

**Testimony before the House Armed Services Committee  
“Testimony from Members on their National Defense  
Priorities for the NDAA”**

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Chairman McKeon and Ranking Member Smith, I would like to thank you for this opportunity to testify before you today on my national defense priorities. My district, Texas’s 19<sup>th</sup> Congressional District, is home to the 5,000 military and 1,000 civilian personnel stationed at Dyess Air Force Base. Located on the outskirts of the City of Abilene, Dyess houses, among other missions, the 7<sup>th</sup> Bomb Wing, representing 36 of the 66 remaining B-1 Lancer strategic bombers.

As a part of its FY 2012 budget, the Air Force has proposed cutting the B-1 fleet by six, reducing the total number of aircraft down to only 60. The Air Force estimates that this cut will save \$61.1 million in FY 2012, and \$357 million over five years, in the procurement and operations & maintenance accounts. However, of these amounts the Air Force plans to invest only \$32.9 million in the B-1 fleet in FY 2012, and only \$125.4 million over the next five years.

Mr. Chairman, I know that in this new, refreshing climate of tightening our belts around here, no program is off limits. There are no sacred cows, and programs and projects across the budget are having to justify their funding levels, and in some cases their very existence. However, when it comes to the Air Force’s proposal,

the argument against the idea of reducing our B-1 fleet seems so strong, I am almost surprised that it even needs to be made.

From September 2001 through June 2010 (the most recent data available), the B-1 has flown 72 percent of bomber combat missions, while representing only 40 percent of the bomber fleet. Before recent military action in Libya, the B-1 was the only bomber to have been used in combat since May 2006 – and used heavily at that. In fact, there has been a B-1 in the air supporting our troops deployed in the Middle East almost constantly for the past several years.

I am sure that many of you are aware that when Operation Odyssey Dawn began on March 19, the Air Force used two B-2s and a handful of F-15s and F-16s to carry out the initial strikes. Knowing the capability of the B-1, frankly I was a little surprised that it was not included in the operation. A few days later I was in Abilene visiting the men and women at Dyess and asked some of the airmen there why the B-1 was not included in Odyssey Dawn. It turns out the answer was that the B-1 is playing such an integral role in Afghanistan that the leadership there simply did not have a plane to spare. It seems to me that when an aircraft is so valuable that not even one can be spared, we should not be looking to cut six. I should also point out that two B-1s eventually did fly missions over Libya – making a round trip flight across the Atlantic Ocean from Ellsworth AFB, where the 28<sup>th</sup> Bomb Wing is stationed.

I would like to come back to the fact that, before last month, the B-1 is the only bomber to have flown combat missions in almost five years, flying well over

4,500 missions (as of June 2010). The 76 B-52s and 20 B-2s also in the bomber fleet sat on the bench. Again, I find it hard to understand why we are even considering a proposal to make cuts to this fleet.

The B-1 is the least expensive bomber in the fleet. As you can see in the attached exhibit to my testimony, the B-52 comes close while being only 23-percent more expensive to fly per Cost Per Flying Hour (CPFH). The B-2 is 179-percent more expensive. The attached exhibit also documents the astounding cost differentials when it comes to the cost of Period Depot Maintenance (PDM).

The B-1 enjoys a significant advantage in its deployability. Despite originally being envisioned as a long-range, nuclear capable bomber, the B-1 has lost its nuclear capabilities as a result of past arms treaties. However, several countries do not allow us to station our nuclear capable aircraft on their soil. Recently, the B-52 has deployed only to England and Diego Garcia, while the B-1 has been stationed much closer to the Area of Responsibility (AOR), eliminating its travel time to the AOR, and any need for fuel tanker support needed to get it there. Furthermore, the B-2 requires expensive, special climate-controlled hangars when not in use in order to help maintain its stealth characteristics. Only three bases in the world have the necessary hangars for the B-2, all of them significantly outside of the AOR.

I could go on, but, lastly, I would like to point out the B-1's versatility. When the B-1 first rolled off the line in 1986, no one ever envisioned it as being able to provide close air support for troops on the ground, or loitering over a battle field providing Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR) capabilities. But

here we are today while the B-1 continues to do just that, and continues to provide this support to our troops in almost all weather, day or night, high altitude or low altitude, using either its APG-164 radar or Sniper targeting pod. In addition, just last month the Air Force began testing a new weapons delivery system that will increase the number of 500-pound Joint Direct Attack Munitions and Laser Guided (JDAM) bombs carried by the B-1 from 15 to 48 - representing a 320 percent increase in capability.

I understand that the Air Force is planning to develop a new Long Range Strike Aircraft. However, the Air Force has said that this new aircraft will not be available until the mid-2020s. If we are fifteen years away from having a new bomber, then it is even more critical that the Air Force keep and maintain the limited number of B-1s that we currently have.

If you remain unconvinced of the value of maintain our B-1 fleet at its current levels, I will close with this quote from General Petraeus, made during his nomination hearing last June:

“[The B-1] is a great platform in at least two respects, maybe more. One, it carries a heck of a lot of bombs, substantial ordnance. And, second, it has very good ISR capabilities... [I]t can loiter for a good time, when it’s not being used to drop bombs... [I]t is almost like having another unmanned aerial vehicle in terms of full motion video and so forth... **So, it’s not just a case of a very, very capable bomber just boring holes in the sky, waiting to open the bomb-bay doors.**

**It is also a case of a platform that's very capable, even as it is just doing that, flying around in circles."**

Thank you again Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member for the opportunity to address you in the forum, and I look forward to your questions.