



Air Force Association

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Take an A-10 Stand

I'm surprised that the "Statement of Policy" did not take a position on the ongoing issue of retiring the A-10 fleet [*The 2015 Statement of Policy, November 2014, p. 6*]. Although USAF leadership has forcefully stated their intent to retire the fleet, it's still a live political issue, with substantial congressional and membership support for retaining the A-10 fleet. Does AFA automatically salute and support the position of the USAF leadership, or is there some independence? As a ground-pounder, I'm strongly in support of the retention of the A-10, given its unequalled capability for CAS and its low cost compared with the supposed equivalents: the F-16 and the F-35. I would agree with Don Chrissinger's suggestion to turn over the fleet to the Army, but USAF is a lot better at operating jet aircraft than the Army [*Letters: Let the Army Have Them, November 2014, p. 10*]. And there would be strong congressional resistance to building a CAS air force in the Army.

Col. Charles Kengla,
USA (Ret.)
Potomac, Md.

■ We addressed the A-10 issue in the June 2014 editorial, which can be summarized as follows: *The Air Force does not want to retire the A-10, but is being forced to by mandatory budget cuts that Congress could choose to reverse.*—THE EDITORS

We have a real problem with the White House, Congress, and Pentagon in making decisions on our military budget that greatly affect the safety and security of our nation. Your November [2014] issue has two poignant articles that together deal with the matters that count in these issues. They are "Action in Congress," [p. 20], dealing with the current status of the A-10, and "Critical 'Patch,' Smaller Window" [p. 60], dealing with the crippling effects of sequestration.

These are actually the cause and effect of the same problem, that being the

grounding of our most effective ground support aircraft, the A-10 Warthog, the crews who fly and maintain it, plus their bases. This without a program or even a hint of a replacement aircraft!

Yet the Administration continues to involve our country in world situations requiring military airpower and/or protection/support of friendly ground forces. This October we deployed another Air Guard A-10 unit (122nd Fighter Wing, Fort Wayne, Ind.), plus their support equipment and personnel to the volatile sandpile of the Middle East. So, the need for the A-10 exists—a dedicated ground attack/support airplane.

If we really need to decrease airpower (and our military in general), then we have a greater need to stop adding missions requiring those military solutions in world conflicts. Are you listening, members of the White House and Congress?

"Action in Congress" states that we may save \$4.2 billion over five years but at a cost of a seriously weakened Air Force—this via the Budget Control Act (more like control via fiscal constipation, my words). Note the words "weakened Air Force." Whatever happened to the promise of providing our military with the best equipment and tools to do its job?

We have some 122 F-22s aircraft and are adding some 18 F-35s in Active Duty. The F-22 has been tested in raids on ISIS and the F-35 is suggested for like

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AFA's Mission

Our mission is to promote a dominant United States Air Force and a strong national defense and to honor airmen and our Air Force heritage. To accomplish this, we:

Educate the public on the critical need for unmatched aerospace power and a technically superior workforce to ensure US national security.

Advocate for aerospace power and STEM education.

Support the Total Air Force family and promote aerospace education.

duty. These are far more expensive to purchase and operate than any other single-pilot aircraft for use as a ground support aircraft. Our fleet of 334 A-10s is purpose designed to be—and has proven to be—one of totally mission capable, ground support aircraft far less expensive than the F-22.

Curiously, the Russians still retain and maintain (since 1980) their Sukhoi "Frogfoot," historically a competitor airplane/mission to our A-10.

"Critical 'Patch,' Smaller Window" states the "whammy of budget cuts" canceled one of the USAF weapons classes for 2013 at Nellis AFB [Nev.] ("120 graduates lost"). These are crippling cuts. Are al Qaeda and ISIS canceling their recruiting or training in the face of our air attacks? No, terrorists fear the A-10 attacks, so why eliminate a feared and highly effective weapon? You can do all the budget juggling you want to, but the A-10 or a like replacement [is] a mission profile aircraft that will be more cost-effective, with higher ground support mission effectiveness, than anything else in our current inventory. Then save the F-22, F-35, F-15, F-18E for combat air patrol for the A-10, and/or its replacement.

Samuel Conte
Fort Wayne, Ind.

Recon Much?

How about the B-50?

Must be one of the world's most invisible aircraft. So far you guys haven't gotten around to it [*"Airpower Classics"*]. It got a two-word mention in the Boeing section of *Jane's Encyclopedia of Aviation*.

As near as I can tell, there were about 300 produced. It appeared in bomber, photo mapping, photo reconnaissance, electronic reconnaissance, weather reconnaissance, and tanker versions as well as several variations on each of those. AB-50 carried one of the Edwards AFB [Calif.] X-type aircraft.

There were three or four B-50 bomb wings and at least two RB-50 strategic reconnaissance wings. Before it was retired, various ones were used for just about anything imaginable. There were almost no two alike.

RB-50 made a number of incursions into Soviet airspace. On July 29, 1953, an RB-50G was shot down by MiG-15s over Zalig Petra Velikogo. Only one of the crew survived.

The B-50 went a long way toward bridging the gap between the B-29 and the jet bombers. Its capability precluded the Air Force's acquisition of a strictly reconnaissance aircraft.

As long as we're on the subject, here's another suggestion: the RF-84F.

At one time or another practically every air force in NATO had RF-84Fs. There were two USAF wings in Europe, one in PACAF, and one or more in CONUS. The Royal Flush NATO recon competitions

were, except for the Brits, RF-84F events.

And then there is the recon version of the F-4, the RF-4C.

Did you get the idea that [this letter has been] written by a guy who spent his career froggong around with photo recon?

SMSgt. George Hodder,
USAF (Ret.)
Westfield, Mass.

May You Live in Interesting Times

Yes, Missiles definitely helped. I agree with [retired Lt. Gen. Aloysius] Casey and [retired Col. Quentin] Thomas and [retired Lt. Col. Dennis] Lyon [*"Letters: Yeah, Pretty Sure Missiles Helped," November, p. 11*].

However, before the Peacekeeper IOC there was another nuclear system known as the Ground Launched Cruise Missile (GLCM), which helped fill the void until Peacekeeper became operational. It was only around from 1983 until 1988, but it gave the missileers of SAC the opportunity to enjoy such places like England, Belgium, Italy, and Germany.

Dealing with both systems was a major part of my Air Force career. The 1980s was an interesting time to be part of the acquisition world.

I was very proud to be part of General Casey's organization in 1984 till 1989.

Maj. John E. Gooch,
USAF (Ret.)
Dayton, Ohio



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