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

March 10, 1998

This morning we conclude our series of modernization overview hearings with the defense department Acquisition Executive and the Service Acquisition Executives. Today we will focus on the Air Force.

Despite the Pentagon's proclamation that the "procurement holiday" is over, as we have learned from our hearings with the Army and Navy, things aren't as rosy as they may seem. I think the same assertion applies to the Air Force. Although the Air Force has requested \$1.5 billion more for procurement in its fiscal year 1999 budget than was appropriated for the fiscal year, the request is, nevertheless, \$1.0 billion less than was forecast this time last year. And, according to our witness' statement, this request, as a percentage of the overall Air Force budget, remains below the all-time low of 20.1% set in fiscal year 1975 - during the "hollow forces" period of the 1970s. Let me repeat that: below the all-time low - not a very convincing argument that the "procurement holiday" is over for the Air Force.

Indeed the Commander of the Air Combat Command, General Richard Hawley, went on record at last week's Air Warfare Symposium as stating that the Air Force needed another \$4-5 billion a year to fix major shortfalls that plague the service.

This observation notwithstanding, to convince us that the Air Force has begun to turn the corner with respect to a sustained increase in its modernization spending, we have with us this morning

**Lt. General George K. Muellner
Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Acquisition.**

And let me note for the record at this point that we invited both the General and his boss, Assistant Secretary Art Money, to testify today. However, the Deputy Secretary of Defense recently announced that Mr. Money is to become the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Command, Control, Communications, and Intelligence. Consequently, as he prepares to assume that role, General Muellner is currently testifying in the service Acquisition Executive's role before the various congressional defense committees.

General Muellner, your formal statement asserts that the fiscal year 1999 budget request represents a balanced and time-phased modernization approach, which captures the recommendations of the Quadrennial Defense Review - the "QDR" - while providing modernization program stability. I hope you will explain what this means in light of QDR - validated procurement shortfalls and in contrast to what General Hawley had to say.

Your statement also counsels congressional restraint with regard to altering the Air Force budget request. Again, I trust you will clarify what you mean by this suggestion and specify precisely to whom you are directing it.