

By Robert S. Dudney

Skywriting

"What you saw this past week was a larger, more complex formation of aircraft carrying out a little deeper, and I would say, a little bit more provocative flight path. ... My opinion is that they're messaging us ... that they are a great power and that they have the ability to exert these kinds of influences in our thinking."—*Gen. Philip M. Breedlove, NATO Supreme Allied Commander, Europe, on intrusive Russian military aircraft flights around Europe, DOD press briefing, Nov. 3.*

Hair Today, Here Tomorrow

"When they have no hair left and they're sitting there talking to their grandchildren, they will say, 'Hey, grandpa, what did you do when you were in the Air Force?' Every single guy here will answer, 'I was the first to work on the KC-46.' This -46 will be around here for decades and decades and decades. Our great grandchildren will probably be able to fly this aircraft. It's going to be an Air Force legacy for a long time."—*Lt. Col. James Quashnock, commander of the 418th Flight Test Squadron, Det. 1, Air Force Times, Nov. 1.*

Tiered Unreadiness

"The modern day version of 'tiered readiness' has arrived for the US military. While the news has yet to sink in the minds of Washington leaders, the state of affairs across the force speaks for itself. ... For many Navy F/A-18 fighter pilots currently not flying, given aircraft equipment shortages, it is a situation described as one of 'haves' and 'have nots.' Pilots in a conflict zone or high-tension area are getting the staff and parts needed to keep jets in the sky, but those not deploying anytime soon are forced to sit idle alongside their parked aircraft and wait. ... In the Air Force, maintenance of older fighters like F-15s and F-16s being used more heavily than planned in Europe after Russia's invasion of Ukraine and against the Islamic State is now causing work to be deferred on the next generation [F-35] strike fighter given the lack of skilled maintainers. These critical personnel have had their transfer delayed because there are not enough people to both keep the older jets flying at such an accelerated

pace overseas and prepare the newest fighter to enter the fleet."—*Mackenzie Eaglen, American Enterprise Institute defense scholar, writing in Real Clear Defense, Nov. 6.*

Mirror Image

"They [makers of China's J-31 stealth fighter] are still in the glossy brochure phase of development, so they still look 10 feet tall and bulletproof. I think they'll eventually be on par with our fifth gen jets—as they should be, because industrial espionage is alive and well."—*Unnamed "senior US fighter pilot," assessing Chinese fighter progress, US Naval Institute blog, Nov. 6.*

Our Negotiating Approach ...

"I want to get this [a US-Iran nuclear agreement] done. And we are driving toward the finish with a view of trying to get it done."—*Secretary of State John F. Kerry, remarks to reporters in Paris, Nov. 5.*

... And Theirs

"We will never come to terms with savage Americans, even if we have chosen to negotiate. Those cannibals, the Americans, shouldn't jump to any conclusion with these talks."—*Iranian mullah Alireza Panahian, speaking in Tehran to a crowd chanting, "Death to America," Reuters, Nov. 5.*

Mobilization, Anyone?

"Through its military exertions in the Islamic world, the United States is clearly trying to achieve something very big. ... Yet from the outset, Americans have refused to acknowledge what employing military means to do big things entails. ... Doing big things militarily necessitates reconfiguring national priorities, with peacetime pursuits taking a back seat to wartime imperatives. The old-fashioned word for this is mobilization, which implies changing just about everything: tax rates, patterns of consumption, social relationships, educational priorities, the prerogatives exercised by the state, and of course, the size of the armed forces. In simplest terms, mobilization implies collective effort that involves collective sacrifice, without which wars fought to achieve big things are doomed to fail. ... Americans willfully ignore this essential truth:

If you will the end, you must will the means. Meanwhile, in Washington, where dereliction of duty is a way of life, no one in a position of influence has mustered the gumption to state the obvious: For the United States to achieve 'victory' in the greater Middle East, [it] will require exertions that exceed those made thus far by orders of magnitude."—*Retired US Army Col. Andrew J. Bacevich, now of Columbia University, op-ed in Los Angeles Times, Nov. 1.*

Slow as Lightning II

"I am very worried now that [despite] my promise to the Air Force to give them all the things they need to declare IOC on August 1 of 2016, I might not be able to give [it to] them. ... It takes a much longer time to get a new guy up to speed maintaining an F-35 than it does to get an experienced guy. ... Even if they can give me enough people, if they don't give me enough experienced people it's still going to take me longer to get them to the right number of maintainers for IOC."—*USAF Lt. Gen. Christopher C. Bogdan, F-35 program manager, claiming that continuation in service of the A-10 will drain experienced maintainers from the F-35, Defense News, Nov. 3.*

Dept. of Small Favors

"If [Russian President Vladimir] Putin says he wants to buy something [to nationalize it], you cannot say that you do not want to sell. If he says 'I want to buy something' then you say, 'Thanks for saying you want to buy it, and not just taking it.'"—*Sergei Pugachev, a Russian businessman and former Putin aide who now lives in London, Time Magazine, Nov. 5.*

Circling the Drain

"Cyberwar just plain makes sense. Attacking the power grid or other industrial control systems is asymmetrical and deniable and devilishly effective. Plus, it gets easier every year. We used to worry about Russia and China taking down our infrastructure. Now we have to worry about Iran and Syria and North Korea. Next up: Hezbollah and Anonymous."—*Stewart Baker, former NSA general counsel, quoted in Defense One dispatch, Oct. 30.*