

## The 2016 Statement of Policy

**T**he United States remains the world leader but the future holds uncertainty, aggression, and, in too many spots around the globe, conflict, and war. To protect American interests, our armed forces must be technologically advanced, lethal, and highly mobile.

Our Air Force is America's first-responder force for engagement: It possesses the skills, agility, responsiveness, and weapons systems to meet challenges on any spot on the globe, with little advance notice. However, the Air Force is at a crossroads, with very old weapon systems and the smallest fleet it has had since before World War II. Our national security interests require that this status be dramatically changed.

Funding pressures have pushed the Air Force into a classic "ready force today" versus "ready force tomorrow" conflict. It's a choice no armed service should ever have to make; either option creates unacceptable risks. AFA calls, in strongest terms, for an end to the funding caps imposed by the Budget Control Act of 2011, and for the Air Force to once again have the flexibility to make prudent decisions about investing the funds it does receive to produce a modernized, balanced, and capable fighting force for today and tomorrow.

If the Air Force is to prevail in the combat environments of today and tomorrow, recapitalizing its aging fleet with fifth generation fighter aircraft is crucial. America simply cannot afford or accept the inherent risk, to maintain older weapon systems while adversaries roll out new platforms.

A steadfast commitment to recapitalizing fighter, bomber, tanker, trainer, combat search and rescue, and intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance platforms is essential to fulfilling the Air Force role in the National Military Strategy.

We must also recapitalize the nuclear force to ensure we continue to successfully carry out the nuclear deterrence mission during a potential future of proliferation, and to maintain both Air Force bomber and missile components

of the nuclear triad. We must invest in infrastructure, personnel development, weapons development, storage, and safety.

Space capabilities remain indispensable to the joint force commander's ability to deter aggression and to execute globally the entire range of military operations. However, our space capabilities are facing evolving competition from both Russia and China in anti-satellite systems. It is imperative to invest smartly to enhance space domain mission assurance, including resilience, defense operations, and reconstitution of space systems.

### **The Air Force Association 2016 Statement of Policy was adopted by the delegates to the AFA National Convention Sept. 13, 2015.**

We must also establish and maintain a robust capability in the cyber domain, to defend our networks against cyberattack and to attack and exploit the networks of our potential adversaries when necessary.

AFA believes the Air Force must play a leadership role in ensuring US military superiority within the cyberspace domain.

Our essential technological edge is strongly connected to advancements in science and technology. As systems become increasingly complex, the links between capability, innovation, and research and development become critical for affordable future system architectures.

AFA believes the Air Force needs to continue to invest in research and development to maintain its technological edge, and must ensure that our defense industrial base has the capability and capacity to reliably and affordably meet our defense needs now and in the future.

AFA will also continue to strongly advocate for aerospace education and the development of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics as the foundational skills and our distinctive advantage needed to insure US airpower dominance, national security, and free economic vitality.

Finally, the effectiveness of today's Air Force hinges more than ever on the quality, training, and dedication of its airmen. Through 25 continuous years of combat operations, our airmen and their families have steadfastly served our nation. We must honor our commitments to them, and to all veterans and retirees who served honorably. The Air Force must also continue the fight against sexual assault and hold those responsible accountable. This should not be open to debate.

The Air Force Association unequivocally declares that America deserves a dominant United States Air Force and a strong national defense. It's time the Air Force became the force America needs it to be, not the Air Force it used to be, or the Air Force it is forced to be by arbitrary budget decisions.

We stand for and respect our airmen, their families, our veterans, and our Air Force heritage. We pledge that we will do all that we can to guarantee that the Air Force can provide for the common defense of the nation we love today and tomorrow. ✪

*For more on AFA's policy positions, see "Top Issues," on page 66.*

