

Statement for  
  
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(ACC)

US Military Services' Ability to Provide the  
Necessary Forces and Their Capability to Carry Out  
the Nation's Military Strategy

Before the

House National Security Committee  
Subcommittee on Military Readiness  
Subcommittee on Military Personnel  
Subcommittee on Military Installations and Facilities

September 25, 1998

**COMACC Statement to House National Security Subcommittees on Military  
Readiness, Military Personnel and Military Installations: Hearing on the Military  
Services' ability to provide the necessary forces and their capability to carry out our  
nation's military strategy**

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, thank you for this opportunity to discuss some of the readiness challenges that we face in Air Combat Command (ACC), and for your continued strong support of the programs on which we depend to maintain a strong and capable force. As the ACC Commander I am responsible to organize, train and equip 14 of the Air Force's 20 deployable fighter wings – seven active and seven in the reserve components, all of the Air Force's bombers, and the majority of the Air Force's Command, Control and Communication systems, Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance aircraft, and Search and Rescue assets. ACC also leads modernization efforts and exercise and deployment scheduling for all of the combat air forces. Can our forces deploy this minute and successfully fight a war? The answer to that depends on who, where and how we fight. But the fact is that we are substantially less ready today than we were just a few years ago.

It's no secret that our metrics indicate declining readiness trends. We track mission capable rates and maintenance trends by category of aircraft (Charts 1,2,3).



## OPERATIONAL FIGHTER TRENDS FY86 - FY98/JUL

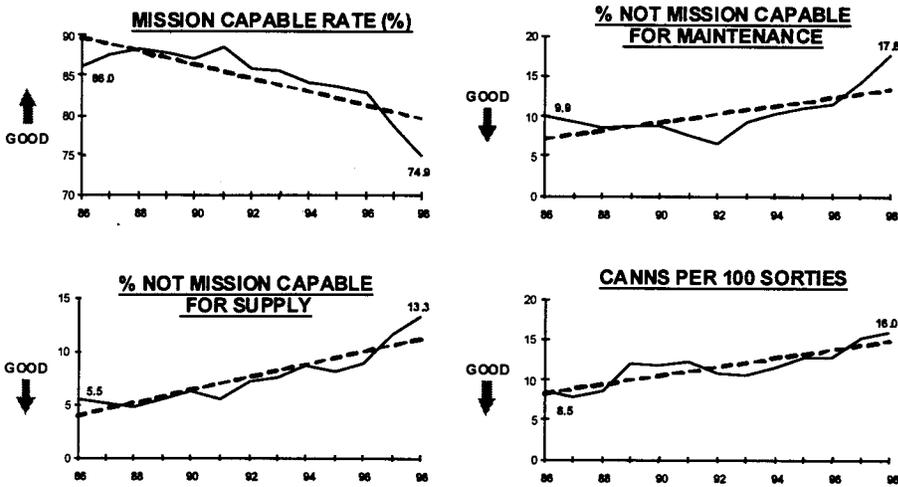


Chart 1



## OPERATIONAL BOMBER TRENDS FY90 - FY98/JUL

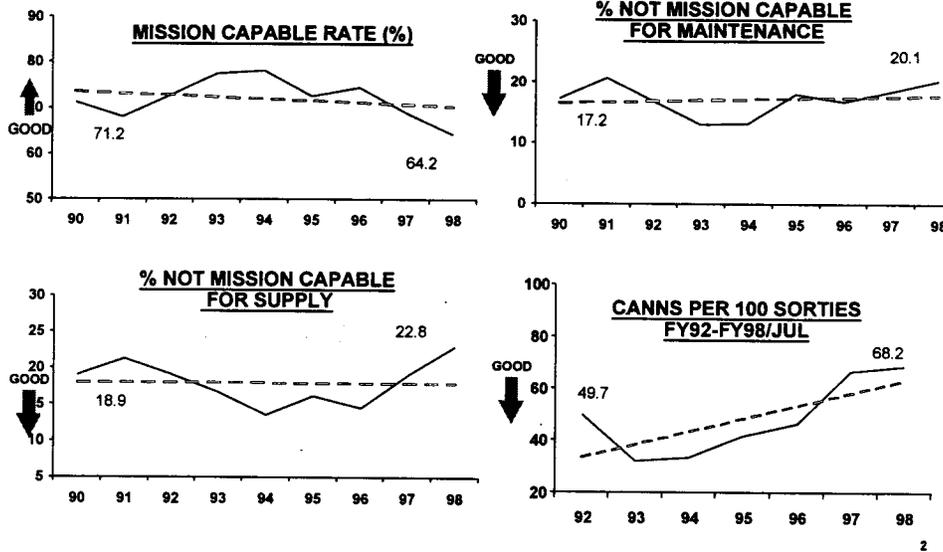
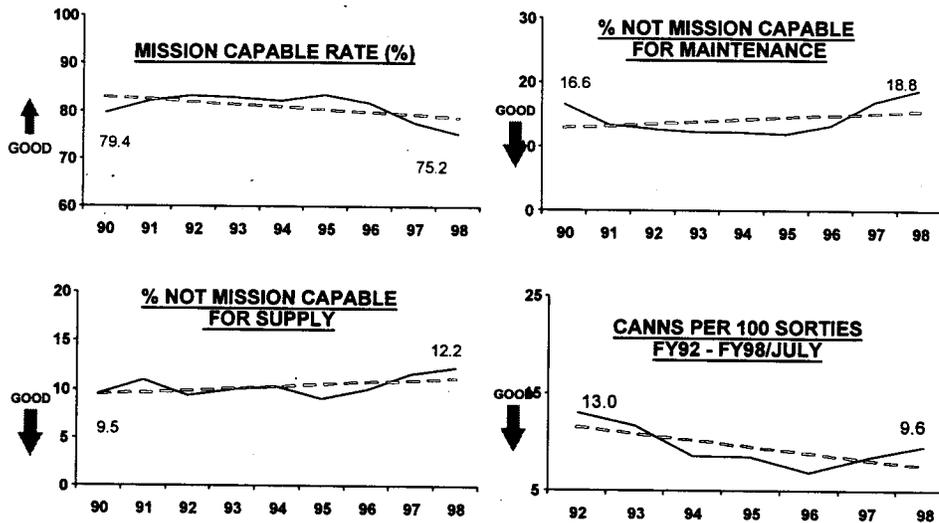


Chart 2 (above) Chart 3 (below)



## ACC SPECIAL MISSION AIRCRAFT TRENDS, FY90 - FY98/JUL



The mission capable rate depicts the percentage of aircraft available to perform their assigned tasks. We categorize the unavailable aircraft by those awaiting parts (not mission capable for supply) and by those aircraft awaiting repair (not mission capable for

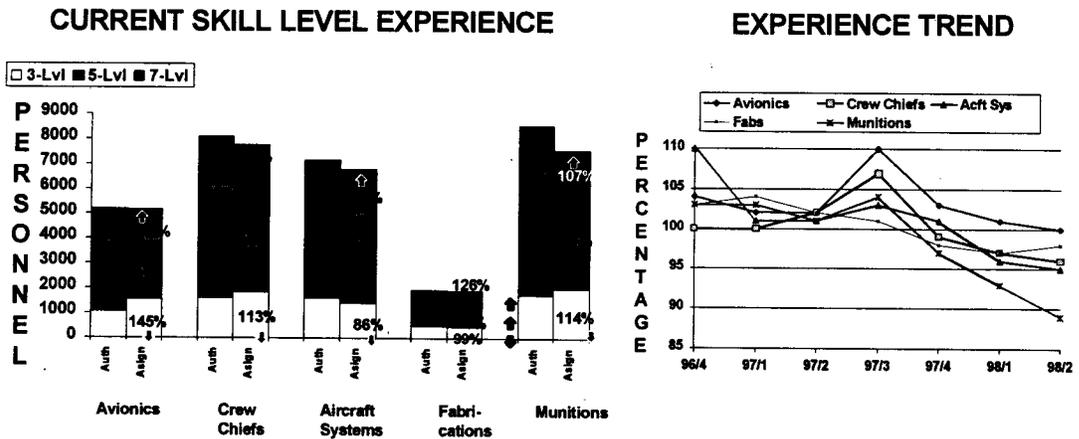
maintenance). We also track the practice of swapping parts between aircraft on the ramp, and describe these maintenance actions as cannibalization, or CANN, actions per 100 sorties.

These data show that the trend in all cases is negative. Our metrics reveal a steady decline since the end of the Gulf War, with a particularly bad spike over the last two years. But even more important than the decline in the condition of our equipment is the erosion we have seen in our ability to retain those well trained, highly motivated and disciplined men and women who have made ours the most revered and feared Air Force on the globe.

Too many of these warriors are leaving the force, and we see the effects in both inexperienced and undermanned units. (Chart 4)



## AIR COMBAT COMMAND ENLISTED MAINTENANCE MANNING

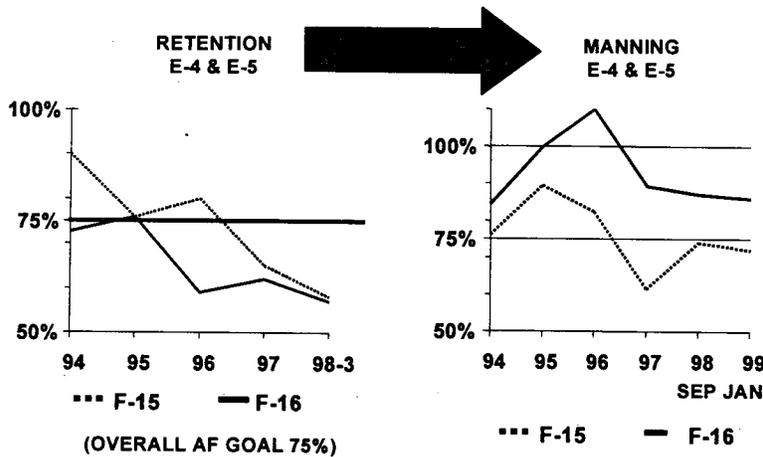


We track our maintenance manning by three broad categories of qualification. While overall manning appears solid, this masks undermanning in many critical specialties. When I checked earlier this month, 129 specialties in ACC, representing nearly one third of our total force, were manned at less than 85% of their authorized strength. The averages also mask a shortage of trained technicians, or 5-levels, who should constitute the bulk of the workforce. Newly arrived technicians start as 3-level apprentices who require close supervision and extensive training, while the 7-levels are relatively senior non-commissioned officers who do most of the planning and supervising.

We have particular problems retaining our F-15 and F-16 crew chiefs and avionics specialists in the rank of E-4 and E-5 who make up the bulk of our trained aircraft maintenance technicians. (Chart 5,6)



## AIR COMBAT COMMAND F15 & F16 AVIONICS

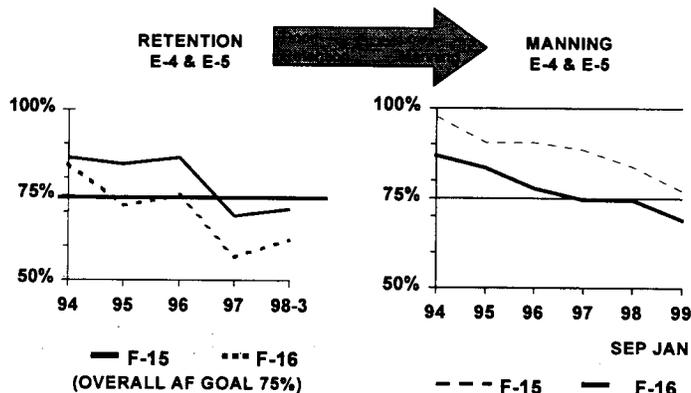


**Chart 5**

NOTES: Retention 98/3 data (Oct 97 - Jun 98) formula = retained/elig to reenlist  
 F-15: 7/12 = 58%      F-16: 16/28 = 57%  
 Avionics Manning deficit: F-15 = 42    F-16 = 124



## AIR COMBAT COMMAND F15 & F16 CREW CHIEFS



**Chart 6**

NOTE: Retention 98/3 data (Oct 97 - Jun 98) formula = retained/elig to reenlist  
 F-15: 34/48 = 71%      F-16: 26/42 = 62%  
 Crew Chief Manning deficit: F-15 = 145      F-16 = 281

These people are the backbone of our fighter maintenance force. Losing these technicians reduces sortie production capability. Some of our wings failed to produce sufficient training sorties for their pilots this year because they had too few qualified crew chiefs to preflight and turn the aircraft.

In this unedited excerpt from a statement given by one of our separating F-15 crew chiefs at Langley AFB, SrA Nicholas J. Malamas, a first term airman who will have served 4 years at the end of his enlistment, wrote:

I have recently decided that I was going to get out of the Air Force when my enlistment was up. There are numerous factors which caused me to make this decision. The main reason is what seems like never-ending work hours which seem to overwhelm my life. I can not recall actually having a 40-hour work week since I enlisted and there are always several days in a week where no one even gets to eat lunch. These factors would not be as big a factor in my decision if I was compensated or rewarded for my hard work and dedication. These long work hours along with deployments to Saudi Arabia are becoming more frequent and I was unable to attend any college classes during my enlistment. Supervisors are

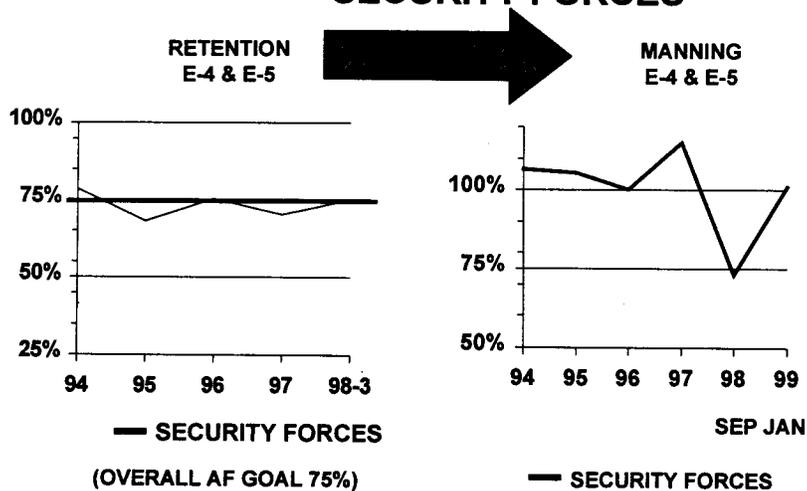
unwilling to work with you so you can get an education. The opportunity to use the leave that you earned is often denied.

That closing remark could be taken as an indictment of this airman's supervisors and commanders, but in fact it is simply evidence of the enormous pressures under which some parts of our force must operate every day.

Our security forces specialists have a very high OPSTEMPO because of the increased threat of terrorist attack on our deployed forces. As a result, 70% of our Security Forces are leaving the Air Force after their first enlistment. Even with sharply increased recruitment and training, we have not keep pace with our losses. (Chart 7)



## AIR COMBAT COMMAND SECURITY FORCES



11

Chart 7

It requires the committed efforts of every Air Force member to put missiles in the air and bombs on target, but it is our pilots who pull the trigger and they are leaving us at an alarming rate. We will be short more than 700 pilots by the end of this month, and that

deficit will nearly triple to almost 2000, or about 15% of the requirement, by the year 2002. (Chart 8) The bonus “take rate,” a useful metric for gauging pilot retention, stands at 26% today for ACC. Only one-quarter of those eligible to take the pilot bonus are making a long term commitment to stay with the Air Force.



## TOTAL PILOT INVENTORY VS. REQUIREMENT

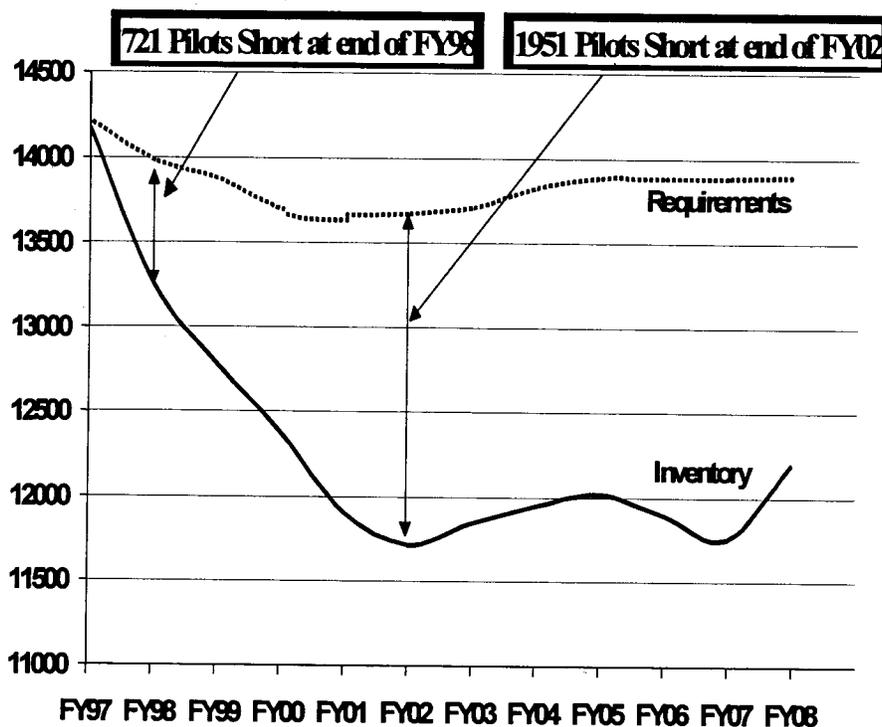


Chart 8

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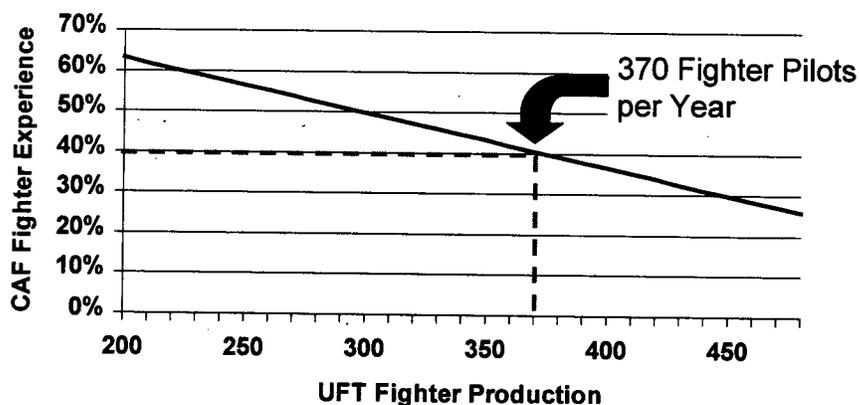
Pilots cite high OPSTEMPO, not pay, as their top reason for leaving the Air Force. It really comes down to something Capt Chuck Cook, an F-16 pilot from Hill AFB, told Air Force Magazine back in August. He said the pilot bonus was not really a factor in his decision to get out. Capt Cook said, “If they offered me a million dollars, it’s still going to require the time,” (away from his family). He was talking about

OPSTEMPO. Maj Ralph Phillips told Air Force Magazine that after 14 years of flying F-16s for the Air Force the decision is mostly due to the impact on his family. "What I'm doing to my family, the cost to them, doesn't make it worth my selfish desire to serve."

Unfortunately we cannot solve our pilot shortage by producing large numbers of new pilots. Each new pilot must go to an operational squadron to gain their initial flight qualifications and build experience. It takes more than two years for a pilot to gain that experience. If we let our squadron experience levels dip below 40%, then we no longer have enough experienced flight leaders and supervisors to lead our sorties. The squadron sinks under its own training burden. The number of new pilots we can accept from pilot training each year is constrained by the reduced size of our force. There is no quick fix to replacing experienced pilots. (Chart 9)



## EXPERIENCE vs. PILOT PRODUCTION



15

Chart 9

An undermanned and inexperienced maintenance force with too few spare parts cannot produce the sorties we need to train these new pilots. As a result, the average

number of hours per crew per month has been in a slow decline since the Gulf War.

(Chart 10)

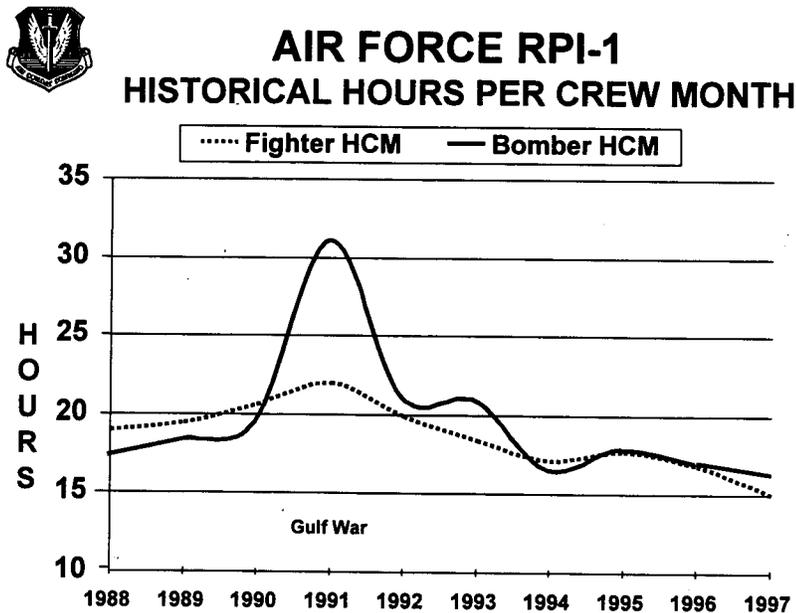


Chart 10

Armies go to the field to train, navies go to sea. We fly from airfields that are just as important to combat capability as the carriers that host our Navy's air wings.

Maintaining our infrastructure is no less important than maintaining our aircraft. But the military construction and real property maintenance accounts have taken a beating over the last several years. Real Property Maintenance funding pays for the repair, maintenance and minor construction improvements to facilities, utilities and pavements.

These funds maintain the infrastructure we need to support our operations. Without adequate funding, facilities will deteriorate and eventually require more costly repairs.

Current funding levels are at an all-time low. Real property maintenance funding is set at 1 percent of plant replacement value, not because that addresses the need, but because that is all we can afford. And funding for new construction has all but

disappeared. By comparison, industry spends on average 4 percent of plant replacement value to preserve, repair and replace facilities. What ACC's 1 percent buys us is replacing facilities at the 100 year point. Until then, about all we can do with that 1 percent is put patches on broken pipes.

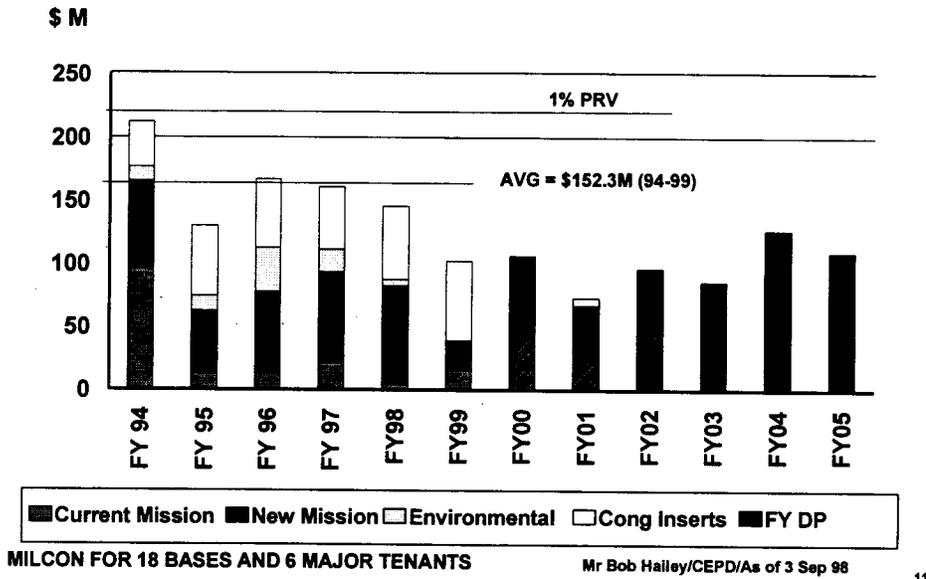
The Dyess AFB, TX Avionics Shop has air conditioning and power limits that support only 8 of their required 14 test stations. As a result, hundreds of B-1 black boxes are sent off base for repairs, Dyess' monthly sortie rate is supported by cannibalization and they have no surge capability to support their wartime tasking. They are utilizing work-arounds, but Air Mobility Command assets are not always available to move parts.

Offutt AFB, NE has an on-going problem with standing water, which in turn attracts birds. Between September and October 1997 Offutt experienced 11 runway shutdowns due to "severe bird environments." They also reported 22 pattern shut downs due to "moderate bird environment." Between 1995 and 1997 they reported a total of 192 bird strikes causing over \$3.9 million in aircraft damage.

Air Force funding for MILCON and real property maintenance, normalized in dollars per square foot, has been on a steady decrease since the mid-80's. (Chart 11)



# ACC MILCON FY 99 BUDGET



**Chart 11**

Further planned cuts in MILCON worsen the downward trend. As a result our basic standards will become unachievable, infrastructure will deteriorate to unacceptable levels, and we will be forced to rely on inefficient and expensive work-arounds. We need to begin making smart investments in our physical plant by fixing all critical situations and lead-turning degraded conditions that will soon have serious mission impact.

Our aircraft average nearly 20 years old today . Our B-52 bombers are twice that old. Try to get parts for or even maintain a 20-year old car and you'll begin to understand the challenges associated with supporting this aging force.

We are banking heavily on modernization to ensure our ability to dominate the airspace over tomorrow's battlefields. Today's F-15s, F-16s and A-10s are showing signs of their age now and will not even begin to be replaced for another seven years. The last of our planned F-22 deliveries will not hit the ramp for another 15 years, and we'll still be

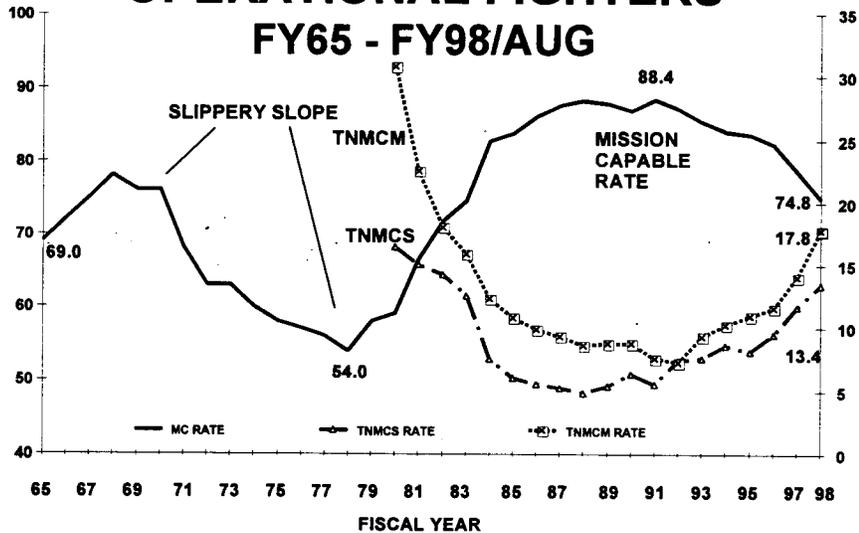
operating F-16s in 2020. But we have been unable to afford critical life sustaining modifications to these aircraft – engine upgrades for the F-15 despite having lost six aircraft in engine related accidents since 1988, timely fielding of an upgraded radar for the F-15 even though the current radar is fast becoming unsupportable, and defensive avionics upgrades to the B-52. The list could go on and on, but the point is simply that we need to sustain these older systems while keeping our major modernization programs on track.

Each of these of shortfalls has a critical impact on ACC's ability to conduct contingency operations. Together they add up to a serious, long-term impact on our ability to fight. Within ACC's POM submittal there were nearly \$2 billion annually in critical unfunded requirements . Now these are not "nice-to-haves." These are validated requirements that we can find no way to fund for the next five years. So as bad as our readiness looks now, it has the potential to get a lot worse in the next five years.

I have attempted to give you some insight into the readiness of Air Combat Command, and a glimpse at some of the data we use to inform our judgments on our capability to deter, fight, and win, both today and tomorrow. I want to leave you with a graph which haunts us every day. This is one indicator we have tracked the same way since the sixties, so the data is consistent over that time. (Chart 12)



## MISSION CAPABLE & NON MISSION CAPABLE RATES OPERATIONAL FIGHTERS FY65 - FY98/AUG



13

Chart 12

We call it the slippery slope chart because it shows clearly how our readiness eroded in the post-Vietnam years leading to the hollow force of the late 70s. The trends, unfortunately, are heading in that direction. We are not there yet, but we should all be concerned. Funding has simply not kept pace with the demands on our force. Mission capable rates have slowly declined since 1990, but we have seen a much sharper rate of decline since 1997.

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, thank you again for this opportunity to discuss the readiness of our Air Force. We remain the most capable force for peace in the world today, but we are less ready today than we were a year ago and we will be less ready next year than we are today. The time to reverse those trends is now, and absent a

change in the world situation and the policies that drive our requirements, that is going to require a significant increase in our investment in national security.