

## Going Gray

"Last June, [the Congressional Budget Office] projected that DoD's planned purchases of F-22s, F/A-18E/Fs, and [Joint Strike Fighters] should make up most of the [fighter] shortfall created as the three services retire their older aircraft. . . . The services will, however, need to keep planes in the fleet for unusually long periods to prevent shortfalls from reaching unmanageable levels. As a result, the large number of older aircraft will drive the average age of DoD's fleets to unprecedented levels. . . . The average ages of Air Force aircraft will be higher than those in the Navy and Marine Corps, exceeding 15 years by 2003. That average age will climb to about 18 years by 2010."

**Cindy Williams, assistant director, National Security Division, Congressional Budget Office, in a March 5, 1997, statement to the House National Security Committee.**

## Sixteen Wings

"Some airpower missions demand the best technology the nation can produce. The construct that produced airpower . . . for the Vietnam War came from a conscious decision, in pursuit of cost-effectiveness, to build a force with capabilities only incrementally better than the [adversary's]. That left us unable to achieve anything like general air superiority in eight years of operation over North Vietnam. Consequently, the US Air Force alone lost 16 wings of aircraft in those eight years. Not only did we not have the capability to dominate the battlespace, [but] our freedom of action was constantly limited by enemy aircraft and other air defenses."

**Gen. Larry D. Welch, USAF (Ret.), former Air Force Chief of Staff, in a February 26, 1997, speech to the Association of the US Army in Washington, D.C.**

## Storm Warnings

"This last year, the Air Force was able to recruit just over 30,000 enlisted folks. Over 99 percent of them have high school diplomas, and 82

percent scored in the top half of the Armed Forces Qualification Test, but it is getting very, very difficult to recruit.

. . . Retention at this point is very good. . . . Our rated retention is an area, though, that is starting to give us some problems as we look out into the future—our rated force. I've talked this over with the Chief of Naval Operations, and he sees the same trends."

**Gen. Ronald R. Fogleman, Air Force Chief of Staff, in February 25, 1997, testimony to the Senate Armed Services Committee.**

## Back in Business . . .

"[The F/A-18E/F Super Hornet] is the right plane at the right time to lead Naval Aviation into the twenty-first century. Super Hornet will help sustain operational primacy and add a great offensive punch to the forward-deployed aircraft carrier battle groups of tomorrow."

**Adm. Jay L. Johnson, Chief of Naval Operations, in a January 18, 1997, statement after the F/A-18E/F's first carrier landing.**

## . . . Or Out of Business?

"The Clinton Administration has ordered the retirement of all Navy [A-6 Intruder] medium-attack aircraft, leaving the deep-strike mission to the Air Force long-range bombers. . . .

"After examining alternatives in the early 1980s, the Navy decided to keep the Intruder in production with a modernized A-6F model, with all-new electronics and engines. But Pentagon bureaucrats killed the program during the Bush Administration, arguing that a new stealth airplane, the A-12, would be better. A year later, the same whiz kids persuaded the Secretary of Defense to kill the A-12 on the grounds that it was too costly, and the smaller F/A-18 would have to do. The agenda all along was to get the Navy out of the deep-strike business.

"Well, as . . . [Sen.] Lloyd Bentsen might say, I know the A-6, and the F/A-18 is no A-6. The F/A-18 is a fine, versatile, reliable airplane, but when the latest E model reaches the fleet,

it will still have only about half of the attack capability of the Intruder."

**John F. Lehman, Jr., former Secretary of the Navy (1981–87) and Reserve A-6 bombardier-navigator, in the Wall Street Journal, February 28, 1997.**

## Goodpaster, Butler, and Perle

"I have read the joint statement by my friend Gen. [Andrew J.] Goodpaster and Gen. [George] Lee Butler. . . . In the real world, there is no serious possibility of an agreement eliminating all nuclear weapons in the foreseeable future. Generals Goodpaster and Butler seem to recognize this when they say, 'The phased withdrawal and destruction of nuclear weapons from all countries' arsenals would take many years, probably decades, to accomplish.' But elsewhere in their joint statement, the Generals acknowledge that 'No one can say today whether or when this final goal will prove feasible.'

"Nevertheless, despite uncertainty about whether the course they recommend will prove *feasible*, they urge us to undertake *now* a serious commitment to it. I should have thought that embarking on a policy, the feasibility of which cannot be shown, is a most doubtful and risky way to shape our future security."

**Richard N. Perle, top Reagan Administration arms-control official, in a February 12, 1997, statement to a Senate Government Affairs Committee subcommittee concerning nuclear weapons abolition.**

## Premonition

"The more that I stayed awake last night thinking of [sending a major US combat force to Vietnam], . . . it just worries the hell out of me. It's damned easy to get in war, but it's going to be awfully hard to ever extricate yourself if you do get in."

**President Lyndon B. Johnson, in a May 27, 1964, telephone conversation with National Security Advisor McGeorge Bundy, the tape of which was released in February by the Lyndon B. Johnson Library and Museum in Austin, Tex. ■**