

TRANSCRIPT

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Moderator: Our guest this morning, as you all know, is General Mark A. Welsh III, chief of staff of the Air Force. Sir, it's a pleasure. We appreciate you making the time for us and rescheduling after our previous engagement had to get canceled for the government shutdown, which was no fun for anybody.

Sir, earlier this fall you were the first Chief of Staff in about 20 years (*editor's note: actual timing was first in 15 years*) to make a trip to China. What were your take-aways from that trip? Did you get any insights into what China's military ambitions are?

General Welsh: I'll answer the second part first. No. I don't know what their ambitions are.

It was a fascinating trip. I had not been to China before, so I was excited about seeing the country, about meeting with their Air Chief, seeing a little bit of their air force. They actually let us visit a couple of different air bases. We got a demonstration of their Ba Yi demonstration team. Had a chance to meet with a bunch of their pilots, had a chance to see some of their aircraft. Not their newest aircraft, but some of the J-10, the F-7B, et cetera.

The biggest take-aways for me were, number one, we were treated exceptionally well. I think the fact that this was kind of another in a series of things that have occurred this year with the two Presidents getting together, their Defense Minister visiting the States, their Chief of Naval Operations visiting the U.S.. I think Ray Odierno, our Chief of Staff of the Army, was scheduled to go to China. I think that visit's now been delayed. But we were the beneficiaries, I think, of a charm offensive. It was a good time to go. Commander Ma, the Chief of Staff of their Air Force, was a wonderful host actually.

The biggest take-away was that I think we can communicate, we can cooperate in a way that helps prevent misinformation, miscommunication, accidental confrontation, if you will, in that part of the world, and there are opportunities to continue that kind of engagement.

I don't think a mil-to-mil relationship will ever be the pillar of the U.S.-Chinese relationship, but I think it can be part of the connective tissue. That was kind of the goal, just to start the discussion.

General Hawk Carlisle who is our Commander of Pacific Air Forces was with me. Hawk has got a plan arranged with the Chinese operations chief to continue this activity with education, search and rescue exercises, humanitarian assistance/disaster relief exercises. There's one going on in Hawaii right now that the Army is actually running with the People's Liberation Army representatives in Hawaii. So it's been actually a good initiative to try and get into. I think if nothing else, if we can set up a new high water mark for mil-to-mil relations, even if we tend to back away from that as we do in cycles, at least there's a new high water mark and we always have that to shoot for. So any step forward is a good step right now. I enjoyed the visit tremendously.

Moderator: Did you get the sense from the Chinese that they also want to continue this relationship? Or were they checking a box. We've got the American Air Force commanders here; let's move on to something else.

General Welsh: I don't know exactly what they were thinking, but I think there is a real chance for communication if we work at it. It will take a while. We're very different. What their motives are, ambitions are, I wouldn't even pretend to guess those. But anything that helps us communicate in a more meaningful way is good. Just to avoid the tensions that are going to occur as we, I hate to use the term collide, but as we interact or come close to each other militarily more and more and more in that part of the world. So being able to communicate better is going to be a good thing.

DWG: General, you testified that the Air Force is looking at eliminating two four star positions and 15 three star positions. Can you update us on how long this process will take and if you've already identified those positions?

General Welsh: No, we haven't identified them yet, although we have an idea of where they'll be. We've tied it to also looking at kind of a reorganization effort in the Air Force, for two purposes. Number one, we have to downsize staff, as you know, which I think is a good idea anyway. Not just because we were told to. It's time to do it. And the other thing we're doing is because of costs over time here, we're going to figure out if there's a way to be more efficient in terms of our large structures in the Air Force. Until we finalize that plan we won't finalize where the four star positions come from. But we're going to cut two. It makes perfect sense for us to do it. We're downsizing enough we need to reduce some senior positions along with it. I think we can get by with two fewer four stars.

The bigger impact will probably be the 15 three stars, but that will actually help us manage our own force better. Over time we've gotten the pyramid of general officers, it's actually gotten a little bulge in it at the three star level, so we don't have to move people too quickly from one to three star. It's important to have more two star positions, fewer three star positions.

DWG: But you said you have an idea where they're coming from. Can you elaborate?

General Welsh: No. I don't want to elaborate on that yet until we make a final decision. It's going to depend on what the reorganized Air Force looks like. If we make major changes it will affect where we put our senior officers. But we're not too far away from that. In the next couple of months we'll finalize that. In the next couple of months we'll finalize that.

DWG: I want to ask you about one of your top two priority programs, the Long Range Strike Bomber. It's been cloaked in secrecy, excessive in my view. The money goes from \$400 million this fiscal year to up over a billion dollars in 2015. What are you going to be spending -- Are you personally monitoring the program so that it doesn't bust its budget and get canceled again like Gates canceled the Next Generation Bomber?

General Welsh: All the requirements for the Long Range Strike Bomber program, any change to the requirements come through me. And I don't intend to approve anything until it makes absolutely perfect and eminent sense to change something on the requirement side of the house.

The important thing for us is that we have a bomber fleet that, God forbid, we should ever have to conduct a large-scale campaign. We need a sufficiently sized bomber fleet to be able to do that. The attributes you know all about, Tony. The operational characteristics are going to be kept cloaked in secrecy for a while. I think that makes perfect sense as well.

Cost is, no-kidding, an independent variable in this platform because we have to field it. We have to field something. I think for the cost of \$550 million a copy we can field a meaningful platform that will be effective in the future war plan.

DWG: Jumping from \$400 million to over a billion, as a taxpayer you'll want to know what are you going to spend the money on? Without giving any secrets away there to the Chinese, the Russians or al-Qaida

General Welsh: We've had a lot of people doing oversight who actually do have access to what we're spending the money on, so I'm not worried about being accused of spending anything indiscriminately. That's not going to be the case. When the POM comes out, the '15 POM, we're now within about ten years of fielding this platform, and like every other aircraft development program, it's time to start getting serious about how do you integrate systems, what comes together to make the aircraft perform the way you expect it to perform.

DWG: Do you expect a leap in technology, a generational leap? Or more incremental improvements given that you're going to be cobbling this thing together with proven technologies as the Air Force has said?

General Welsh: I don't think it's going to look like the Frankenstein Monster of airplanes. That's kind of the cobbling together view that I get. It's going to be a very capable machine. What we don't want to do is try and reach into some level of technology that is impractical or that we're betting on to come for. That's where prices start to get out of control. That's where your requirements start to drift. Somebody offers you something new that sounds [inaudible], so you just keep adding to the requirement base for a platform without proven technology. We are not going to go there.

DWG: Fair enough.

DWG: General, if I can follow up on your China trip. If I have the chronology right not long after you went to China, Secretary Hagel went to Tokyo. [Inaudible] fly Global Hawks from Japan. The Chinese have been pretty worked up about this. You talked about communication, the need to be open with each other, with the Chinese. Is that something you raised with them? Did you discuss it with them? Do you feel a need to inform them in advance with something like that? Or would it be a poke in the eye -- Will something like that affect the relationship?

General Welsh: It's not something I discussed with the Chinese, Craig, and the discussions that I did have with the Chinese military leadership was essentially that in their dealings with other nations in the region, we just stressed that we need to be solving problems diplomatically, we need to stay calm. Major nations need to meet each other to discuss issues and work our way through it peacefully. It was that kind of a discussion. We didn't discuss any specific initiatives with other countries at all.

DWG: In terms of, I hear this a lot from senior leaders about the need for communication, transparency with the Chinese about what they're up to, and presumably that means what we're up to as well in terms of --

General Welsh: I'm not in the policy business for the nation, Craig. My intent was to make sure that the Chinese Air Force knew that there is a line of communication we can keep open so that things like improper intercepts of other airplanes or actions taken as a result of not understanding international protocol the same way, when conducting intercepts near your airspace, all were well understood by both sides, so we don't have anything happen that could be avoided just by better communication. We think things like doing search and rescue exercises together will help that kind of communication.

We do a lot of educational programs together, professional military education programs together sponsored by people like the Air War College, sponsored by the service academies. We will continue to do that. We think there's an opportunity for medical collaboration on the military medicine side of the house. Not too long ago the Department of Defense sent some medical specialists over to actually talk to the Chinese military medical folks about acupuncture, in fact. We offered during my visit, invited them to come back to the States at the Uniformed Services Health University and continue that conversation. So that's the kind of things that we were talking about.

DWG: It was interesting, you mentioned when you spoke of the bomber about costing, an independent variable. I've been covering stuff like this for a long time now. We hear that creep into the lexicon and then fall back away. The F-35 was the start of that.

I wanted to ask you specifically though about program management. Do you think there needs to be some structural changes, some changes as to how you assign program managers; the longevity as it relates to new development programs? Does that need some relooking? It seems like every two years a guy or a woman gets to the point where they really understand a program, then they're gone and somebody new steps in. This is a reoccurring challenge or a problem. Like I heard on Capitol Hill, nobody wanted to be the second or the fourth program manager because they have to live with the decisions of the first and the third.

Can you speak a little bit to program management and whether or not you think that needs to change?

Then I just want to throw you, real quick, on medium altitude RPAs, as to whether or not there's been a decision on orbits requirements, any revisions there?

General Welsh: I think the—Frank Kendall as you know has been talking about lots of changes in the acquisition community for a while. He's a very common sense, level-headed guy when it comes to approaching this. I think he takes an honest look at the problem and he's not afraid to say what he thinks about it, which is a good thing for us.

I think it depends on the program. I don't think we've had -- The common thought is that we really aren't very good program managers. That's actually not true if you look at the number of programs across the board. We have an awful lot of program managers who do fantastic work in programs that have delivered very very successfully. In some areas they're just difficult to do. In some areas we probably need more stability, and I think that's the key. Which programs do you require more stability over time and make sure you have not just the right people, but you give them the right time period to actually bring a program through critical milestones in its development process. I think Frank's been saying that from the beginning.

Bill La Plante, who is our nominee to take over as our senior acquisition official in the Air Force has been looking at this since he walked in the door. He's got a lot of views from his background. He came to us from industry. He's been a program manager. He's a scientist and researcher. He's got a great instinct for these things. I think we'll find that he'll look at the Air Force programs and try and make the decisions on which ones we need more stability in and we may adjust some things.

DWG: I've spoken to General Mollner recently who had been a program manager in the early F-35 version, and one of the things that he mentioned was that he felt like he didn't stay with the program long enough, and that when he went to Boeing that he required program managers to stay four or five years. In early major development programs where you had multi-billion dollar commitments it would seem like continuity would be very important. Do you agree?

General Welsh: I think continuity is always important, but you're trading that against other things. That doesn't mean we've done it right or wrong. It just means that the way our system works if you're a senior military guy, you get to a point where if you don't move, you don't progress. Within certain worlds if you stagnate in a job for too many years, you're not going to move forward in the Air Force.

So if we have a really talented colonel program manager, for example, and we want to promote him to brigadier general because we think he's earned that opportunity and he has the potential to serve really really well at the senior ranks in the Air Force, then we're going to want to move him to a larger program office as we promote him. That creates a problem with continuity in the lower program office. So the trade is, do you keep him from advancing and doing bigger things for the service, or do you keep him there and optimize that program? So in multiple levels of program management, that's the balance. It's the balance all the time.

The key for us is going to be to identify those major programs where you can't afford for the good of the service for the program not to have continuity. I think that's what we're talking about here. What are those programs?

I think clearly the major programs that we have, if you have a good program manager, benefit from continuity.

DWG: Then the RPA question?

General Welsh: On the requirement side there's a debate going on right now about how many we need. From an Air Force perspective it's not so much about RPAs, it's about ISR writ large. We have an awful lot of money invested in moving towards 65 orbits of RPAs or other kind of medium altitude platforms that provide support for forces in Afghanistan right now.

If you go ask the commander of other combatant commands, the commander of U.S. Pacific Command for example, what kind of ISR support does he need for his theater of operations? He would not say 65 orbits of medium altitude RPAs.

The Air Force's job, in my view, is to provide a theater's worth of ISR to support a combatant commander. In a big conflict or enough to support phase zero requirements, the peacetime requirements, for the combatant commanders around the globe. That is not done well with 65 orbits of medium altitude long endurance platforms. You need something that looks at a broader area. You need something that can help you queue those platforms that then provide direct support to small units on the ground.

So I believe we have to change our ISR structure over time and the first step in that is as we come out of Afghanistan when we can afford to draw that down, the direct support stuff in Afghanistan, we need to trade some of that for investment in other platforms. That's the plan we're putting together.

I think you know the number one demand signal from all the combatant commands is ISR, so we feel like we owe them something right now we can't deliver everywhere because of the necessity of the last 12 years of support in Iraq and Afghanistan. I understand how we got here, but now we have to migrate to a solution for the longer term.

DWG: Do you have a sense of where that orbit number is going to go? Sixty-five wagged the dog for a long time.

General Welsh: We'd like to bring that down. The vicinity of 45 would be a good start, and see how we do. I think there are some people who would like to keep that number higher and that will be one of the things that goes on in the budget discussions this year. I'm not sure exactly where we'll end up, Frank. We'll see.

Moderator: Mark Thompson and then --

DWG: General, I'd like to ask you about your risk rheostat in a micro and a macro sense. It seems that the notion of risk in the military has become very binary. Last week on the Hill you talked about the need to get training back to where it had been. You said we should never do anything that would peril our airmen.

Yet at the same time the Air Force is seeking to thicken up the canopy on the T-38 trainer. For 40 years it's been too thin and it's killed pilots. So they've lived with that element of risk willingly and acknowledgeably.

In the same way, in the big sense on the Hill, in the macro sense, you get congressmen saying isn't the world dangerous? The Chiefs are going yes, the world is dangerous. There's sort of this self-reinforcing tendency.

It seems to be very black and white. We hire you guys to slide that balance of risk and to say this much risk we can take, be it the canopy on a T-38 or China or al-Qaida. But it just seems now, today, everything is very black and white. Why isn't there more gray in the ongoing debate over the future of our military?

General Welsh: I think everything is gray in the ongoing debate on the future of our military. If I asked you right now what does the nation want the military to be able to do in the future, I don't think you can answer that question for me.

What we're trying to do right now is identify what can the military do with the reality of sequestered budgets for ten years? What kind of Air Force, for example, can we have ten years from now? Once we identify that, if we can design it as well as we possibly can based on what we know as part of a joint warfighting team, then we can tell you here's what the Air Force will be able to do. So if the nation wants us to do more than that, we can't. That's the question for us right now.

DWG: How much risk do we run by having the numbers drive the strategy?

General Welsh: To some extent numbers have always driven strategy. A strategy uninformed by resources is not a strategy. It's a dream. So we have got to understand the reality of where we're going in order to build a strategy that makes sense for the nation. I think the task we have before us right now is to make sure that when the Service Chiefs talk to the Secretary of Defense, we need to be able to very clearly tell him what are we capable of doing with the level of resources we think we're going to have for the next ten years?

One of the things that we're trying to do right now is do that at multiple levels of resources. The President's budget, a mid-point, and then a sequestered budget. It's taking a lot of time and energy to develop all these different options, but that's our task, is to make sure that Secretary Hagel clearly understands so he and the Chairman can inform the President, what we think is in the art of the possible. Then of course the President has to decide where the nation should accept risk. There's lots more risk than just military risk involved in the national security risk. We're just part of that equation. There's the economy, there's lots of other things. So our job is just to make sure everyone understands the military equation clearly.

Where we would be failing is if we came out of all this and somebody thought we could continue to do all the things we've done in the past when we won't have either that capability or that capacity. So we just need to make sure everyone understands where reality lies. Then we execute. That's our job.

DWG: You already addressed the bomber. I just wanted to take it from a different angle.

About four years ago Secretary Gates went down to Air University to ... around the Air Force a little bit ... One of his comments in his speech that didn't get a lot of coverage was what he said about the triad. He said basically something to the effect of if the warhead numbers come down significantly, if we get a new arms control agreement, we're going to have to take a serious look at force structure in the triad. Maybe it doesn't make too much sense anymore.

Here we are almost in 2014, [inaudible] sequestration [inaudible], warheads are coming down. Is it time to do some really hard thinking about, for example, the ICBM leg of the triad?

General Welsh: I think the whole nuclear deterrence strategy is something we should be thinking and talking about all the time. I think it constantly evolves, the thinking constantly changes. We need to have a very clear picture of where the nation's going and what our part is in executing it.

I'm a believer in the triad. I think the three legs of the triad really do give us flexibility, responsiveness and survivability in a way that you might not get with any one or two legs.

The cost of operating our ICBM fleet day to day is not that significant compared to the cost of running other things, in fact it's actually fairly small.

The cost of modernizing the nuclear infrastructure is not small. So I think that will lead to a very honest debate about where can we afford to invest, where must we invest, and how does that relate to a strategy going forward for the nation? I think that's all going to be tied to the policy discussions coming up in the next round of START. I think that will trigger another round of this debate. I think it's a fair debate and the Air Force needs to be in the middle of it.

I don't know where we're going on this, Mark, but we will likely have at least one, hopefully two legs of this to execute for some period of time and we have to do it well. That's our role.

DWG: Is the sequestration discussion weighing more heavily now as opposed to [inaudible]?

General Welsh: You mean does sequestration make us more concerned about the cost of the nuclear enterprise? I think the costs are going to be a factor whether we're sequestered or not. But sequestration certainly adds concern to every cost that we have facing us, not just the nuclear recapitalization costs.

DWG: The House is getting a classified briefing tomorrow on readiness. And you talked about readiness over the last few months and sequestration. The folks from the JLTE program during AUSA told us they were doing four or five budget drills a week, and essentially had no idea where they were going because they had no guidance.

If you were sitting before the members tomorrow, what would you tell them?

General Welsh: I think I have told them multiple times. I'm concerned about readiness. Readiness is -- For the Air Force -- Every service has a different readiness model for a reason. If you're the Chief of Staff of the Army and you have, I'm making these numbers up. They're roughly right, but they're in the ball park, but just to demonstrate the model. If you have a requirement to have 34 or 36 brigade combat teams ready at any given time based on worldwide war plans and you have 60-some available in your force, you can afford to have some of those not at the same level of readiness as those 36 that need to be ready to go. So you have some kind of tiered readiness model where you can spin up those combat brigades. Same thing with carrier battle groups. If you have a requirement for five or seven and you have 11, you can keep some of them at a lower state of readiness and some fully ready to go.

In the Air Force if you look at our force structure for our aircraft fleets, the demand signal equals our force structure. We have other options. We could buy twice as much force structure and have a tiered readiness model which would make no sense because the force structure costs a lot more than the readiness costs.

So we basically have demand equals requirement and we want to keep it 100 percent ready.

Realistically, in any fleet of airplanes you can have about 80 percent of them fully ready at any given time. If you do a really good job of managing things. That's because of return from deployments, down time for maintenance, base schedules for airplanes, all those kinds of things. So our goal is 80 percent combat readiness for all of our combat units. That would be the perfect world for us and then we can meet this demand signal that we have around us all the time. That's for homeland defense, it's for standing global response forces that the Chairman manages, it's for combatant command demands, ISR platforms, command and control platforms, all the time. Then it's for contingency responses, whether it's to places like Korea or wherever. That's what that number comes from. So we try and keep our force fully ready because we don't have a lot of excess force structure compared to our requirement.

We have not been able to do that lately. That readiness number has been coming down for 10 years or more. Before sequestration about 54-55 percent of our combat units were what we consider fully mission ready, combat ready. Sequestration has made that much worse. It's put us in a position where we're now in the high 30s probably. I don't know what the number is today, but that's been roughly where it's been for the last few weeks. And we think that's going to last for a while.

Sequestered accounts like flying hours, weapon system sustainment, and that takes directly from our ability to keep units ready day to day.

In FY14 if we continue with a continuing resolution and a sequester, we'll probably cut about 15 percent of our flying hours will come out of those accounts again to pay the sequester bill, readiness will continue to drop. Then in '15 if it continues it will get worse.

It takes two to three times, depending on the airplane type, to requalify somebody who is not maintaining a steady state of readiness as it would to just maintain that state of readiness. That two or three times the money is not in our flying hour accounts and our budgets for the next few years. I don't anticipate somebody's going to give it to us. So readiness is going to continue to be an issue for us.

DWG: Why is the Air Force different than the other two services?

General Welsh: We have completely different readiness models.

DWG: But why?

General Welsh: I'll back up, this is where I started. Because you have two choices if you have a demand signal on your force. If the demand signal is ten things that you need to meet the global demand, you can buy 15 or 20 and you can have 10 ready and the others can be in some kind of tiered readiness. That's the Army and the Navy model.

The Air Force has 10 things, so the demand's 10, we have 10. Whether it's fighter squadrons, bomber squadrons, ISR platforms, the requirement equals our force structure.

DWG: So we can cut the Navy carriers in half is what you're saying.

General Welsh: No, that's not what I'm saying. It's not even close to what I said. What I said is there are different models.

If you have an Air Force unit that deploys to a combat zone, I can take that Air Force unit, deploy it to a combat zone, they're not in face-to-face, hand-to-hand combat day, night, all the time. You can leave them on a pretty high combat footing, fly missions every day, and they're coming back to a place where they sleep relatively safely, where we can feed them, we can keep an eye on them, we can take care of them. You can't take an Army unit, a Marine Corps Unit, a Special Ops unit, put it into front line combat and leave it there for months. You can't do it. Human beings can't handle that. In World War II it was 40 days in and then you had to come out. We do the same kind of thing with our forces now. They go in the field, they patrol, they come back out. But we don't leave them in major combat indefinitely. That's why you need rotational forces.

So you put a brigade combat team forward, you rotate another one in after a year, they come out. Air Forces you can leave longer. With our model, we have to. But it saves us money because we don't have to buy excess force structure to have this rotational model. We could buy the additional force structure. It would be easier on our folks, less OpTempo, but it would cost a lot more for the nation so we have not chosen to go that way.

DWG: What's the practical effect of this decline in readiness? You're still able to do day one, day two, day three. When do you start falling apart?

General Welsh: The practical impact is happening. It's been happening for the last year. It's just not very visible to anybody because we haven't been asked to do anything new.

It comes in less options for decision-makers. If you don't have forces ready to go employ at the high end of the combat spectrum, then you have less options to take. It may take longer to respond. And in the worst case where you were forced to respond to a major contingency, it may mean higher risk to the people who actually deploy because they're not as combat ready as they would be otherwise. That would be an extreme case and hopefully that would never happen. Of course I think every decision-maker would have to make the choice of do we send them or do we take the time to train them before we send them, which would be clearly our recommendation. But it has an effect over time.

If you take an Air Force, pick a flying squadron. Two or three months of every year it stands down because we can't afford to keep them flying at their normal rates. Then they fly fully up the other nine months. Over time those pilots and that squadron are not as good as squadrons that fly every month.

I'm in the business of looking people in the eye and telling them we have the best fighting force in the world, not we have one that's adequate. So this will never be okay with me. I understand why it's necessary right now.

The balance that we're trying to reach right now is between capability, capacity and readiness over time. That's the dilemma we're in. In the Air Force the debate is do we trade readiness today to buy capability for tomorrow?

There's a reason that the F-35, the Long Range Strike Bomber, and the KC-46 are our top priorities. If you were a people-based force, the Army and the Marine Corps, where you are manning people to fight, you have a very different investment strategy and timeline than if you're a platform-based force. The Navy and the Air Force man platforms to fight. So for us to be credible and viable against a threat in 2025, we have to be investing today in the platforms that will be conducting that fight. By 2025 there will be 5th Generation technology produced by other countries that is in the battle space. I certainly hope we're not fighting Russia and China, and I don't believe we will be, but we'll see their equipment. They export typically three to five years or so after they field this stuff. It will be on the streets. We'll be fighting it. Their new stuff will be better than our legacy stuff. That's just the way it is.

DWG: Can I follow on that?

If there's a major conflagration, if God forbid anything big happened and your readiness is what it is today, how quickly could you turn around and surge? I've never heard anybody explain like in a major war suddenly money is no longer an issue. You guys are flush with it and things start to happen very quickly. How quickly could you requalify and get your pilots up and get you to the 80 percent readiness?

General Welsh: Let me talk about two scenarios. One, let's say it happens in 2015 and it happens in 2025. To get pilots back up to speed, from a standing start, would probably take three to six months if you had the money, the training space, and the number of airplanes required to do it. It takes a lot more sorties to retrain a squadron than it takes just to keep it trained. So you have to have training airspace and the ranges required, you have to have enough airplanes that aren't broken. Hopefully they've been through the depot, hopefully you have the weapon system sustainment money so that your parts are available to you, et cetera. And you have to be able to surge your training. If you did that with just one squadron sitting there and all their airplanes are available, you could probably do it in three, four, six months, somewhere in that window.

If you were trying to surge an Air Force against a higher end threat and you hadn't invested in the modernization required to do that, you can't get there from here.

So in 2025 if we decide oh my gosh, the threat is as good as we anticipated it was going to be and you hadn't invested in modernization and recapitalization of your fleets, it's going to take you ten years or longer,

So you can't panic and recover a technological deficit in this business. You can't get there from here. That's why things like the F-35 are so important to us. It's not the F-35. That's the name of a platform. It's the technology and the capability it brings to operate in a threat environment that will be different in the future. Fourth generation aircraft capabilities are not fifth generation aircraft capabilities. You can dress them up, you can make them prettier, you can do all you want to do but it's not going to compete.

So if you're going to operate in that environment, hopefully we never have to, but if we want to do it successfully you've got to have the technology to operate there. We're a high tech force.

DWG: Two questions for you. I wanted to follow up on Frank's question about the RPAs. Looking at the future for the demand signal for ISR as you mentioned, it's still going to be really high. We're kind of shifting the strategic focus in the Asia Pacific region. Historically there are three options --satellites, manned, unmanned. What direction do you see the Air Force moving in? Which of those do you think, to fill that void as we draw down on the CAPS? Will it be more UAVs, satellites, or manned? What do you see?

General Welsh: It depends. I'm a big fan of UAVs where they make sense. UAVs that actually perform a job better than a manned platform because they overcome human limitations are a good thing to do. We shouldn't rush into buying a whole bunch of remotely piloted aircraft just because we can. By the way, the ones that, once they get to be larger than this table they cost a lot of money, just like airplanes do. So there's nothing cheap about them. There's a lot of manpower behind them that isn't cheap either.

For us, the biggest key is the architecture that supports all these things. It's the infrastructure. It's the distributed common ground station. It's the people, the analysts, the network administrators, the folks who flow data, create intelligence, and move it to where decision-makers need it. That's kind of the heart of this whole thing for us and we'll continue to focus a lot of time, energy and investment on that.

For our other platforms we have to be able to make them pretty easily plug and play. So whatever sensors we're drawing from, whether it's space sensors, airborne sensors or sensors on

the ground, or humans, we have to be able to feed this network of information and move it quickly.

Right now the RPA force is about five percent of our Air Force. It's not like this overwhelming number that's overcoming everything else, and I don't think it will be for some period of time, much past my time.

I don't know where we're going to go, but building bigger, more expensive, more cosmic RPAs probably isn't the answer, just like building bigger, more expensive, more cosmic airplanes isn't the answer either.

We've got to start thinking about breaking price curves in a major way here.

DWG: The second quick question for you, sir, is on hypersonic technology. There's been a lot in the news lately about the SR-72, but I know these ideas have been kind of bubbling up for a while, especially on the DARPA side, and we have these black [list] programs, [inaudible]. The dollars on the table seem to me like a [inaudible].

Looking at this from your perspective, the pragmatic Air Force perspective, like you just said. You don't need the cosmic here. Do you think this stuff is realistic? Are we really going to have this SR-72 type system in our Air Force in the next like, I don't now --

General Welsh: How many years? I think this is up there with the Death Star. [Laughter]. A major investment.

The Wave Rider program was actually a pretty fascinating program. I think the data we got from that program indicated that hypersonic flight for a purpose is possible. It's a plausible investment approach.

To me it's something that appeals to me for a very simple reason. Not because it's cool, but because speed compresses decision time lines. That's actually a very good thing from a military perspective. Anything you can do to decrease an adversary's decision timeline and give you the advantage in action is a good thing. So if it's practical to pursue hypersonics and create the ability to move at a much much faster speed than we could in the past, it's worth pursuing. How far we go, I don't have any idea. We'll have to see how it goes.

DWG: What about like, why an airframe? From the Air Force perspective and the pilot perspective, when you look at hypersonics do you need to have a hypersonic airplane or can we just use a hypersonic missile? Would that be just as cool and effective?

General Welsh: I don't think there's any preconceived notion of what kind of platform we're talking about here, whether it's a weapons platform or something else. Right now we don't have the materials to do anything other than something the size of a Wave Rider which is not an airplane. It's a smaller aircraft. The airframe that you actually would use for some other purpose. I think it will probably start small, and then who knows where it will go after that? I don't know.

Just think how cool you'd look in a hypersonic airplane. That drives all our decisions, doesn't it?

DWG: So it's true?

General Welsh: Can you imagine how that scarf would be whipping in the wind up there? Mach 6. It would just look bad. [Laughter].

DWG: What do you think of the SR-72 idea? Lockheed has apparently, they say it's going to cost one million to build a demonstrator, they can have it ready by 2018. They're obviously making a big sales pitch for this. What would you say to them?

General Welsh: I don't know anything about the SR-72 concept. I haven't talked to Lockheed about it. I don't know anything about it. I saw an article about it. That's all I know.

DWG: Sir, I wanted to go back to the general question from before. Over the past two-plus months or so all of the military services including the Air Force have seen a general be released from service or fired outright. As you look at your generals talking about reshaping the way you set up your commands and so forth, does the Air Force, does the Defense Department generally need to look at how commanders are screened, how generals are trained or prepared given this trend about them being relieved over the last little while here?

General Welsh: Always. Two things aren't new. One, misbehavior by people isn't new; and number two, the idea that we have to be careful about how we train general officers, how we oversee them, what standards we hold them to, that's not new either. There's nothing happening recently that hasn't happened for years, at all levels in our military and in industry.

I'll tell you this. The other Service Chiefs and I feel very strongly about the standards we set for our general officers. When we meet with our new general officers, I'll just tell you what I tell them. I tell them exactly how much slack they can expect if they do something immoral, illegal or improper, and that's none. Which is exactly what I'd expect.

So I don't think there's any doubt in anybody's mind that that behavior won't be tolerated. So when we find it, we have to deal with it aggressively.

You've got to get the facts on the table because sometimes the facts aren't immediately evident, but once you get the facts on the table you have to deal with this aggressively.

There has been I think some great things here recently that all the services are taking advantage of lessons learned from each other in this arena. The Air Force, for example, borrowed the Army's General Officer 360 Evaluation and we've implemented one of our own based on the Army model. Ray Odierno was very kind in offering us his experts to talk to and the experiences that they've had in implementing this in the Army, what's been good, what's been bad, and we've been able to build our own 360 Eval. I just finished reviewing the first annual cycle's worth of assessments of all of our general officers. It's actually going to be a very very good tool. We've got some administrative work to do to make sure we get it right, that we have enough people involved. But essentially every general officer will be required to rate any other general officer in their chain of command above them or below them.

We'll also expand this eventually to colonel commanders. Hopefully to command chief master sergeants, to senior civilians, et cetera. Once we get the administrative stuff down pat, we'll expand this because it will be a very valuable tool for the individual to learn how people perceive them, and also for me in particular to use for looking for screening behaviors that I think are of concern. As we consider people for other jobs, more senior jobs, this will be part of the review. So we're doing that now.

The nuclear business, one of the things we need to do I think as a result of our recent relief of one of our nuclear commanders is we have changed our hiring process. We will now do a pre-screening that is a little more intensive than we've done before. Typically the screening was done once a nomination was made. The Department of Defense IG and others would get into a detailed screening process. We are now going to do more of that prior to the slate being built that we would pick a nominee from. If it involves, for example, a nuclear task force commander, our nuclear commanders at 20th Air Force and 8th Air Force, our task force commanders for U.S. Strategic Command, part of the screening will be an interview with the commander of U.S. Strategic Command as well as interviews inside the Air Force. We'll do the same thing for all of our four star positions and our four star nominees to other four star joint positions.

We're going to have more rigor, which I think is appropriate. It's also very good to let the individuals who are considering have a chance to consider what would they bring to this new job and have a chance to express that to their potential bosses in the future, both their Air Force bosses and their joint bosses.

So we're going to add things like that to this. We've added a whole bunch of over the years general officer training. We've added audits this last year for general officer travel. So staffs are aware of the mistakes that can be made. We have groups that are visiting every command and showing them here you're doing it right, you're not doing it right, here's what you have to be careful for. Individual general officer staffs are being trained before they go into their job so they understand what all the rules are, because the rules change relatively frequently and if you're not up to speed you can completely unintentionally put yourself in a bad position. Or someone else can put you in a bad position and regardless of how you got there, you're guilty, which I believe is fair, by the way. But we have to understand what those rules are.

We're training spouses now in the Air Force. Every time we bring our four star spouses together we have a briefing by the Air Force Inspector General, we go through the latest ethics regulation adjustments. Things like use of personal staff, travel requirements, all those things so that they're fully aware of the rules as well. That's a group we get unbelievable return on investment for because having them travel with our senior commanders costs the government nothing. The feedback they get from family members, from young airmen, from mid-level officers especially, and changes we make to programs as a result of that is incredibly beneficial to us, but we've got to make sure we're following all the rules and doing it right.

We're working this pretty hard, but we should. There is no excuse for not getting this right.

DWG: Can I follow up? You mentioned more vigorous screening of general officer candidates for jobs in the nuclear business, and you alluded to General Carey's relief. Is it just because of him or were there other issues that you saw or had seen previously that led you to this reinvigorating effort?

General Welsh: I think in this case when we looked at this particular case it was just a chance to kind of step back and go okay, and it was more not related to General Carey as it related to, as we looked at who his successor should be. We realized that the process by which we quickly jumped to a conclusion probably wasn't a comprehensive enough process. We tended to look at professional background, we looked at job skills, we looked at what kind of assignments had these people had. Therefore someone would quickly, that's the obvious choice.

Just assuming an obvious choice in this business is probably dangerous, so let's take a little bit deeper look. It includes everything from, for a nuclear job, for a medical review for things that can relate to the personnel reliability program, health issues that maybe we should know about

before we consider you for a job. Nothing improper, just normal health issues that can affect you in that role. It can include a Google search, you know? What pops up when you type somebody's name into Google? It might be worth knowing that before you nominate somebody for a key job. Some of this is common sense and we just have to do --

DWG: Is that because you looked back at how the [Maj. Gen. Michael J.] General Carey selection was made?

General Welsh: No, no, no. This had nothing to do with General Carey. General Carey was relieved for something that General Carey would tell you was an embarrassing period of behavior while he was on a TDY. He would say that to you. That's exactly what he said to me. I've embarrassed myself and my Air Force. I'm sorry.

Mike Carey served honorably for a long, long time in our Air Force. But as I said before, I expect an awful lot from our general officers and if you put yourself in a position where you don't meet that standard for any period of time, you've given up the right.

DWG: Where --

General Welsh: He's working in Space Command, and doing great work since he got there, but he's working for General Shelton at Air Force Space Command waiting for all this to be finalized.

DWG: Would the health screening include a psychiatric screening?

General Welsh: I don't think so. Initially our intent is to do more of a screening that relates to, well, let me caveat that a bit. It relates to the personal reliability program for a nuclear commander. So if there's anything in your record that would indicate a problem with the PRP, whatever that is. It could be a heart problem, it could be a psychiatric problem, it could be anything in your medical records. It's a normal review that we would do for anyone going into that program, but let's check before we put somebody in at a senior level and then have it discovered as they take command, for example.

DWG: General, you answered some of this, but last week Secretary Hagel gave a kind of interesting speech where I took him to say basically sequester is irresponsible but we've got to quit denying reality and it he's not betting apparently on this budget negotiation that starts today.

Short term, next couple of years, if we're at sequester levels of spending at the Pentagon, describe to us the kind of choices you're going to be confronted with and what your thinking is on the balance between modernization, between readiness, between the things you want to do and the things, as you said, you can do.

General Welsh: We actually started an effort last year called Air Force 2023. The idea of Air Force 2023 was let's assume sequestration no-kidding remains the law and we go for the next ten years, through 2023, with sequester level budgets. What's the best Air Force we can have in 2023? It wasn't the Air Force we had on the books planned for 2023. So what do we have to change to get us from here to there? And then when a decision is finally made if sequester if is in fact the way we're going to go, then let's get headed that way. That's what we've been working on.

We also have the incremental adjustments we'd make if we had more money and some other level of budget, which is a good thing. But let's get realistic about what we could look like in 2023 and then take a real honest look in the mirror about what do we have to do to get there.

What we're going to have to do to get there is we believe, we don't believe modernization is optional for the Air Force. I mentioned that earlier. So there are some areas we just have to modernize. The areas that we are focused on are recapitalizing our fighter fleet, that's the F-35. We have got to recapitalize our air refueling fleet. The last KC-46 will deliver in 2028. 179 of them will have delivered by then and we'll still have two-thirds of our refueling fleet that's about 65 years or older at that point in time. That's insane.

We've got to figure out what's the next tranche. We've got to replace the other two-thirds of the fleet immediately following that, but we've got to start recapitalizing the tanker fleet. It's the life blood of American mobility.

I discussed the Long Range Strike Bomber already. Those are the three recapitalization programs we feel we have to stand behind to be a viable and credible force in the mid '20s.

Beyond that, we've looked at every modernization program in the Air Force. If we go full sequestration we will have to cut about 50 percent of them, just to be able to afford some level of readiness and to modernize the force. The things we think we have to protect are those capabilities that will allow us to be viable in the future. If you look at fighter radars, for example, we have to upgrade in some cases. In order to be able to compete against future threats. Our legacy aircraft are going to be around for a long time. We're going to have a mixed fleet of aircraft for the next 20-30 years. So we have to upgrade some things. But if it's nice to have, it's off the books. That's what it's going to do to us. It's going to make us make that trade between readiness today and capability tomorrow. That's the dilemma we're in.

It doesn't matter how much money we're able to eventually pull out of the personnel accounts or out of facilities and infrastructure. Even if we make some savings in there, we have to eventually, but it's the bulk of the sequestration bill that's still going to have to come out of readiness force structure modernization.

DWG: So this 30 percent readiness level you're talking about now, that could be the new norm?

General Welsh: Hopefully not that low. No. I think what we would do is we'd, our major command commanders are looking at how they would stagger these things. Would you have a squadron instead of flying for six months and sitting for six months, would you have it fly for three-fourths of the year and the rest of the year as it just came back from a deployment, would you sit it down for some period of time to save some money and then start spinning it back up again as it got ready for its next rotation?

It means that your standing force available to respond to unknown contingencies would be much less ready than it has been in the past. For the Air Force that's a big deal because we do kind of give the -- One of the benefits of air power is its responsiveness, its flexibility, its speed of movement. If you're not ready to do that then the nation is giving up options. We just want to make sure everybody understands that. Which options the nation wants to give us is really the nation's business, not the Air Force's business. We've just got to make the decision clear for you.

DWG: That's the clearest picture you would have -- It sounds like tiered readiness to me. Maybe you'd have to do something like that that would make you significantly less responsive --

General Welsh: I would call it not ready. We're going to have units that are not ready. It's not a tiered readiness model. Tiered readiness assumes, to me, is a model that you would use to have a ready force to do what you've been asked to do. We are not going to be ready to do all the things that we have a requirement on the books to do with full sequester. It's not going to happen. So either the requirements are going to have to change or resources will have to change but the two aren't connecting under sequestration.

DWG: You lived through the 1970s. It sounds like we're sort of [inaudible] the 1970s but we got [inaudible] decade. It sounds like we're getting there pretty quickly.

General Welsh: But very different in one major way. I don't know what the exact number was, but 700-some-thousand airmen in the 1970s, not 300,000 or less. All of the -- We had force structure in the past that gave you flexibility. In this business quantity really does have a quality all its own. As you shrink and shrink and shrink, you get to the point where you don't have flexibility. You don't have the ability to pull from over here and throw it over there because you've got extra. We don't have extra anymore. Our demand signal now, the requirements that we have on the books, equals our force structure. In the ISR arena, the demand is more than our force structure. That's the issue for us.

Moderator: Sir, we're down to seven minutes now and we still have seven people on the list, so we'll go to the speed round and we'll forego the follow-ups beginning with Otto and Jim.

DWG: General, back to your visit to China, AirSea Battle. You and the CNO have been pretty much [inaudible]. Is it fair to say that AirSea Battle is more dangerous, the concept, than is healthy because it makes China and others want to react against it? In your discussions in China did they bring up AirSea Battle? What was their reaction?

General Welsh: No. It didn't come up. Here's what I would have told them. AirSea Battle is not a strategy. It's a way of developing capability for the future that just makes common sense. AirLand Battle, if you remember that, started as a series of initiatives just designed to let the Air Force and Army communicate with each other, was the first step. How do we get a radio where we can talk to each other? It was a series of steps designed to develop capability to work together that resulted in what you see on the battlefield in Afghanistan today with battlefield airmen, combat controllers, JTACs, TACPs, all those things that make this communication virtually seamless now. Airmen living with soldiers all the time, not just in combat, all the time. All that was an outcome of AirLand Battle.

AirSea Battle, I see the same way. The threats are changing. Sensor ranges are longer, detection ranges are longer. So how do you link the sensors to get a longer look from your side of the problem? How do you pass hard quality data to weapons that now have longer kinematic ranges than they have the ability to target? So that you can target them from longer ranges. How do you extend all these things in an environment where all the sensors and defensive systems are extending? That's what AirSea Battle is all about. It's not, there's nothing cosmic about this. It has as much application in the Indian Ocean or the Arabian Sea as it does in the Pacific. The Pacific just suits itself well to it because there are spaces where you can actually train, exercise, and do these kinds of things.

DWG: You said they didn't bring it up? If you --

General Welsh: No, I said if they brought it up that's what I would have told them. This isn't something for anybody to be scared of, it's an approach that we're taking to try to make sure that we keep getting better over time.

DWG: You travel around the Air Force quite a bit. When you talk to airmen what do they tell you about their morale? Is it going up? Is it going down? I think it's probably going down. And specifically could you address what Department of the Air Force civilians tell you?

General Welsh: Airmen, morale is actually still pretty good. I haven't seen a major downturn in morale. There are units where it has had a downturn, but in general airmen are still pretty excited about what they do. They're very proud of what they do. They want to be the best in the world at what they do. And when they feel like they can't be, that's when we're going to have a morale problem and they'll choose other options because they've got them. So that's the key for us. How do we make sure they have the training, the education, the tools they need to be the best at what they do? That's why they like what they do. They know they're good and they want to stay that way. When they start to feel like they can't, then we're going to have a problem so my job is to make sure we never get to that point.

They're confused. They have questions about the future. They've got concerns. Where are we going? What's going to happen to me? My career field? My unit? They're worried about that. But they're still proud, they're still fired up, they're still doing great work.

Our civilians actually are still, the morale is still better than you would think at this point in time after three years of no pay raises and then the reward is furlough and then the government shutdown which was -- All those things are horrible.

The furlough was almost, the civilians I've talked to said we can almost understand that. We didn't like it but we could understand it. The way they saw the furlough was not that, they weren't complaining about not getting paid, although that was a concern. They were complaining that they didn't think they'd be able to get their work done by the end of the year. As a corporation we lost almost eight million man hours through furlough, which is a huge deal. You don't replace that kind of workload.

The government shutdown I think kind of took them over the top a little bit. Now they're worried about job stability, job security. They're worried about is this going to be the kind of common response now if we can't solve things in the government? If so, why am I doing this job when I think I can make more doing something else?

We've got a lot of civilians now who are contemplating other career choices. That's not a good thing for the Department of Defense. Our civilian work force is essential to us. They're critical. And in some areas they're the whole work force. So we have got to, I feel like we've got to kind of rebuild trust with our civilian work force to some extent, and that's a horrible situation to be in.

We let them down a little bit last year. We as a government let them down last year.

DWG: You were talking about modernization priorities and the impact of sequestration on modernization. Where does space modernization fit into that? And emerging space capabilities and the space fence? [Inaudible] because of the modernization.

General Welsh: I think one of the things we did over the last 10 to 12 years, we did it, actually we, the nation, did a pretty darn good job of recapitalizing architecture in space. There was a

real problem and I think we've done a good job of investment to kind of rebuild constellations, rebuild capability in space.

Moving forward, space situational awareness is a big deal to the United States Air Force and to the nation, I believe. Space fence is a big part of that.

I don't know where it's all going, but we think it's a critical capability. The proliferation of objects in space at smaller and smaller sizes now is a big deal. The more we operate in space the more we're going to have to be aware of the environment we're operating in. That domain is really critically important for us to understand. Air Force Space Command is a lead player for the nation and we're not going to quit investing in space capabilities.

DWG: [Inaudible] trying to protect in all of this?

General Welsh: The space fence program is not one that we're talking about cutting in the -- There's a lot of debate about space fence, but the Air Force thinks space fence is a good program to invest in.

DWG: Thank you, Bob. [Inaudible] the Indian Air Force Chief, so [inaudible] looking with Indian Air Force and [inaudible] U.S. fighter jets [inaudible] any time [inaudible]?

General Welsh: First of all, I really much enjoyed meeting the Indian Air Chief. I had not met him before. It was a real pleasure to meet him, he's a wonderful guy and very capable guy.

The decision of the Indian Air Force to buy an airplane is the decision of the Indian Air Force to buy an airplane. You'll have to talk to them about their choice.

I think that we have the opportunity with the Indian Air Force to continue to develop a partnership that over time could be a very strong one. I think that Pacific Air Forces and U.S. Pacific Command are very interested in building that partnership and have paid a lot of attention to it. Hawk Carlisle, our Commander, Pacific Air Forces, actually knows Air Marshal Brown very well and intends to keep that relationship strong. I hope to see him here very soon, within the next couple of months, again, to continue to build a relationship with him. I think it's a partnership that's critical to our nation over time and I think it's also very beneficial to India.

DWG: Will you be going there?

General Welsh: At some point in time, I think so. He told me he would send me an invitation for some point in the future. If we get that opportunity, I'd love to do that. He has an open invitation to come see us here.

DWG: General, I just wanted to [inaudible] a little bit about your Air Advisory Corps. [Inaudible]. As the war winds down and these folks start coming back, there's been some discussion about moving into different areas of [inaudible], South America, and sort of staying [inaudible]. Can you kind of go into a little bit of detail on how you see that mission evolving now? And aside from the Asia Pacific, what other hot spots in the world do you see?

General Welsh: I think this is one of those things that sequestration will have an impact on. I don't know where we're going with it. It's a discussion that's bigger than just the Air Force. It's also Special Operations Command and our component to that, the Air Force Special Operations Command.

We think we have a real ability to help in building relationships and building partner capacity in many places with this capability. The question will be can we afford it going forward? Where will it rank and stack in the prioritization chart for the Department of Defense?

There are two ways to look at partnerships I think over time as resources come down. One is that you just don't have the money to afford it, and the other is you need to rely on your partners more as resourcing becomes an issue, especially if resources are an issue for both of us.

The question is how many partners can you afford to do this with? If you're going to rely more on your very close partners then you can hopefully encourage them to develop capabilities that complement yours. If you're going to build new partners from scratch and help new air forces that are fledgling and are trying to build up capability, it's going to require pretty much a unilateral investment on our side of the house to help them do that and then hope they'll grow into that. That's going to be the tricky part. How many places can we do that?

So lots of ideas on this one, but it's going to depend on resources.

DWG: You mentioned your plan for Air Force 2023 if sequestration continues. We talked about the need to [inaudible] force structure [within that]. So what then is the size of an Air Force 2023 fighter force, and how does that impact the JSF buy in terms of numbers?

General Welsh: First of all the JSF buy for us right now, the important thing is to get production rates up so we buy some number. If we impact the JSF program significantly now, costs will be an issue for us. We've got the price curve coming down. We shouldn't screw with it right now. Keep the cost curve coming down, get it to where we want it to be, and buy the number we need.

The number on the books right now based on analysis that was done a couple of years ago was 1763 for our Air Force. We should revisit that every few years and see what the number is. I don't know if it will end up being more or less than that as the right answer for the nation, but we should constantly revisit it for every program, not just the JSF. How much do we need?

We spend a lot of money on things in the Air Force and we have to be willing to assess constantly. But the program is actually, for the last couple of years, has been kind of steadily on track. I know there are lots of problems in the early development cycle, but since I've been in this job the program has tracked on every time line that I've been shown. I watch it pretty closely. I'm very happy with the job Chris Bogdan's doing as the program manager and hopefully, or as the PEO, and hopefully this will continue and we expect to reach IOC in 2016 on time. I think the other services feel the same way.

The actual numbers for 2023, we're going to have to cut force structure overall. We're trying to figure out the balance of that structure right now. A lot of this is based on the requirements I mentioned before. We're at the required number right now, so anything we draw down puts us below requirement. Combine that with less readiness and you've got a problem.

So the decision-makers in our department and the White House and Congress need to understand what does that mean to the nation? And the ultimate decision-makers on how much money we get don't live in my staff. They live in Capitol Hill. The President has to send a budget to them and those decisions will all be made during that process. We'll adjust to those and move forward.

There are some things about this job that you just, you do your best and then you adjust and move on.

We don't have clear answers right now as to where we're going to go. I know we're going to get smaller. My goal is to make us as capable as we can be as a smaller Air Force. I don't think we can give up the ability to fight the high end fight. I think that's what air forces exist for. We don't exist to fight a counter-insurgency fight. We can participate in that, we can help in that, but major air forces exist to fight a full spectrum conflict against a well-armed, well-trained, determined foe. And if we can't do that for the nation, then I don't think we're doing our job. If the nation decides that's not our job and tells us that, then we'll adjust, but they haven't decided that yet. So I think that's still our goal.

Does that make sense?

DWG: Yes.

Moderator: We appreciate your time.

General Welsh: Thank you all very much. Thanks for telling the story. Good or bad, thanks for telling it all the time. I appreciate it.

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