

**DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
PRESENTATION TO THE READINESS SUBCOMMITTEE
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

SUBJECT: READINESS IN AN AGE OF AUSTERITY

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The United States continues to need a strong and agile military to confront a diverse range of threats in a dynamic international security environment. With our Joint partners, the Air Force defends and advances the interests of the United States by providing unique capabilities across the full spectrum of conflict in order to succeed in today's wars and prevent future conflicts. The Air Force remains a mission-oriented and highly prepared force — not an easy task after more than 20 years of constant combat operations.

Current Operations

This year, the Air Force has been engaged in a broad range of operations across the globe. From humanitarian support of our Japanese friends; to the ongoing stability and counterinsurgency operations in Afghanistan and Iraq; support for the NATO no-fly zone and protection of civilians in Libya; to the continuous air sovereignty, space, cyber and nuclear deterrence missions we execute every day – the speed, precision, and versatility of the Air Force has been tested and proven every day, all around the world.

This level of activity reflects our commitment to provide *Global Vigilance, Reach, and Power* in today's Joint fight. However, this high operations tempo (OPTEMPO) has had some detrimental effects on our overall readiness. Since 2003, we have seen a slow but steady decline in reported unit readiness indicators. Maintaining our ability to be ready for the full spectrum of operations, with an acceptable level of risk, is challenging, especially for the Combat Air Forces (CAF) and some limited-supply/high-demand units.

Airpower Reset

Over the past 10 years, the Air Force has substantially reshaped itself to meet the immediate needs of today's irregular conflicts. For example, we've boosted our Intelligence,

Surveillance, and Reconnaissance capacity, increased special operations capacity, added hundreds of new aircraft, funded the development of over 30 satellites, and added thousands of Airmen for critical nuclear and cyber operations as well as acquisition support. To fund this reshaping, we've retired over 1,500 older aircraft, canceled major acquisition programs, shed manpower in less critical career fields, and deferred much needed military construction.

However, even as we continue to fulfill our commitment to the Joint and Coalition team in the current fight, we must also ensure that our Air Force is positioned to face future threats. Looking forward, the Air Force faces a multi-year effort to recapitalize our aging tanker, fighter, bomber, and missile forces; modernize our satellite constellations; meet dynamic requirements in the cyber domain; and replace aging airframes for pilot training, vertical lift, and presidential support. We are constrained fiscally at a time when we are also called upon to meet the full spectrum of threats in a period of tremendous uncertainty.

Age of Fiscal Austerity

Our task of resetting our military after two decades of combat operations would be daunting even without the urgent need to bring our Nation's debt and deficit spending back under control. Despite increasing mission requirements, we know that the Department of Defense (DoD) will be a part of the solution to the Nation's fiscal problems. The first step was the DoD's effort to identify over \$100 billion of efficiencies in order to move money from support to mission-critical activities. In the Air Force alone, nearly \$33 billion was reallocated. We are now in the process of identifying at least \$450 billion in national security budget reductions over the next 10 years.

However, as Secretary Panetta has said, we don't have to make a choice between national security and fiscal solvency. With the other Services, we are participating in a strategy review

that will help us to identify which missions, roles, and/or capabilities can be scaled back or eliminated. Until this strategy review is complete, Secretary Panetta has outlined four guiding principles for the current budget reductions: maintain a military force capable of deterring conflict, projecting power, and winning wars; avoid a hollow force; institute better business practices by trimming overhead, introducing competition, and reducing the cost growth in personnel accounts; all while not breaking faith with our men and women in uniform.

As DoD senior leaders have noted, we did not begin this budget exercise at a low level of risk. Even before the passage of the Budget Control Act (BCA), the Air Force was at a moderate level of risk, caused partially by increasing operational requirements, which we mitigated through force management policies. To meet the initial requirements of the BCA, we are projecting that the future Air Force will face significant risk in mission accomplishment, and, although our analysis isn't complete, I believe we will have several capability areas that are at risk of mission failure if the sequester occurs. These elevated levels of risk all assume a relatively static level of operational requirements. However, history has shown that as U.S. military forces withdraw from active combat, the relative requirement for airpower actually goes up, not down.

To meet our share of the \$450 billion reduction, the Air Force's budgetary strategy has been to reduce capacity while maintaining capability. However, since we have not yet completed our reduction planning, we may be forced to eliminate some capabilities — even without the sequester cuts — to gain the savings from their associated operations, infrastructure, modernization, and maintenance costs. Considering just the initial BCA cuts, this future Air Force will be capable of accomplishing many of the mission sets of today, but will do so at a significant level of risk and with less capacity to respond to multiple crises. Assuming that the

operational requirements remain at the same level, we will continue to be prepared to respond to major conflict and will retain our strategic deterrence forces. However, due to reduced capacity, our Airmen and equipment will face increasing rotational requirements. This will lead to shorter deploy-to-dwell timelines, further stress on our Reserve component, and exacerbate the aging of our airframes as well as the stress on our personnel.

In a scenario where the budget reductions exceed the \$450 billion of cuts envisioned by the BCA, we would need to go beyond merely constricting our capacity, and instead shed several required capabilities, thereby fundamentally changing the complexion and character of the Air Force. We may be unable to continue to perform certain missions and would certainly increase the risk of mission failure in those capabilities that we retain. A reduction of this size would affect the number of bases we can economically support; the number of Airmen, civilians, and contractors necessary to man a reduced force; the size of the industrial base for aircraft, weapons, and space vehicles; and the benefits that accrue from closely working with our allies, partners, and friends across the globe.

Depending on the total level of reductions, we would be unable to repeat the simultaneous global operations that the Air Force has been known for and demonstrated earlier this year. In late March and early April, U.S. Airmen were concurrently responsible for evacuating 7,500 American citizens and delivering 60 percent of U.S. relief supplies to Japan, even as they contributed more than 65 percent of all coalition sorties in Libya — all while executing full spectrum operations in Iraq and Afghanistan in support of our Joint and Coalition partners.

In any budget scenario, we know that we will be required to continue to provide certain capabilities that offer our Nation's leaders a wide range of strategic options for rapid and flexible

power projection. Our core contributions result in tailored effects at the time and place of our choosing, enabling America's global engagement. As such, in our budget drills, we have prioritized funding towards the Air Force's unique contributions to national security. These core contributions reside in four main areas:

- Establishing and exploiting control in air, space, and cyberspace;
- Holding any target on the globe at risk—such that we can strike it at the time and place of our choosing;
- Providing responsive ISR across the spectrum from on orbit to tactical remotely piloted vehicles;
- Rapid mobility—to include moving people and equipment with unmatched speed anywhere in the world.

These four unique contributions are enabled and enhanced by our superior command and control networks. Without these contributions, the United States would have to fundamentally recast its expeditionary power projection capability.

We live in challenging times for our Nation and its military. Your Air Force remains ready to make the tough choices required to cut costs without compromising our Nation's security. Despite the current fiscal challenges and high operations tempo, our Airmen, along with their fellow Soldiers, Sailors, Marines, and Coast Guardsmen, remain committed to accomplishing the mission. We remain grateful for your continued support, and are committed to continuing to provide *Global Vigilance, Reach, and Power* in defense of our Nation's interests.