

RECORD VERSION

STATEMENT BY

**THE HONORABLE DOUGLAS R. BUSH
ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE ARMY
FOR ACQUISITION, LOGISTICS AND TECHNOLOGY
AND ARMY ACQUISITION EXECUTIVE**

**AND
GENERAL JAMES E. RAINEY
COMMANDING GENERAL, ARMY FUTURES COMMAND**

**AND
MAJOR GENERAL MICHAEL C. McCURRY
COMMANDING GENERAL
UNITED STATES ARMY AVIATION CENTER OF EXCELLENCE**

**AND
BG DAVID C. PHILLIPS
PROGRAM EXECUTIVE OFFICER, AVIATION
UNITED STATES ARMY**

BEFORE THE

**SUBCOMMITTEE ON TACTICAL AIR AND LAND FORCES
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ON ARMY AVIATION REBALANCING AND THE PATH AHEAD

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INTRODUCTION

Chairman Wittman, Ranking Member Norcross, and distinguished members of the Subcommittee on Tactical Air and Land Forces, thank you for this opportunity to discuss the Army's Aviation programs and modernization efforts. On behalf of the Secretary of the Army, the Honorable Christine E. Wormuth, and the Chief of Staff of the Army, General Randy A. George, we thank you for the invitation to join you today and look forward to a productive discussion.

Army Aviation is a key element of the Joint and multi-national force. Aviation provides critical capabilities to maintain superiority over our adversaries by increasing lethality and survivability of the Joint/combined arms team, providing enhanced mobility into and within the theater of operations, and enabling unprecedented situational awareness and battlespace integration. Army Aviation is the cross-domain solution for Army and Joint Land Force Commanders to simultaneously create and exploit relative advantages. As part of the land component operating in the lower tier of the air domain, Army Aviation is a decisive capability in domain interdependence – operating in the nexus between the air, ground, and maritime domains. Army Aviation's ability to see, sense, strike, move, and extend is critical to our ability to fight and win in Large Scale Combat Operations (LSCO).

ARMY AVIATION MODERNIZATION

Major investments in new airframes, technology, unmanned systems, and the aviation industrial base are necessary to achieve overmatch against near-peer competitors. Our focus on modernization comprises two parallel lanes of execution – development and fielding of new platforms and capabilities, and modernization of the current fleet. We remain deeply committed to maintaining the modernization momentum of the overall Future Vertical Lift (FVL) portfolio comprised of the Future Long-Range Assault Aircraft (FLRAA), Future Tactical Unmanned Aircraft System (FTUAS), and Launched Effects to deliver the Army of 2030. We also remain keenly focused on our current fleet – making

prudent investments to address safety, obsolescence, and the aviation industrial base at large. This resourcing strategy requires a synchronized effort to provide the best capability to our soldiers and commanders on the ground in support of the Joint/combined arms team.

ARMY AVIATION REBALANCE

Recently, the Army announced a rebalancing within its aviation portfolio to ensure that we upgrade current platforms and shift investment into unmanned systems.

Army Senior Leaders made four decisions:

1. First, to end development of the Future Attack and Reconnaissance Aircraft (FARA) at the conclusion of Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 prototyping activities
2. Second, to end production of the UH-60V (“Victor”) version of the Blackhawk after the aircraft funded in FY2024.
3. Third, to delay entering production of the Improved Turbine Engine Program (ITEP).
4. Fourth, phase out operations and sustainment of the legacy Shadow and Raven unmanned aircraft systems.

The Army will also propose to make several investments:

1. First, the Army will commit to another multi-year contract to produce the UH-60M Blackhawk helicopter—a new airframe with an over 20 year service life—and invest in upgrades for the Blackhawk.
2. Second, the Army will formally enter production of the CH-47F Block II Chinook helicopter in FY2025, with an objective to affordably modernize the current fleet.
3. Third, we will increase investments in research and development to expand and accelerate the Army’s unmanned aerial reconnaissance

capability including the Future Tactical Unmanned Aircraft System, Launched Effects, and commercial small, unmanned aircraft systems.

4. Fourth, the Army will continue the Future Long Range Assault Aircraft program as planned and aim to equip the first operational unit in FY2030.

RATIONALE FOR THE ARMY AVIATION REBALANCE

These rebalancing decisions did not come lightly, nor was it any single factor that drove the Army make these shifts in its aviation portfolio.

Ever-Changing Battlefield. As demonstrated recently by real-world events in Ukraine and in the Middle East, it continues to become increasingly clear that the Army must be able to adapt and respond to the ever-evolving battlefield. Given the evolution of aerial reconnaissance, transport, and combat technologies—evidenced in Ukraine’s defense against Russian aggression—we know we must shift to focus on a mix of current, unmanned, joint, and space-based assets to do the mission originally envisioned for the FARA aircraft. This mix of capabilities can provide persistent and plentiful awareness at a lower cost than FARA.

Industrial Base. Prior to the rebalance, the aviation industrial base was on a path to have two production lines likely going cold within five years. The conflict in Ukraine has reinforced the importance of the U.S. having a robust industrial base that is equipped to respond to the demands of the battlefield, the nation’s stockpiles, and the needs our allies. In light of these lessons learned, the Army determined the previous path carried too much long-term risk. If Congress approves, the Army will instead be able to sustain the current production line for the UH-60M Black Hawks in Stratford, CT, as well as move to a production capability for the CH-47F Block II Chinooks in Ridely Park, PA. These production activities will help maintain the crucial workforce expertise in these areas for years to come. The Army is also planning to set up additional research and development resources for the UH-60M Black Hawks to continually provide upgraded capabilities to the existing platform. The additional

resources that will be available for unmanned aircraft and launched effects should motivate new and innovative companies to come to the table.

Army leaders carefully considered the workforces that support the current FARA prototyping efforts and that of the UH-60V Black Hawks in their decisions. The Army is committed to working closely with our industry partners to conduct an orderly ramp-down of their current efforts and allow personnel time to shift to new or different opportunities.

Foreign Military Sales. The Army will always be committed to equipping our Soldiers with the best capabilities available. We are also committed to promoting interoperability and strengthening our worldwide security partnerships. The Army seeks to provide clarity to our allies involved in our aviation programs through foreign military sales, or those considering acquiring our aircraft in the future. Announcing this rebalance now makes it clear the Army will continue to build CH-47s, UH-60s, and develop the FLRAA, which strengthens those industrial bases and supports more foreign procurements of these aircraft. Our relationships with our partner nations are critical as they have allowed us to continue to be successful on the battlefield, while also helping keep our production lines healthy here at home.

Successes in Experimentation. A final factor affecting the decision was Army's dramatically increased pace of experimentation and development in recent years. Project Convergence, the Army's campaign of continuous learning, is demonstrating to us the feasibility and potential of future unmanned systems and launched effects. These capabilities will magnify the lethality and survivability of our combat formations and help inform and validate alternative ways to do aerial reconnaissance.

CONCLUSION

It is clear the security challenges of tomorrow will be met with the Rotary Wing Aircraft Acquisition and Modernization Programs we develop and execute today. The Army

believes there continues to be a need for manned aviation systems, but we also need to expand our investments into those that are unmanned. As adversaries will continue to invest in technology to counter or evade U.S. strengths and exploit vulnerabilities, it is critical that the Army Aviation portfolio receive timely, adequate, predictable, and sustained funding to maintain overmatch.

We can assure you that the Army's senior leaders continue to work hard to address current challenges, as well as the needs of Army Aviation in the future. We will meet the equipping needs of our soldiers while remaining good stewards of our Nation's resources.

Mr. Chairman and distinguished Members of this Subcommittee, thank you for your steadfast and strong support of our outstanding soldiers, civilians, and their families.