction of roughly 370 aircraft in fiscal year 2023. This would

include reducing or altering the force structure for A-10s, F-16s, F-15s, F-22s, C-130s, KC-135s, KC-10s, JSTARS aircraft, AWACS aircraft, and MQ-9 Reaper remotely piloted aircraft. Any proposal of this sort deserves our careful consideration. I hope the witnesses will provide the Committee with reasoning for the proposed retirements and realignments within this budget request and assure us that any decisions are well thought-out before disruptions to the force structure begin.

We will have to evaluate these proposals against the backdrop of the conflict in Ukraine. First, this conflict causes many of us concern about retiring weapons systems that could actually be required in the very near term. Second, we need to be sure that we maintain or increase our stocks of munitions, spare parts, and other elements of the sustainment portfolio to ensure we are sufficiently prepared to deter any aggressors. And third, we need to evaluate our domestic industrial base to avoid making short-sighted decisions that could harm our nation's ability to provide for our defense. I am interested to know your thoughts on these matters, as well as your plans to improve shortfalls within the pilot and maintenance personnel communities.

Turning to the Space Force. Congress established the Space Force with the purpose of consolidating numerous space activities in the Department of Defense. General Raymond, I would like to know how you are growing the service in terms of personnel. I am also interested in an update on how you are normalizing operations within the larger Department of Defense, including progress on the merging of the Space Development Agency into the Space Force by October 1, 2022.

With regard to space warfighting capabilities, Section 1602 of the Fiscal Year 2022 National Defense Authorization Act required the Secretary of Defense to designate the Chief of Space Operations as the force design architect for future satellite constellations of the armed services. It is critical for the Space Force to design its warfighting objectives in the same way the Chief of Naval Operations designs our Navy fleets and the Chief of the Air Force designs our air posture. I will want to know your progress toward that objective.

Finally, now that the Space Force is up and running, it is important to present a trained force with substantive capabilities to the combatant commands. One of the capabilities for the combatant commands now under discussion is tactical space intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR). This is a new operating domain for the Defense Department, and I would ask the witnesses to discuss what resources they believe are needed to ensure its success.

Secretary Kendall, General Brown, and General Raymond, thank you again for appearing before our committee and I look forward to your testimony.

Senator Inhofe.