

**DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
PRESENTATION TO THE SUBCOMMITTEE
ON
READINESS
UNITED STATES SENATE**

SUBJECT: CURRENT READINESS OF THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE

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FEBRUARY 8, 2017

**NOT FOR PUBLICATION UNTIL RELEASED
BY THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON READINESS
AND MANAGEMENT SUPPORT
UNITED STATES SENATE**

INTRODUCTION

Since our establishment 70 years ago, the United States Air Force has secured peace throughout the full spectrum of hostilities with a decisive warfighting advantage in, through, and from air, space, and cyberspace. Without pause, we deliver global combat power by deterring and defeating our nation's enemies, while supporting joint and coalition forces at the beginning, the middle, and end of every operation. Though the intrinsic nature of warfare remains unchanged, the character of war—and the approach joint forces must take to address new and changing threats—must continually evolve.

As the nation plans to counter the national security challenges posed by Russia, China, Iran, North Korea, and Violent Extremist Organizations, controlling and exploiting air, space, and cyberspace remains foundational to joint and coalition success. Today's 660,000 active duty, guard, reserve, and civilian Airmen meet these challenges by deterring threats to the U.S., assuring our allies, and defeating our adversaries 24/7/365. We provide unwavering homeland defense and operate a robust, reliable, flexible, and survivable nuclear enterprise, as the bedrock of our national security.

This steadfast watch, however, comes at a price. Conducting continuous, worldwide combat operations since 1991 has placed a dangerous toll on our Airmen, equipment, and infrastructure. Sustained global commitments and funding reductions have eroded our Air Force to be one of the smallest, oldest-equipped, and least ready forces across the full-spectrum of operations, in our service history. The uncertainty and reduction in military funding resulting from Budget Control Act of 2011 (BCA)

further degraded our readiness. Such fiscal uncertainty critically challenges our ability to sustain warfighting capacity, improve readiness, modernize our force, and invest in research and development to maintain our advantages over near-peer competitors.

While the Bipartisan Budget Act (BBA) of 2015 provided some space to improve readiness and continue modernization efforts, your Air Force needs further Congressional support to ensure we continue to strengthen America's military to win today's fight, while building the Air Force our nation needs to meet tomorrow's challenges.

ALWAYS THERE

Your Air Force has been globally engaged for the last 26 years of combat operations. We relentlessly provide **Global Vigilance**, **Global Reach**, and **Global Power** for the nation...we're always in demand...and we're always there. Though our end strength has decreased by 38% since 1991, we have experienced significant growth across several mission areas.

Our Airmen provide joint forces with **Global Vigilance** using real-time multi-domain platforms and sensors integrated across our global intelligence and command and control networks to find, fix, and finish a range of hostile targets simultaneously across the globe. Without fail, the Air Force flies 60 combat lines of persistent attack remotely piloted aircraft (RPA) per day...the unblinking eye that supports combatant commander around the globe. Through our Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) capabilities, we provided warfighters over 6,000 intelligence products per day used to identify enemy targets and trigger 70% of Special Operations Forces assaults on terrorists.

Additionally, the Air Force conducted 4,000 cyber missions against more than 100,000 targets, disrupting adversaries and enabling over 200 High Value Individual kill/capture missions. In securing our networks and digital infrastructure, 2016 saw Air Force cyber operators block more than 1.3 billion malicious connections – an average of more than 40 per second. Meanwhile, our space operators provide relentless and reliable interconnectedness, global positional awareness, global missile warning, and battlefield situational awareness for our joint forces.

Nearly every three minutes a mobility aircraft departs on a mission, providing **Global Reach** and access, projecting power through a network of airfields in 23 countries and 77 locations, while providing critical aerial refueling capability. In 2016, our aeromedical professionals evacuated over 5,700 patients and provided emergency medical care resulting in a 98% survival rate. Your Air Force provides unrelenting ability to maneuver, sustain, and recover personnel and assets...at home, abroad, and with our allies and partners.

With American fighters, bombers, RPAs, and Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles (ICBMs), the Air Force provides conventional and nuclear **Global Power** that can strike an enemy on short notice anywhere in the world. In Iraq and Syria, the Air Force has led 65% of the more than 17,000 coalition airstrikes since 2014, to deliver decisive firepower supporting joint, special operations, and coalition ground forces to defeat and degrade ISIS and regain critical territory. All while our Airmen continue to provide two legs of the nuclear triad, resource 75% of the Nuclear Command, Control, and Communications framework, deter our adversaries, and connect the President to strategic options.

Stitched together, the fabric of our Air Force weaves multi-domain effects and provides U.S. service men and women the strongest blanket of protection and the ability to power project American's full range of combat capabilities. Make no mistake, your Air Force is always there.

READINESS IN A CHANGING WORLD

However, being "always there" comes at a cost to our Airmen, equipment, and infrastructure, and we are now at a tipping point. Sustained global commitments and recent funding cuts eroded Air Force readiness, capacity, and capability for a full-spectrum fight against a near-peer adversary. Our force structure and our platforms now represent one of the smallest, oldest-equipped, and least ready forces in our service history. In 2013, sequestration abruptly delayed modernization and reduced both readiness and the size of the Total Force.

Our readiness decline began as we entered FY14 expecting a corresponding decrease in both operations and overall funding. Instead, FY14 began with a government shutdown and fiscal planning focused on a second year of sequestration. Compounding the fiscal austerity, 2014 presented enormous geopolitical challenges to America. Challenges included Russia's annexing of Crimea, Chinese island-building in the South China Seas, the rapid rise of ISIS, and ongoing operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. Therefore, instead of reducing commitments, we entered into a new era of great power competition coupled with persistent war against violent extremism. The combination of decreased funding and increased military operations required the Air Force to make tradeoffs that adversely affected readiness. In short, our force is stressed to meet ever-growing mission demands.

In FY16 and FY17 budgets, we made necessary adjustments to balance near-term readiness with future modernization, but our readiness remains at a near all-time low due to continuous combat operations, reduced manpower, an aging fleet, and inconsistent funding. Instead of rebuilding readiness for near-peer conflicts, your Air Force is globally engaged in operations against lesser-equipped, but still highly lethal, enemies. This requires Airmen to serve at home and abroad to underpin joint force success, but at the expense of full-spectrum readiness. In contrast to our joint teammates, your Airmen do not reset or regroup...they are either deployed abroad, deployed in place, or training for their next deployment.

Your Air Force needs permanent relief from the BCA caps, increased funding, flexible execution authority, and manpower to recover full-spectrum readiness. We will continue to do all we can to innovate, transform, and improve how we maximize our resources. However, we still need your help in providing funding stability with the ability to modernize our capabilities, at the pace required to fight and win against any emerging threat.

STATE OF AIR FORCE READINESS

During WWII, General MacArthur's Airman, General George Kenney, said it best, "Airpower is like poker. A second-best hand is like none at all—it will cost you dough and win you nothing." Today's Air Force is at risk of becoming a second-best hand with readiness hovering near 50 percent.

We remain America's first and most agile responder to crisis and conflict, underwriting every joint operation...however, the demand for your Air Force, exceeds the supply.

To meet the full requirements of our Defense Strategic Guidance and current operation plans, we require 80 percent of our combat squadrons to be full-spectrum ready. We define full-spectrum readiness as the right number of Airmen, properly led, trained and equipped, to accomplish our Air Force mission in support of joint forces in both contested and uncontested environments.

We measure full-spectrum readiness through our five levers of readiness: critical skills availability, weapons system sustainment, training resource availability, flying hour program, and operational tempo. If Airmen are not ready for all possible scenarios, especially a high-end fight against a near-peer adversary, it will take longer to get to the fight; it will take longer to win; and it will cost more lives. The following sections highlight key areas where Congressional support is needed in order to balance our five levers of readiness.

PEOPLE

Airmen are our greatest resource and our Air Force need to increase end strength to meet national security requirements. Manpower shortfalls in key areas remain the number one issue limiting readiness and is our top priority. At the start of 2016, our end strength stood at 311,000 active duty Airmen, down from more than 500,000 during Desert Storm—a 38 percent decrease. Though we appreciate your support to build the force up to about 321,000 in 2017, we will still be stretched to meet national security requirements. To quote Senator McCain, we need to “dig out” more than “build up.”

To improve readiness and attain manning levels matching our mission requirements, we are considering an increase to our active-duty, Guard, and Reserve

end strength and will work with the Secretary of Defense to develop the FY 2018 President's Budget to address personnel shortages. Our Total Force model (incorporating our active duty, guard, reserve, civilians, and our contracted capabilities), not only recognizes the value of an integrated team, but helps guarantee today's and tomorrow's capability. We will develop plans to address shortfalls in a number of key areas, including critical career fields such as aircraft maintenance, pilots, NC3, intelligence, cyber, and battlefield Airmen.

As we drew down active duty manpower in recent years, we have relied more heavily on our civilian Airmen. Our civilians make up 26% of our Total Force—of which, 94% are in the field, providing vital mission support through weapons system maintenance, sustainment, engineering, logistics, security, intelligence, and medical functions. Currently, our civilian workforce is 96% manned. At the historical attrition rate, the civilian workforce will shrink to a 93% manning level over the next four months.

In the aircraft maintenance field, we were short approximately 3,400 aircraft maintainers at the close of 2016. Because of this shortage, we cannot generate the training sorties needed for our aircrews. The same pool of maintainers that keep our existing aircraft flying at home and in combat, must simultaneously support fielding new platforms. Due to an ongoing shortage of active duty aircraft maintainers, we will continue to fund contractors to fill the gap at select non-combat A-10, F-16, and C-130 units as our active duty maintainers transition to the F-35. This allows us to strike a balance between meeting today's demand while modernizing for the future, but masks the insufficient size of the force.

We also face a pilot shortage crisis across all disciplines, most acutely in the

fighter community. The Air Force has the world's finest pilots who enable an incomparable duality of global mobility and combat lethality. As airlines continue hiring at unprecedented rates, they draw away experienced pilots. Without a healthy pool of pilots, we risk the ability to provide airpower to the nation.

Pilots are strategic national assets and the pilot crisis extends beyond the Air Force and military. It is a national problem which requires senior-level attention in Congress, the Commercial Industry, and the DoD. To address this national challenge, since 2014 the 'Air Force -Airline Collaboration', formally known as the National Pilot Sourcing Forum has increased efforts to effectively utilize and train an adequate number of pilots to meet our nation's pilot demand signal.

However, pilot retention has declined for five straight years. We ended FY16 at 723 *fighter* pilots below requirement and 1,555 *total* pilots short across all mission areas. Pilot training and retention are priorities. The increased end-strength provided in the FY17 NDAA will allow us to maximize the training pipeline and fill out under-manned units, which are vital to our recovery. We are grateful for your support to increase the pilot bonus, and we will continue to ensure our retention programs are appropriately sized and utilized.

NUCLEAR DETERRENCE OPERATIONS

We require additional resources to invest in our nuclear capabilities and infrastructure that are the bedrock of our national security. While our nuclear forces remain safe, secure, and effective, we require significant investment to ensure robust, reliable, flexible, and survivable nuclear readiness and deterrence well into the future.

On average, our B-52 bombers are 55 years old and our nuclear facilities are

now over 50 years old, with many facility systems operating well past their 20-year designed life span. Currently, all of our weapons storage areas are operating with waivers and deviations from our high standards. Although these storage areas are uncompromised—they remain safe and secure—we must recapitalize this infrastructure to address the recommendations identified in our Nuclear Enterprise Reviews for facility and weapons sustainment.

Meanwhile, we must continue to invest in modernization of our air- and ground-based nuclear weapons systems. The B-2 and B-52 require upgrades, and we must ensure one of our main acquisitions priorities, the B-21 bomber, proceeds on schedule. In addition, our ICBMs, which provide the US with a stabilizing and responsive strategic deterrent capability, are being maintained and operated well beyond their planned operational life-cycles and face significant sustainment challenges. The Ground-based Strategic Deterrent (GBSD) recapitalization program, which will replace the ICBM fleet, must proceed as planned in order to ensure the ground leg of the nuclear triad remains credible and effective in the decades ahead. Connecting the nuclear triad is our nuclear command, control, and communications (NC3) system. Accordingly, NC3 must be modernized to support accompanying nuclear capabilities.

Finally, we must modernize our nuclear stockpile, by continuing to support the B-61 modernization program, while investing in the development of the Long-Range Standoff weapon as a survivable air-launched weapon capable of destroying otherwise inaccessible targets in any conflict zone. Though we are grateful for modest relief of spending limitations that allowed us to address a scrutinized priority list of

nuclear modernization efforts, we require additional resources to invest in foundational nuclear capabilities and infrastructure.

SPACE

Underwriting every joint operation across the globe is our ability to use the space domain at the time and place of our choosing. But our freedom of action in, through and from space can no longer be taken for granted. Our potential adversaries have had a front row seat to the many successes achieved by space integration into joint warfighting and, unfortunately, they are rapidly developing capabilities to deny us space superiority. In the not too distant future, our potential adversaries will have the capability to hold all of our military space capabilities at risk.

Space is a warfighting domain. The paradigm for space operations has shifted from a force enabler/enhancer to an integrated warfighting capability. As the Nation's lead service for space, we require additional support to build Air Force space systems, that are more resilient and agile. This means investment in capabilities to defend our space assets, while maintaining a cycle of continuous upgrades in each generation of spacecraft to ensure that systems are fully ready when called upon by the joint warfighter and can continue to operate in an increasingly contested environment.

Maintaining assured access to space remains one of our top priorities. We are working to mature and advance our Launch Service Agreement strategy to develop affordable, sustainable launch capabilities that will eliminate dependence on foreign rocket propulsion systems. Second, we are developing Space Situational Awareness and Battle Management Command and Control (BMC2) capabilities, which underpin

our efforts to integrate space into full spectrum joint operations. Investments in space situational awareness capabilities, such as Space Fence, ground-based radar and optical systems and on-orbit surveillance capabilities, like the Geosynchronous Space Situational Awareness Program (GSSAP) [our geosynchronous orbit “neighborhood watch”], enables critical battlespace awareness in space and the unprecedented ability to characterize the space operational environment.

Similarly, investments in the Joint Interagency Coalition Space Operations Center (JICSpOC) and the Joint Space Operation Center (JSpOC) Mission System (JMS) provide the decision superiority and data we need to deter attack, and, if necessary, defend our capabilities and freedom to operate in space. Lastly, space systems provide mission-critical services and capabilities to support our Joint Forces in theater and around the globe, every day. Continuing to modernize and replenish our missile warning, nuclear command and control, satellite communication and Global Positioning System constellations ensures we will have resilient, mission-assured capability to support daily joint operations.

Finally, we need to continue integrating our organizations and capabilities across both the DoD and the Intelligence Community, while improving training for our space force and cultivating an enduring cadre of space operators and acquirers. We must normalize and operationalize the space domain by maturing our tactics, techniques and procedures and “train like we fight,” in space, just as we would in any other domain to ensure we are fully prepared to deal with today’s adversaries and emerging technology.

CYBERSPACE

Cyberspace capabilities are essential to joint operations. The Air Force remains committed to providing 39 fully operational Cyber Mission teams by the end of FY18. Today's cyber teams are conducting ongoing offensive and defensive cyber operations in support of combatant commanders daily, therefore we must commit to a robust and resilient cyber enterprise.

Today, the Air Force cyber enterprise lacks sufficient numbers of trained cyber forces to meet the ever-increasing demands. Additionally, the increasing numbers of attacks on our cyber infrastructure and weapon systems, from state and non-state actors, continue to tax the limited personnel and tools to effectively defend critical assets and preserve freedom of movement in a domain where actions happen at the speed of light. Adequate and consistent resourcing over time will enable us to obtain and maintain cyber superiority in this highly dynamic warfighting domain.

Additional investments in cyberspace capabilities are required. We need to continue modernizing and developing offensive and defensive tools and measures to harden current infrastructures while baking cyber security into every new capability to counter cyberspace adversaries. This will ensure Air Force and joint force mission assurance—command and control, weapon system cyberspace defense, information dominance, and integrating offensive cyberspace effects into multi-domain operations.

COMBAT AIR FORCES

The average age of Air Force aircraft is 27 years. This is the oldest in our 70-year history. If aircraft required license plates, 54% of our platforms would qualify for antique designation in the state of Virginia. The ability to fly, fight, and win with aging

aircraft is made possible by remarkable Airmen in an all-volunteer force.

Modernization can no longer be delayed...it is the capability and capacity for a high-end fight. Today's modernization is tomorrow's readiness.

To continue to provide unrelenting air superiority and global precision strike, we cannot accept a less than ready force. With current combat readiness falling below 50% and an ever-growing demand signal, our Air Force requires an increase in combat air forces capacity. The more diminished our combat-coded fighter squadrons, the more degraded our ability to posture and project global power for America. At our current fighter procurement rate, it will take 45 years to recapitalize our full fighter force. We must also continue to procure the F-35 to counter rapidly advancing near-peer threats.

To ensure our Airmen are ready to face any emerging or future threat, we need to provide our Airmen with advanced threat testing, training, and associated technology. Our forces must have access to realistic test and training ranges and investment in computer-aided live, virtual, and constructive (LVC) infrastructure. LVC capability provides opportunities to test and train against the world's most capable threats, reduces costs, and supports full-spectrum readiness. Finally, we must have sufficient munitions to counter current threats, while developing advanced munitions to counter future threats.

INTELLIGENCE, SURVEILLANCE, AND RECONNAISSANCE (ISR)

The Air Force ISR enterprise is often the first in the fight and the last to leave...providing continuous coverage of global threats and targets...from the earliest surveillance of the battlespace, to after weapon impact. However, the demand for

continuous ISR presence is insatiable and ever growing, and our ISR enterprise is strained.

Over the past 15 years we grew the RPA enterprise 1200%...and today we support 60 continual combat lines of persistent attack RPAs. Within current constraints, we are committed to improving quality of life and work for our Airmen, and are prioritizing investments to create a dedicated launch and recovery MQ-1/9 squadron, increase training, and restore two MQ-9 operations squadrons. Additionally, we are training enlisted operators to fly the RQ-4 Global Hawk and funding a strategic basing initiative to eventually fly RPAs at new locations on schedule.

However, our ISR enterprise still needs help. More than 7,000 Airmen working in our Distributed Common Ground System are over-stressed and undermanned. These Airmen supported over 29,000 ISR missions, analyzed more than 380,000 hours of full motion video and disseminated 2.6 million images to our warfighters in the last year alone, attempting to quench the insatiable demand for ISR. They have operated at these surge levels for over a decade.

To meet the needs of combatant commanders, the RPA force may require additional Airmen to achieve a healthy and sustainable force. Moreover, we continue to pursue emerging ISR Cyber and Space capabilities. We must also recapitalize our C2ISR platforms, such as our E-8C JSTARS aircraft, which provides a unique combination of airborne C2, communications, and high-fidelity moving-target surveillance capability. These capabilities are essential to finding and tracking our adversaries, conducting non-kinetic targeting, and ensuring Air Force weapon systems cyber mission assurance.

INFRASTRUCTURE

We project airpower from a network of globally positioned bases, and we must focus on maintaining these bases as part of our strategic force posture. However, our infrastructure, particularly our installations in the continental U.S., are in excess of our operational needs. This is an inefficient arrangement with aging and underused facilities consuming funds that should be prioritized for readiness and modernization.

Budget pressures have repeatedly delayed investments in aging infrastructure such as test and training ranges, airfields, facilities, and even basic infrastructure like power and drainage systems. Our infrastructure problem has only been exacerbated by the funding caps imposed under the BCA. Every year that we delay infrastructure repairs affects operations and substantially increases improvement costs. It is time for another round of Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) to allow us to reinvest funds in higher priority areas across the Air Force.

CONCLUSION

Since 1947, the Air Force has relentlessly provided America with credible deterrence and decisive combat power in times of peace, crisis, contingency, and conflict. However, our relative advantage over potential adversaries is shrinking and we must be prepared to win decisively against any adversary. We owe this to our nation, our joint teammates, and our allies. The nation requires full-spectrum ready air, space, and cyber power, now more than ever. America expects it; combatant commanders require it; and with your support, Airmen will deliver it.