

■ Welsh: USAF Really Short 40K to 60K People

The Air Force's recent moves to up its end strength to 321,000 people is only a crisis Band-Aid. To really fix the service's manpower shortages, as many as 40,000 to 60,000 more Active Duty airmen are needed, Chief of Staff Gen. Mark A. Welsh III said May 26.

Speaking at an AFA-sponsored Air Force breakfast in Arlington, Va., Welsh said USAF's recent plan to add 4,000 airmen will only be enough "to do what we're doing today," allowing remotely piloted aircraft operators to go down to "six [days] on, one off" from "seven on, no off." Absent the increase, "we will drive them out" of the service under a punitive and increasing workload. The 4,000 does nothing, he said, to address typical career field manning of 84 percent. Welsh called the 40,000 to 60,000 figure an "educated guess," but said that's what it would take "to do it right and fill in those manpower holes throughout the force."

There would also have to be a proportionate increase in the Guard and Reserve, "because they're a major part of this," he said.

■ Trimming From the Top

The Air Force tried to cut 15 three-star billets last year but was only successful in cutting eight, Chief of Staff Gen. Mark A. Welsh III said May 26.

"The others were just a bridge too far," not because of Air Force resistance, but because of resistance outside the service, he said.

Defense Secretary Ashton B. Carter recently proposed updating the Goldwater-Nichols Act, and lawmakers and defense officials have been discussing trimming headquarters operations and jobs for the highest-ranking officers. Welsh said it is fair to ask why the general and flag officer ranks have not been downsized at the same rate as the overall force. If the services can't justify those positions, he said, "maybe they shouldn't be there."

Still, he said, "it's very difficult to reduce," in part because senior positions "are coming out of somebody's district, somebody's state."

General officer rank reductions have cascading effects, as downgraded three-star positions become two-star billets that may in turn require cutting, etc. This all leads to a "pretty robust discussion," Welsh said.

■ Gorenc Retiring

Gen. Frank Gorenc, head of US Air Forces in Europe and Allied Air Command, will retire in July after 37 years of commissioned service, Air Force officials said. Gorenc has held the USAFE job since August 2013 and has led the command during Russia's invasion of Crimea and

USAF photo by Amn. Daniel Snider



Watch Me Whip, Whip, Watch Me Nae Nae: An F-15E banks above Grand Bay Bombing and Gunnery Range at Moody AFB, Ga., during joint aerial training. Air Combat Command aircraft including F-16s, HH-60G Pave Hawk helicopters, and A-10C aircraft participated in the training, showcasing tactical maneuvers and weapons capabilities.

USAF photo by SrA. Justyn M. Freeman

They're Strapped: TSgt. Joseph McCullough straps down a GBU-54 to a munitions loader at Bagram Air Field, Afghanistan, on June 7. The guided munition was to be loaded onto an F-16.



Ukraine, overseeing deployments of US Air Force assets to Europe—including the first deployment of F-22s to the continent—partnership activities with NATO and other air forces, and shifts of USAF European posture to deter Russia from further adventurism.

President Barack Obama on June 7 nominated Lt. Gen. Tod D. Wolters for a fourth star and to head USAFE and Allied Air Command. Wolters has been the director of operations on the Joint Staff since July 2015 and served as deputy chief of staff for operations, plans, and requirements on the Air Staff before then.

■ B-52 Crew Averts Catastrophe in Mishap

The quick thinking of a B-52 crew during a mishap at Andersen AFB, Guam, averted a “more catastrophic incident” as the Stratofortress caught fire on the ground, base officials said.

Images of the May 19 mishap on the Andersen flight line showed a B-52H fully engulfed in flames. The seven-member crew was able to escape the aircraft without any injuries reported.

“Because of their quick thinking and good judgment in this emergency situation, the aircrew not only saved their lives but averted a more catastrophic incident,” Brig. Gen. Douglas A. Cox, 36th Wing commander, said in a news release.

The B-52H had deployed from Minot AFB, N.D., for a Pacific bomber rotation, was conducting routine flight training, and was carrying inert munitions at the time.

■ Pilots' Errors Caused F-16 Collision at Nellis

Mistakes by a pair of pilots caused their F-16s to collide after landing on the runway at Nellis AFB, Nev., in August 2015, Air Combat Command investigators found.

The collision almost killed one pilot and caused nearly \$70 million in damage, according to the accident investigation report released May 9.

The pilots were both assigned to the Air Force Reserve Command's 301st Fighter Wing at NAS JRB Fort Worth, Texas, and were participating in exercise Red Flag 15-4 at the time.

After the first pilot landed his fighter normally, he did not move to the exit side of the runway. While preparing to land, the second pilot did not open his speedbrakes. He landed with the proper spacing, but closed on the other F-16 because “he landed too fast, touched down long, and had the engine above idle power,” according to the report.

After noticing the first aircraft on the hot side of the runway, he applied heavy braking pressure and directed his fellow pilot to clear right. The pilot of the first aircraft misunderstood the call and continued to drift left, but braked and turned hard right after hearing a second command. At the same time, the second pilot abandoned normal runway deconfliction and pulled hard right in an attempt to pass on that side. Instead, the aircraft collided.

The impact forced both aircraft off the runway, fired the second pilot's ejection seat, and pinned him under the other F-16's wing, causing “life threatening blunt force, burn, and crush-type injuries.” First responders were on the scene in

USAF photo by A1C Alexa Ann Henderson



Cozy Abodes: Airmen inspect the engines of a B-52 at Andersen AFB, Guam, where they are deployed as part of the military's continuous bomber presence in the Pacific.

68 seconds, helping save the pilot's life. The other pilot was not injured. One aircraft was considered a total loss and the repair costs to the other aircraft are estimated at \$5.4 million.

Hesterman Retires With Three Stars

The former assistant vice chief of staff of the Air Force, who was removed from office in March after a USAF inspector

general investigation found he engaged in an unprofessional relationship as a two-star general, retired as a three-star May 1.

"In the case of retirements, the Secretary of Defense retains the authority to determine satisfactory or unsatisfactory service for all officers in the grades of O-9 or O-10 who have adverse or reportable information," an Air Force spokeswoman said.

In the case of Lt. Gen. John W. Hesterman III, Air Force Secretary Deborah Lee James made a recommendation to Defense Secretary Ashton B. Carter "based on the recommendation of the supervisor, the recommendation of an officer grade determination board, consideration of DOD-wide precedents, and very extensive consideration of the nature of the misconduct, when it occurred, and the accomplishments of the individual in the last grade," the spokeswoman said.

The IG report found a "string of suggestive emails" supported allegations that Hesterman had an unprofessional relationship with an Air Force lieutenant colonel between March and May 2011, and that the relationship "seriously compromised his standing as an officer."

On June 7, Obama nominated Maj. Gen. Stayce D. Harris, 22nd Air Force commander, for promotion to lieutenant general and assignment as assistant vice chief of staff.

The Future of Drones

The Air Force on May 17 unveiled a plan for small, unmanned aircraft systems—drones smaller than Predators

By the Numbers

The Air Force has 194 golf courses on its bases around the world, according to a count released by *Mother Jones*. The Pentagon, meanwhile, has just 183 of its advanced Air Force F-22 fighter jets. Air Force officials, including Air Combat Command boss Gen. "Hawk" Carlisle have said ending F-22 production was a mistake. Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Mark Welsh said May 26 that restarting the F-22 production line isn't a "wild idea," though it is "cost prohibitive."



The War on Terrorism

US Central Command Operations: Freedom's Sentinel and Inherent Resolve

Casualties

As of June 15, 22 Americans had died in Operation Freedom's Sentinel in Afghanistan, and 20 Americans had died in Operation Inherent Resolve in Iraq and Syria.

The total includes 38 troops and four Department of Defense civilians. Of these deaths, 15 were killed in action with the enemy, while 27 died in noncombat incidents.

B-52s Picking Up the Pace

The B-52s that deployed to fight ISIS earlier this year have not been flying high-tempo operations, though they have been "picking up the pace," said US Air Forces Central Command boss Lt. Gen. Charles Q. Brown Jr. in a May 26 briefing.

Since the B-52 hasn't been based in the US Central Command area of operations for 26 years, the command needs to build up its logistic supports to "make sure they've got everything they need," he said.

The operations tempo had continued to increase in April and May and would continue to do so, Brown said. The Stratofortresses replaced B-1s that were recently rotated out of CENTCOM for the first time since 2001 after setting records for the amount of weapons dropped during its last deployment.

In that same briefing, Brown said the Air Force is conducting constant analysis to make sure US Central Command has enough weapons to fight ISIS, and that means taking weapons away from other contingencies. The number of weapons available to strike aircraft in Operation Inherent Resolve is "still a concern," he said.

The coalition conducts a lot of strikes with precision guided munitions and the Defense Department has not bought a large amount of those weapons since Afghanistan started drawing down because it did not "forecast for this particular operation."

The Air Force is increasing the numbers of weapons it will buy over the next five years, but those weapons are still two years away, said Brown.

In the meantime, the Air Force is doing analysis "about where [to] take risk" with other combatant commands so

it can move weapons from one stock and bring it to the fight, he added.

Extenders Mark 25 Years in Middle East

The KC-10 Extender recently marked 25 years of continuous operations in the US Central Command area of responsibility. The tankers first deployed to the region in 1991 to begin refueling aircraft conducting operations in the region, and they continue to support aircraft flying for operations Freedom's Sentinel and Inherent Resolve.

KC-10s are based at only two locations—Travis AFB, Calif., and JB McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, N.J.—so the crews routinely rotate to locations in the AOR.

STO Receives Posthumous Silver Star

Special tactics officer Capt. Matthew Roland on June 1 received a Silver Star posthumously, about nine months after he was killed in an insider attack in Afghanistan.

Roland, 27, of Lexington, Ky., was deployed from the 23rd Special Tactics Squadron at Hurlburt Field, Fla. On Aug. 26, 2015, Roland was driving the lead vehicle, a bus, in a convoy of US Army Special Forces soldiers to Camp Antonik in Helmand province when they pulled up to an Afghan security checkpoint.

Shortly after the bus stopped, two guards in Afghan National Defense and Security Forces uniforms moved, one toward a bunker, the other toward the bus while raising his weapon, according to an Air Force press release. Roland shouted, "Insider attack, insider attack!" and reversed the bus as the guard opened fire.

Roland was killed instantly, but by moving the bus he gave the rest of the special operations team time to respond and kill the gunmen. "His actions on that night do not surprise me," Roland's father, retired Air Force Col. Mark Roland, said in the release. "He was a warrior, a leader, and more than that, a servant leader whose first thoughts were for those he served."

Another airman, combat controller SSgt. Forrest Sibley, 31, from the 21st Special Tactics Squadron at Pope Army Airfield, N.C., was killed in the same incident.

and Reapers—that the service expects will take over as its dominant means of surveillance.

"What we're saying today is we do believe small unmanned aircraft systems will be the cornerstone of Air Force ISR," Lt. Gen. Robert P. Otto, deputy chief of staff for intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance, said in unveiling the "Small Unmanned Aircraft Systems (SUAS) Plan: 2016–2036."

The Air Force's current fleet of remotely piloted aircraft is falling drastically short of the unrelenting need for more ISR, so the service needs to look at creative ways to make up the gap. In the future, this will be small-scale RPAs with miniaturized sensors, like those on the bigger aircraft. These will be more autonomous, cheaper, and work alongside other RPAs and manned aircraft in what the service plans to be the Third Offset.

The future dependence on autonomy will dramatically change the manpower makeup of the remotely piloted aircraft force, and it will take humans even more out of intelligence gathering and targeting. However, people will not completely be out of the process. The Air Force now has humans physically flying MQ-1B Predators and MQ-9 Reapers in ground stations, and "that can't happen in the future," said Col. Brandon Baker, director of remotely piloted aircraft capabilities.

The service needs to take the man "out of the loop" and put the man "on the loop"—instead of having a pilot in control of one aircraft, have the pilot in charge of a fleet of small UAS systems that can largely operate autonomously. A human will remain in charge of decision making for air strikes, Baker said.

Wing Walking: Airman Bradley Williams, a C-17 crew chief, inspects a C-17 as part of Crescent Reach 16, an annual training exercise at JB Charleston, S.C. Crescent Reach is designed to test and evaluate the base's ability to mobilize and launch large aircraft and to train, process, and deploy airmen and cargo in response to a crisis.



USAF photo by SrA. Ericka Engblom

■ **Robinson Is First Female Combatant Commander**

Gen. Lori J. Robinson on May 13 took command of NORAD and US Northern Command from Adm. William E. Gortney, becoming the first woman to lead a combatant command.

Robinson “has a remarkable and complete set of proven experience” and is a strong strategic thinker and manager, Defense Secretary Ashton B. Carter said during the ceremony.

“We cannot predict precisely how or when the men and women of NORAD and NORTHCOM will be called forward to carry their mission, but we do know this: We know General Robinson will lead this team with certainty, clarity, and with the full trust and confidence of me and the President,” said Carter.

■ **Rice Takes Reins of Air National Guard**

Lt. Gen. L. Scott Rice pinned on his third star and assumed his new role as director of the Air National Guard on May 9.

Rice, who previously served as the adjutant general of the Massachusetts National Guard, replaced Maj. Gen. Brian G. Neal, who has served as the acting director since December 2015. The former director, Lt. Gen. Stanley E. Clarke III, retired officially in March. National Guard Bureau Chief Army Gen. Frank J. Grass, who presided over the ceremony, said Rice “has all the right tools to do this job.” ★

In His Spare Time: A1C Andrew Des Marias, a member of the Honor Guard at Dover AFB, Del., stands at port arms during the change of command ceremony for the 436th Maintenance Group on May 24. Col. Chuck Nesemeier relinquished command to Col. Tyler Knack. Marias is a 436th Aerial Port Squadron fleet service specialist.



USAF photo by Roland Bailek