

NOT FOR PUBLICATION UNTIL RELEASED BY  
HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON SEAPOWER AND PROJECTION FORCES  
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

PRESENTATION TO THE  
HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON SEAPOWER AND PROJECTION FORCES  
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

HEARING DATE/TIME: 13 May 2026, 3:30 P.M.

SUBJECT: Department of the Air Force Fiscal Year 2027 Budget Request for Seapower and  
Projection Forces

STATEMENT OF:

Mr. William D. Bailey  
Performing the Duties of Assistant Secretary of the Air Force  
(Acquisition, Technology & Logistics)

Lt. Gen. David H. Tabor, USAF  
Deputy Chief of Staff  
(Plans and Programs)

NOT FOR PUBLICATION UNTIL RELEASED BY  
HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON SEAPOWER AND PROJECTION FORCES  
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

## **INTRODUCTION**

Chairman Kelly, Ranking Member Courtney, and distinguished members of the subcommittee, thank you for having us here today to provide testimony on the Department of the Air Force's bomber, tanker, and airlift programs.

As we have seen in Operations MIDNIGHT HAMMER and EPIC FURY, the United States Air Force brings unique capabilities to the fight. These distinct air power advantages ensure the Joint force retains freedom of action, extends its operational reach, and projects decisive power worldwide. It is, therefore, essential that the Air Force continues to be fiscally prioritized so we may consistently maintain our foundational readiness accounts and, looking ever-forward, modernize our force to ensure the Air Force can meet the requirements of the National Defense Strategy. Together, the Air Force and this Committee have spent years discussing the urgency of the threats our Airmen face; this year marks a pivotal moment in our commitment to modernizing and reshaping the force to meet the challenges presented by a rapidly evolving global security landscape. We are forging an Air Force to sustain a state of constant readiness, globally project a wide spectrum of multi-domain capabilities, and provide relevant, strategic options to senior leaders. The world's preeminent air power will be postured to effectively meet the rising call to defend the Homeland, deter or defeat our adversaries, and set conditions to achieve National objectives.

## **ACQUISITION TRANSFORMATION**

The Air Force is fully committed and moving rapidly to implement the Secretary of War's Acquisition Transformation imperatives. We are transforming acquisition into a true warfighting function. Our focus is on mission outcomes over compliance and pushing authority and accountability closest to the field. This is a fundamental cultural shift towards speed, agility, and responsible risk-taking, driven from the highest levels of the Department. Our guiding principle is to ensure every Portfolio Acquisition Executive (PAE) has the three things they need to succeed: the authority, the resources, and the talent to execute their mission. This transformation puts the warfighter at the center of a unified system. By integrating requirements, acquisition, and resourcing, we ensure the voice of the operator is the driving force behind every decision we make. We want to thank Chairman Rogers for his vision and leadership in the SPEED Act and the acquisition reforms Congress enacted in the FY26 NDAA. We are moving

rapidly to execute and take advantage of these new flexibilities, and we look forward to continuing our work with Congress as we implement Acquisition Transformation in the Air Force.

### ***Direct Reporting Portfolio Manager for Critical Major Weapon Systems***

On December 19, 2025, the United States Senate confirmed General Dale White as the Direct Reporting Portfolio Manager (DRPM) for Critical Major Weapon Systems (CMWS), reporting directly to Deputy Secretary of War Feinberg. General White's portfolio is comprised of LGM-35A Sentinel Intercontinental Ballistic Missile systems, Minuteman III ICBM systems, F-47 Family of Systems, B-21 Family of Systems, and VC-25B Presidential Airlift. The latter two systems, B-21 and VC-25B, fall under the purview of this Subcommittee.

The DRPM CMWS is designed to provide two main benefits. First, by giving these uniquely demanding systems a dedicated 4-star senior leader, it allows our acquisition executives to focus their full attention on the rest of the portfolio. This ensures every program gets the leadership and support it needs to deliver for the warfighter. Secondly, DRPM CWMS has the authority to cut through bureaucracy and "prove out" faster ways of doing business. The lessons we are learning are being shared and applied across the board, making all our programs faster and more efficient. The Department of the Air Force continues to support these programs and is committed to providing CMWS with the resources and talent required to successfully execute these critical programs.

### **CURRENT CAPACITY & CAPABILITY**

In line with the National Security Strategy (NSS) principles and National Defense Strategy (NDS) priorities, the Air Force continues to invest in building an increasingly integrated, connected and ready force to deter aggression from our adversaries and promote peace through strength. Our primary goal is to restore funding to enable full readiness. We will do this by incrementally adjusting our readiness accounts and ensuring training and equipment needs are properly funded. This investment also enhances our lethality by ensuring our Airmen are trained and equipped to fly, fix, and fight both today and in future high-end conflict.

## **Bomber Force Structure & Readiness**

The American bomber force proudly retains its status symbol as the epitome of “Peace through Strength.” We remain steadfast in prioritizing near and long-term readiness with funding requests for B-52 simulator upgrade options, B-52 service life extension programs for both Commercial Engine Replacement and Radar Modernization Programs, and a Bomber Companion Trainer. We are extending the service of our B-1 and B-2 fleets to mitigate operational gaps and facilitate the modernization of our core bomber force. Accordingly, we have programmed the B-2 to be retained through the Future Years Defense Program (FYDP), which includes a fiscal year 2027 request of \$166 million for the Modular Rotary Launcher Assembly to significantly enhance its future combat capacity. The B-21 program is a national imperative, and we expect delivery on time. We have finalized a 25% increase in production capacity to provide for future flexibility. The final fleet size remains a broader Department-level decision.

### ***B-21***

The FY27 PB includes \$2.9 billion in Research Development Test & Evaluation (RDT&E) to continue test aircraft build, scale manufacturing, and execute test and evaluation activities, and it encompasses modernization activities continuing across the FYDP. Modernization includes, but is not limited to, Long Range Standoff Weapon (LRSO) integration, new conventional weapon integration, air vehicle provisioning for future capabilities, and continued nuclear certification activities. The FY27 PB includes \$3.2 billion in Procurement funding for the execution towards Lot 5 of LRIP. In addition to aircraft costs, which includes Advanced Procurement, this also provides funding for producibility improvements, approved incentives towards LRIP Active Management strategies, initial spares, support equipment, alternate mission equipment, training, rate tooling, Diminishing Manufacturing Sources and Material Shortages (DMSMS) or obsolescence issues, depot standup and program support costs. The FY27 PB includes \$355 million in Main Operating Bases (MOB) MILCON funding for two projects at Whiteman Air Force Base (AFB), MO, the Field Training Detachment facility, and Weapons Load Trainer 2 Bay, as well as continued Planning & Design and supports funding for three MILCON projects at Dyess AFB, TX, Low Observable & Radio Frequency facility, a Simulator facility and utility and site improvements.

### ***B-52***

The FY27 PB requests \$1.6 billion in RDT&E and \$480 million in Procurement for B-52 to sustain and modernize the 76 aircraft through the 2038 timeframe. This funding will support the current programs of record to include Commercial Engine Replacement Program, Radar Modernization Program, AEHF Integration, Mission Employment Trainer, nuclear and conventional communications, and weapon integration efforts. The program remains committed to installations of capabilities through the depot line that occurs at Tinker AFB, OK.

### ***B-1***

The FY27 PB requests \$283.6 million in RDT&E and \$149 million in Procurement for the B-1 to sustain and modernize the 44 aircraft into the 2034 timeframe. This funding will support the current programs of record to include external heavy stores pylons, Hybrid Satellite Communications (SATCOM), Developmental Test Jet maintenance, and LRASM C-3 integration. In FY27 \$27 million of RDT&E is allocated to integrate ARRW Increment 1 on the aircraft.

### ***B-2***

The FY27 PB requests \$418.2 million in RDT&E and \$325.5 million in Procurement to sustain and modernize the B-2 aircraft fleet into the late 2030 timeframe. This funding will support multiple new start efforts on the B-2 that will increase its lethality and interoperability with the Joint force.

### **Aerial Refueling & Mobility Programs**

Our strategic competitors continue to make significant advancements to threaten the current tanker fleet, which increases risk to air refueling operations and induces a cascading effect that significantly impacts on the effectiveness of the Joint force writ large. The Air Force will comply with congressional direction to grow the tanker force to 478 Total Aircraft Inventory (TAI), but our over-arching goal is to remain consistent with our one-for-one tanker recapitalization strategy. We also are investing in long distance over the horizon communications and protection

and airlift service life extension programs as we explore next generation airlift options. We appreciate the support of this Committee and Congress in these efforts.

## **Tankers**

### ***KC-46A***

The KC-46A Pegasus program continues to be a critical component of modernizing the tanker fleet, steadily producing and delivering capable aircraft to the warfighter. The program of record stands at 188 tankers, with plans to purchase up to 75 additional aircraft through the KC-46 Production Extension (PEX) program. This strategy ensures the long-term sustainment and operational readiness of the fleet, cementing the KC-46A's role in global reach for years to come.

Currently, 173 KC-46A aircraft are on contract, which includes the four initial Engineering and Manufacturing Development (EMD) aircraft. As of March 13, 2026, the Air Force has accepted 104 of these aircraft, across six main operating bases: McConnell AFB, KS (24); Travis AFB, CA (24); Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, NJ (24); Seymour Johnson AFB, NC (12); Pease ANGB, NH (12); and Altus AFB, OK (8), which serves as the Formal Training Unit.

The Air Force continues to work diligently with Boeing to resolve five open Category-I (CAT-I) deficiencies. These include two related to the Remote Vision System (RVS), one for the stiff aerial refueling boom, one for aerial refueling drain line cracks, and one concerning damage to the Environmental Control System (ECS) bleed air duct. Progress is being made, with the first flight of the redesigned RVS 2.0 occurring on November 14, 2025. The current projection to begin fielding RVS 2.0 is the fourth quarter of FY27, though the Air Force and Boeing are actively exploring all opportunities to accelerate the fielding of these corrective actions.

Significant investments are being made to enhance the capability and availability of the KC-46A fleet. The Air Force is investing a \$1.08 billion across the FYDP to improve aircraft availability by improving spares provisioning, part reliability, and repair timelines. In FY27, funding for the KC-46 program is set to increase by 21%, totaling an additional \$809.2 million. This will fund the final 15 aircraft of the current program of record and includes a substantial investment in depot standup and solutions for DMSMS.

### ***KC-46 Production Extension (PEX)***

The Air Force continues to prioritize the importance of securing uninterrupted tanker recapitalization in the FY27 PB. The PEX program will continue research and development of technical solutions to address DMSMS issues projected to impact the manufacturing of additional KC-46A aircraft under the KC-46A PEX program. The \$267.6 million in RDT&E funding in the FY27 PB will enable planning and preparation to include acquisition documentation development, pre-award activities, risk and issue assessment, and risk and issue mitigation. The FY27 PB request of \$66.9 million in procurement will fund long lead Large Aircraft Infrared Counter Measures (LAIRCM) Government Furnished Equipment (GFE) requirements for the first lot of PEX aircraft.

### ***KC-135***

The KC-135 fleet of 373 will continue to provide legacy aerial refueling capabilities into the 2050s. The FY27 PB requests \$121.7 million for KC-135 in RDT&E to support cryptographic modernization, Hybrid SATCOM development, DMSMS solutions for the KC-135 weather radar and the fuel management system. The FY27 PB request of \$158.7 million for KC-135 in Procurement allows the Air Force to procure equipment for Cryptographic Modernization, high frequency radio modernization, and Starshield SATCOM capabilities.

### ***Advanced Tanker Systems (ATS)***

The FY27 PB requests \$13.1 million to pursue Advanced Tanker Systems (ATS) options with a focus on tanker survivability and connectivity. ATS studies are building on previous Analysis of Alternatives (AoA) initial data funded through the Next Generation Air-refueling System (NGAS) program. Through the ATS program, the Air Force is continuing to investigate platform agnostic mission system improvements for use across the tanker fleet, including increased connectivity and survivability along with air refueling capabilities. Research will explore self-protection internally and externally and new concepts for aerial refueling. To understand future air refueling requirements, force designers must explore the relationships and tradeoffs among receivers, munitions, sortie generation, fuel distribution/storage, prepositioning, and logistics.

## **Executive Airlift**

### ***C-37***

The Air Force's Executive Airlift C-37A/B fleet is in sustainment and consists of a mix of Gulfstream GV and G550 aircraft for a total aircraft inventory of 16. Starting in FY27, the Air Force will begin recapitalizing the C-37A/B fleets with a common small commercial derivative aircraft. This new start will be an ACAT II program with a total program cost of \$2.2 billion to acquire 17 aircraft (to include one trainer aircraft) across the FYDP. The FY27 PB request of \$208 million will purchase and deliver one new fully mission capable aircraft equipped with executive interiors, a robust mission communications suite, and self-defense systems.

## **Strategic Airlift**

### ***Next Generation Airlift (NGAL)***

The Next Generation Airlift (NGAL) program is the Air Force's initiative to recapitalize its strategic airlift capability, designed to replace both the C-5M Super Galaxy and C-17A Globemaster III fleets. This effort is driven by the dual challenges of an aging fleet and the demands of future contested logistics, particularly across the vast distances of the Indo-Pacific. NGAL aims to develop a platform that can transport heavy, outsized, and oversized cargo over intercontinental ranges while incorporating advanced technologies for enhanced survivability, fuel efficiency, and rapid cargo handling in contested environments. Currently in its early analysis phase, with an Analysis of Alternatives (AoA) slated for FY27, the program is on an accelerated timeline to deliver the first aircraft as early as FY38 and achieve Initial Operational Capability (IOC) by FY41, ensuring the United States maintains its global power projection capabilities for decades to come.

### ***C-5M***

The FY27 PB request of \$100.2 million for the C-5M Super Galaxy is focused on combating systemic obsolescence, maintaining aircraft viability, and sustainability. Key initiatives include replacing the primary cockpit displays, known as the Multi-Functional Display Units (MFDUs) and the 41-year-old Standard Air Data Computer. Procurement programs address immediate reliability and safety issues by replacing faulty lavatory systems to prevent corrosion and funding low-cost modifications to mitigate parts shortages, all to maintain the C-5M's vital strategic airlift role.

## ***C-17***

The FY27 PB request of \$564.3 million for the C-17 Globemaster III fleet is designated for a comprehensive modernization aimed at enhancing operational capabilities, addressing component obsolescence, and improving overall safety and reliability. Key initiatives focus on upgrading the flight deck and integrating advanced connectivity systems to enhance crews' situational awareness through all phases of Mobility Air Force (MAF) operations. Procurement programs will also tackle immediate needs by addressing Federal Aviation Administration and National Security Agency mandates, On-Board Inert Gas Generation System (OBIGGS) fire risks, Heads-Up Display (HUD) obsolescence, and addressing other known deficiencies, ensuring the C-17 remains a state-of-the-art asset for strategic airlift missions.

## **Tactical Airlift**

### ***C-130H***

The FY27 PB requests \$23.6 million in procurement funding for key modifications. The Air Force continues to ensure the viability and sustainability of the C-130H fleet through our Center Wing Box (CWB) replacement program. CWB replacement breathes new life into some of our hardest flown aircraft, enabling them to continue to safely operate well into the future.

### ***C-130J***

The FY27 PB requests \$16.6 million in RDT&E and \$315.3 million for Procurement and modification efforts. The FY27 PB also requests \$34.9 million in RDT&E for HC/MC-130J and \$278.2 million for Procurement and modification efforts for HC/MC-130J.

The Air Force has partially recapitalized the C-130H fleet with C-130Js, which also supports our Special Operations missions by providing Special Forces with extra weight carrying capacity, longer range, and better fuel efficiency. These special mission variants of the C-130J conduct weather reconnaissance (WC-130J), search and rescue (HC-130J), and special operations (MC-130J and AC-130J). The Air Force has multiple modification efforts for the C-130J, including CWB replacement, communications upgrades, Block 8.1, and mission computer updates. The C-130J Block 8.1 modernization program, currently in production, delivers new communication and data link capabilities, a modern flight management system, and other key capabilities to the field. In addition, the Air Force plans to upgrade our C-130J fleet with a Mobile User Objective System (MUOS) and a Second-Generation Anti-Jam Tactical Ultra High Frequency Radio satellite communication system to ensure we maintain key

communication links anywhere in the world. Beginning in FY27, the Air Force will start procuring Star XIII mission computers. This is a critical modernization effort to replace legacy computers before they become obsolete in FY29.

### ***CV-22***

The CV-22 Osprey is the Air Force's variant of the joint V-22 tilt-rotor aircraft and its only high-speed vertical lift platform, allowing for long-distance, terrain-following operations with increased survivability. With the 56-aircraft Program of Record completed in August 2025, the program's focus has shifted to sustainment and modernization. The FY27 PB requests \$25.7 million in RDT&E and \$142.2 million in Procurement for critical upgrades to address parts obsolescence, improve capability, and enhance safety.

The Joint Program Office and industry partners are committed to improving the V-22's safety, reliability, and availability through initiatives to include the Osprey Drive System Safety and Health Instrumentation, Nacelle Improvement modifications, and upgraded Proprotor Gearboxes (PRGBs). These efforts are crucial to ensure the fleet retains its unique and vital mission capabilities.

### **CONCLUSION**

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify. We look forward to working with this subcommittee to ensure the Department of the Air Force maintains the necessary military advantage to defend the Homeland, deter our adversaries, and if necessary, fight and win.