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**STATEMENT OF  
THE HONORABLE DUNCAN HUNTER  
CHAIRMAN, SUBCOMMITTEE ON MILITARY  
PROCUREMENT  
AIR FORCE  
MODERNIZATION PROGRAMS HEARING**

This afternoon, we welcome witnesses from the Department of the Air Force to receive testimony on its Fiscal Year 2001 modernization programs.

The Fiscal Year 2001 Air Force procurement budget request is \$20.9 billion. Compared to the Fiscal Year 2000 request of \$18.6 billion, that's a 12 percent increase. However, this budget request is also about \$370 million, or 1.7 percent, less than the Administration told us it would be when the budget for Fiscal Year 2000 was submitted a year ago.

As most of you know, I have been very concerned about diminished levels of modernization funding over the past seven years. This year, General Mike Ryan, the Air Force Chief of Staff, also shared his concerns about the effect of another underfunded Air Force modernization budget when he told the committee that the average age of today's Air Force aircraft is an unprecedented 20 years, and under the current modernization plans the average age will increase to 30 years by 2015. He also warned us that the cost of maintaining older equipment is growing, which reduces his ability to buy new equipment. Aircraft aging has also been a major contributor to falling aircraft mission capable rates.

Against the backdrop of older equipment and reduced readiness, the 12 percent increase in this procurement budget request, compared to last year, is simply not enough, as evidenced by General Ryan's unfunded priority list of \$3.5 billion in Fiscal Year 2001 alone. In the remaining years of the Future Years Defense Program from 2002 to 2005, his unfunded priorities total an additional \$8.2 billion.

Before I introduce our witnesses, I would like to announce that immediately following the hearing, the Committees will receive briefings on the Joint Strike Fighter program from both the General Accounting Office and the JSF Program director. These briefings will address the recent GAO draft report on the JSF, which expresses concerns with the program's planned transition to engineering and manufacturing development in mid-2001. While I'm sure our Air Force witnesses can answer most questions concerning the JSF program, we will not be able to discuss specific issues raised by the GAO report during this open hearing due to proprietary considerations in the ongoing competition. Therefore, immediately after the hearing we will clear the room, except for Members and Staff, in order to discuss the details of the GAO report.

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