



An expeditionary airman prepares weapons for deployed bombers. Readiness and modernization are priorities for USAF leaders.

SHIFTING PRIORITIES

It's become a tradition that new Secretaries of the Air Force and their Chiefs of Staff set out priorities for their tenure. Those priorities usually boil down to the same common elements, which depending on the times vary in order: people, readiness, and modernization.

Chief of Staff Gen. David L. Goldfein announced at an Air Force Association Capitol Hill event in August that Secretary of the Air Force Heather A. Wilson and he will follow suit, but this new list will have some subtle adds.

During the "Wilson-Goldfein era," he said, the priorities are five, and they are: "restore our readiness," pursue "cost-effective modernization," innovate for the future, "strengthen how we develop airmen and future leaders," and "strengthen alliances" with partner air forces.

Recent USAF leadership teams have placed "taking care of people" or modernization as No. 1, but Defense Secretary James N. Mattis has given the services no-kidding instructions to improve the training and availability of troops, raise the readiness of units and individual platforms, and bulk up dwindling bins of spare parts and munitions as the top imperatives.

Only because of that has modernization dropped to No. 2 in the pecking order, because USAF still faces a fleet that averages 27 years old—25 years for fighters—and it can feel the breath on its neck of adversaries fielding brand-new, state-of-the-art fleets.

Modernization is going to have to adapt from "the industrial-age model of acquisition" to "the information-age model," Goldfein asserted. He explained that this means making networks and connectivity the top push, the better to get full value of the platforms USAF already has, and the better to emphasize "the family of systems" over the attributes of any one platform. This in turn is likely to give USAF more trade space of missions and

capabilities among different platforms across combat portfolios and more flexibility in buying new gear. The key question to ask of new systems will not be what it can do but "how does it connect?" Goldfein said.

He told *Air Force Magazine* that a new Bomber Roadmap will encapsulate the thinking on modernization writ large: It will be, of necessity, a "combination of old and new," bringing together, for example, 55-year-old B-52s with state-of-the-art standoff missiles.

BEFORE AND AFTER

Goldfein declined to discuss what might be the puts and takes among USAF's top acquisition priorities as a result of having to shift more funds to readiness and people. The F-35 fighter, KC-46 tanker, and B-21 bomber all still take precedence over other programs—the next grouping usually described as the JSTARS radar plane replacement, T-X trainer, new ICBM, and Combat Rescue Helicopter. However, it's a zero-sum game and Goldfein told *Air Force Magazine* it hasn't been decided yet "what'll push outside the FYDP," or Future Years Defense Program. Some things may be "pushed right"—that is, postponed—while some may be "pushed left," or accelerated, he observed. "It's all about, how do I get the most return on investment in the connective tissue?"

Innovation has been a talking point in recent years, because the service has had to rely on innovation as a substitute for money in getting more value out of the people and assets it's got. In mid-August, Wilson ordered USAF to provide fewer directions to airmen, trusting them to find the best and most efficient ways to do things.

"Our end strength is finally on the rise," Goldfein pointed out, noting that manpower shortages have been the key factor in declining readiness rates. There will be a "laser focus on revitalizing squadrons," with much of the new manpower earmarked for "first sergeants and commander support staffs." A renaissance of the squadron as the core Air Force unit has been Goldfein's top theme in his first year on the job. (See "Revitalizing the Squadron," this issue.)

Goldfein also stated directly that USAF wants to get more of its people into top regional commands, taking to heart recent findings revealing that airmen in joint billets feel cut off from the service and don't enjoy much career progress from those jobs. Other services, though, have had great success in grooming their people for regional, joint commands. An airman is often head of US Transportation Command and US Strategic Command, but not regional theaters like US Central Command—even though USAF is the principal contributor to Operation Inherent Resolve, which dominates CENTCOM's activities. Goldfein's predecessor, Gen. Mark A. Welsh III, now retired, frequently discussed that fact.

Toward getting USAF into those joint billets, there will be "incentives" for airmen to take joint jobs and for duty in air operations centers, where "the operational art" of airpower "is practiced daily," Goldfein announced. Tours in AOCs will make airmen "more competitive for promotion." There will also be much more effort applied to getting airmen certified for joint task force duty. Ninth Air Force at Shaw AFB, S.C., will be the first focus area, "to ensure that we have certified JTF offerings to combatant commanders to respond to crises and conflict in the future."

Alliances also made the top five priorities list, and Goldfein said it's crucial to keep them healthy because they are the nation's "greatest strategic and asymmetric advantage." Alliances are something "we have" and adversaries don't, he said, alluding later to the need for USAF forces to be able to fall in on alliance bases in virtually any conflict. The threat from ballistic missiles wielded by adversaries in any theater will require USAF to be able to pick up and move operations quickly and with agility to other locations; healthy alliances will make that possible, Goldfein said.

ADDING TO THE PROCUREMENT PARFAIT

The Pentagon has answered Congress' demands for a quicker and more streamlined weapons acquisition system with a proposed new organizational scheme that shuffles organizations, creates 11 new offices, and adds new levels to the acquisition bureaucracy—putting, for example, four layers between the Secretary of Defense and the Strategic Capabilities Office. It also cuts a few deputy and assistant secretary jobs, which is hoped will aid progress toward a separate goal to reduce headquarters staff.

The so-called 901 Report, which takes its name from the section of the 2017 defense bill that requires it, released in August, explains how the Defense Department plans to follow Congress' order to split up the No. 3 job in the Pentagon, the undersecretary for acquisition, technology, and logistics (USD AT&L).

This position was held by Frank Kendall III for much of the Obama administration and is now occupied by Ellen M. Lord, former CEO of Textron. By Feb. 1, 2018, the position is scheduled, by law, to become two posts, undersecretary for research and engineering (USD R&E), and undersecretary for acquisition and sustainment (USD A&S). Lord is expected to move over to the latter post, but a nominee for the R&E job had not been named by mid-August.

In many ways, the R&E position is a throwback to the director of defense research and engineering job, which predated the existing USD AT&L structure. It will focus on creating new wonder weapons, while the USD A&S will have to figure out how to turn them into fielded, supported systems.

Both the Pentagon and Congress will undoubtedly tinker with the scheme in the coming few months.

In its executive summary of the 901 Report, the Pentagon laid out why all of this is necessary. While American weapons are considered the best in the world, "the current pace at which we develop advanced warfighting capability is being eclipsed by those nations that pose the greatest threat to our security," the Pentagon said, adding that relentless cost growth threatens "our ability to acquire and sustain these systems at sufficient levels." Congress' directive to speed things up is a "once in a generation opportunity" to shift things around more efficiently and to gain speed, according to the report.

The R&E post will have three roles: create a "technology strategy" for DOD, "solve the critical technical" challenges for combat forces, and quicken the delivery of "technology solutions." Billed as a "lean" organization staffed with experts in various disciplines, the R&E shop will identify key needed technologies, set priorities among them, budget for them, set up demonstrations and prototyping, and develop "high-end

architectures" to connect, network, and orchestrate new with old systems, across all the services.

Under R&E will be five organizations. They will include the Missile Defense Agency, the Defense Science Board, a new assistant secretary for research and technology (ASD R&T), an assistant secretary of defense for advanced capabilities, and a Strategic Intelligence Analysis Cell. The idea will be to tie these groups tightly together so that word of new foreign advances reaches all the right people right away, and together they can quickly choose ways to answer those challenges. The Strategic Intelligence Analysis Cell, charged with either speedy reaction to, or leaping beyond, foreign advances, will effectively set budgetary priorities for defense technology.

Labs and technology hothouses such as the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency will be under R&T. The ASD for advanced capabilities will be in charge of turning theory into hardware. The Strategic Capabilities Office will be in this organization, and there will be a deputy assistant secretary (DASD) for mission engineering and integration, and a DASD for prototyping and experimentation. The Defense Innovation Unit-Experimental will be here as well (an outfit that used to report directly to the Secretary of Defense).

SUSTAINING MEMBERS

The A&S side of the house will feature fewer new organizations. The undersecretary will have three deputies: an assistant secretary for acquisition, one for sustainment, and one for nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons (NBC).

The acquisition group will have a DASD for: policy, planning, resources, and performance; industrial base; warfare systems support; and defense procurement. The acquisition group will also be in charge of cultivating the professional acquisition workforce.

The ASD for sustainment will have DASDs for materiel readiness; transportation policy; and program support and logistics policy. It will encompass the Defense Logistics Agency and have a dotted line to US Transportation Command.

The assistant for NBC will have DASDs for nuclear matters, chemical-biological defense policy, plus one for threat reduction and arms control.

The Pentagon was less specific about the creation of a new chief management officer, a position whose exact relationship with these other agencies is still being worked out. However, this person's portfolio will include health care, personnel development, real property, logistics and supply chain, "community services," and "performance reform." This position will also oversee a streamlined information technology unit, which will combine many others, with the goal of streamlining reporting and action and reducing redundant people. Congress' last defense authorization bill directed a 25 percent cut in headquarters staff.

Deputy Defense Secretary Patrick M. Shanahan, discussing the report with journalists, said the existing system is too focused on "the here and now" and not enough on anticipating and deploying new systems. Without that shift, "we'll fall behind," he said. He also acknowledged "there will be parts of this that people don't like," but that's the nature of change. 