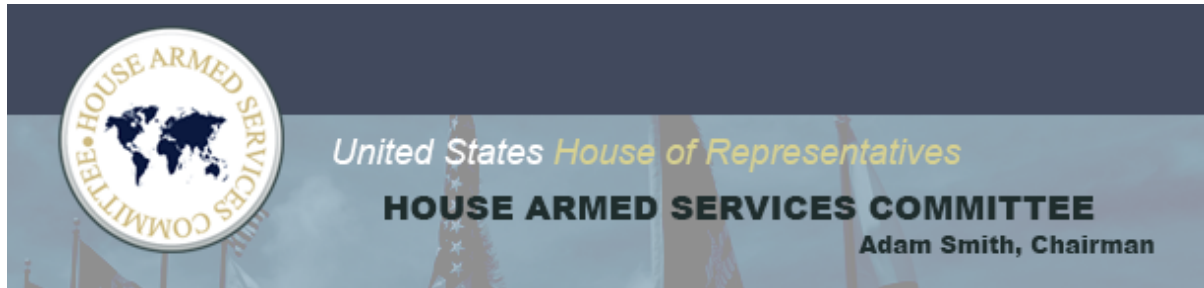


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**Opening Statement (As Prepared)**  
**Chairman Joe Courtney**  
Subcommittee on Seapower and Projection Forces  
Hearing:  
*"Air Force Projection Forces Aviation Programs and Capabilities Related to the FY23 President's Budget Request"*  
May 19, 2022

Click [here](#) to stream the hearing.

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Good morning. Ladies and gentlemen, I call to order this hearing of the Seapower and Projection Forces Subcommittee.

We meet today to discuss the Department of the Air Force's Fiscal Year 2023 budget request for projection forces aviation programs and capabilities.

Appearing before the Subcommittee today are:

- **Mr. Andrew Hunter**, Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Acquisition, Technology and Logistics; and
- **Lieutenant General David Nahom**, Air Force Deputy Chief of Staff for Plans and Programs.

Gentlemen, I'd like to thank you in advance for your testimony, and I welcome Mr. Hunter back to the Committee and congratulate General Nahom for his next assignment to Alaska. I wish him safe travels.

The programs under our Subcommittee's jurisdiction provide the Department of Defense with capabilities to project power and support operations around the world. The bombers, tankers, strategic, and tactical airlift programs present an advantage and retain our superiority over our adversaries and pacing threats. I am concerned with the increasing age of our tactical airlift fleet, combined with numerous readiness challenges, that pose serious risks to our ability to meet key warfighting requirements.

As our Subcommittee continues to move forward on the next NDAA, we must assess these tradeoffs and ask ourselves if we are responding to the combatant commanders' immediate requirements today, while directing resources to deliver future capabilities that will transform the trajectory of our capabilities in the future.

It is worth noting that the Air Force requests a significant investment for procurement of the B-21 Raider, as well as investments in continued research and development for a modernized airframe capable of providing global strike capabilities.

Additionally, the budget request retires no bombers in FY23, and it requests a 35% increase from FY22 enacted levels across RDT&E and procurement for bomber programs to recapitalize and modernize our bomber fleet.

On the KC-46, the budget proposes to procure 15 aircraft to advance mobility aircraft fleets. Similar to the position we were in last year, while the Air Force proposes procurement of additional tankers, questions are raised while the service plans to retire what it deems "legacy" tankers from the Guard and Reserve. Additionally, it was just reported that the Air Force is in fact paying for some of the KC-46s Remote Vision System 2.0 after stating that industry would cover the costs of the upgrade, which causes serious budgetary concerns for this Subcommittee.

To that end, the Air Force's continuously changing tanker roadmap poses serious concerns for Congress, as any decision will impact basing strategy, personnel levels, and locations for those personnel, installation upgrades, maintenance strategies, and implications for Air Force spending. As the Air Force continues deliberations for the best strategy, it is of interest to many Members on this Subcommittee to be informed on any updates that result from those discussions. I hope that our witnesses will address this in our hearing today.

Finally, the issue of the Air Force's plans to sustain the tactical airlift fleet for the National Guard has been long-standing concern for this Subcommittee. In the past, it has been the job of Congress to direct spending for the procurement of additional C-130Js and investments in upgrades to in-service aircraft. Just last year, it was Congress that added 16 J-models for the Air National Guard and four J-models for the Air Force Reserve, while also leading – again – the effort to procure propeller and engine enhancement packages.

It is evident that, once again, the Air Force lacks a clear plan to sustain and recapitalize our tactical airlift fleet. This issue is even more urgent as we look to the results of the MCRS and the validated and clear need to sustain our tactical airlift capabilities. I remain frustrated by the lack of path forward on this issue that doesn't rely on annual congressional plus-ups.

With that I turn to Ranking Member Wittman for his comments.

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