

## Future Bomber Investment

"The panel found that, if the current bomber fleet [comprising B-1Bs, B-2s, and B-52s] is supported with smart, continuing investments, this force will provide high leverage in a wide range of contingencies through the remainder of its useful life. Even so, an investment plan is needed to upgrade and sustain the future force structure. Current plans do not adequately address the long-term future of the bomber force. The lead time for the next generation aircraft is likely to be long, regardless of the approach selected. The panel recommends that the Department [of Defense] develop a plan to replace the existing force over time. Alternatives for consideration are a variant of the B-2, incorporating upgrades, ... or development of more advanced technologies that might lead to a better solution for the next generation aircraft. Today, there is not yet an adequate basis for such a choice. A continuing program to demonstrate advanced technologies in support of long-range air power should be given high priority."

**From the March 25, 1998, final report of the Panel to Review Long Range Airpower, created by Congress last year.**

## The "Backbone" Fighter

"We believe the F-22 program should remain on its current schedule. It's an important program. It's important that we get the F-22 up and flying and into the force as soon as possible. ... Our goal is to make the program work. ... At this stage we want to stay on the schedule, which is to get ... the first two production aircraft, I believe, in FY99. ... As I understand it, the GAO asked for a 12-month slip in the program. That is not something we're contemplating right now. We want to stick with the program. ... It will really be the backbone of the Air Force in the 21st century. And they would like to bring that fighter on as soon as they can to start the training and the workup that go with introducing a new weapon into the force."

**Pentagon spokesman Kenneth H. Bacon in a March 26, 1998, news briefing the day after a GAO report suggested delaying F-22 production for a year to conduct more testing.**

## Salty Language

"Withdrawal of US troops [from the war in South Vietnam] will become like salted peanuts to the American public: The more US troops come home, the more will be demanded. ... The more troops are withdrawn, the more [North Vietnam's Communist officials in] Hanoi will be encouraged. They are the last people we will be able to fool about the ability of the South Vietnamese to take over from us. ... You will be caught between the hawks and the doves. ... It will become harder and harder to maintain the morale of those [US troops] who remain—not to speak of their mothers." **Then—National Security Adviser Henry Kissinger in a previously secret 1969 memo to President Nixon, warning about the likely outcome of "Vietnamization." The memo was released March 18, 1998, by the National Archives in Washington.**

## Warning Flags

"Our [Fiscal 1997] enlistee quality was the highest in DoD. Despite this success, the percent of our enlistees scoring in the top half on the Armed Forces Qualification Test dropped down to 79 percent from 88 percent in [Fiscal 1989]. We also experienced a drop in the average mechanical aptitude score of our enlistees. ...

"While we continue to meet our recruiting goals, the challenges our recruiters face also continue. Ample opportunity to attend college and a robust economy have effectively shrunk the pool of qualified and interested potential recruits. ...

"We are currently projecting a pilot shortage of 836 in [Fiscal 1998], and could have a shortage as high as 1,410 in [Fiscal 2000]. We are aggressively addressing the situation. ... However, if pilot retention worsens, it may directly

impact the readiness of our combat units."

**Air Force Lt. Gen. Michael D. McGinty, deputy chief of staff, personnel, in a March 18, 1998, statement to a Senate Armed Services Committee subcommittee.**

## Very-Long-Weekend Warriors

"The deployment rates of our Total Force have increased dramatically since the end of the Cold War. And, we've asked the reserve forces to do a larger share. During 1997 our reserve component[s] deployed during every contingency tasking. On average, Air National Guard and Air Reserve aircrews serve 110 days a year in uniform, and their support teams [serve] 80 days." **F. Whitten Peters, acting Secretary of the Air Force, Feb. 27, 1998, at the Air Force Association Air Warfare Symposium in Orlando, Fla.**

## Accidents at "Historic" Lows

"Overall, in fiscal years 1996 and 1997, the military achieved historically low levels of serious mishaps. The number of Class A flight mishaps across DoD in Fiscal Year 1997 was 68, an all-time low, and the rate of mishaps per 100,000 flying hours remained virtually the same for the last three fiscal years at about 1.5. While the number of fatalities rose from 85 in 1995 to 116 in 1996 due to several high-casualty mishaps, they declined in 1997 to 76, DoD's second lowest level ever. The fatality rate per 100,000 flight hours ... has been within the low end of its historic range over the last 10 years. New lows on the number of destroyed aircraft (54) and the rate of destroyed aircraft per 100,000 flight hours (1.2) were also reached in Fiscal Year 1997. Finally, the value of the aircraft lost reached its lowest level in the 1990s, \$1.1 billion."

**From the report "Military Aircraft Safety: Serious Accidents Remain at Historically Low Levels," prepared by the General Accounting Office and released on March 23, 1998. ■**