

## ■ The Private F-35 Fix Is In Beyond 2020

It'll cost the Air Force "tens of millions" per year out of hide to hire contractors to do F-35 maintenance through at least 2020, because the service doesn't have enough people to do the work, Air Force Materiel Command chief Gen. Ellen M. Pawlikowski said April 28.

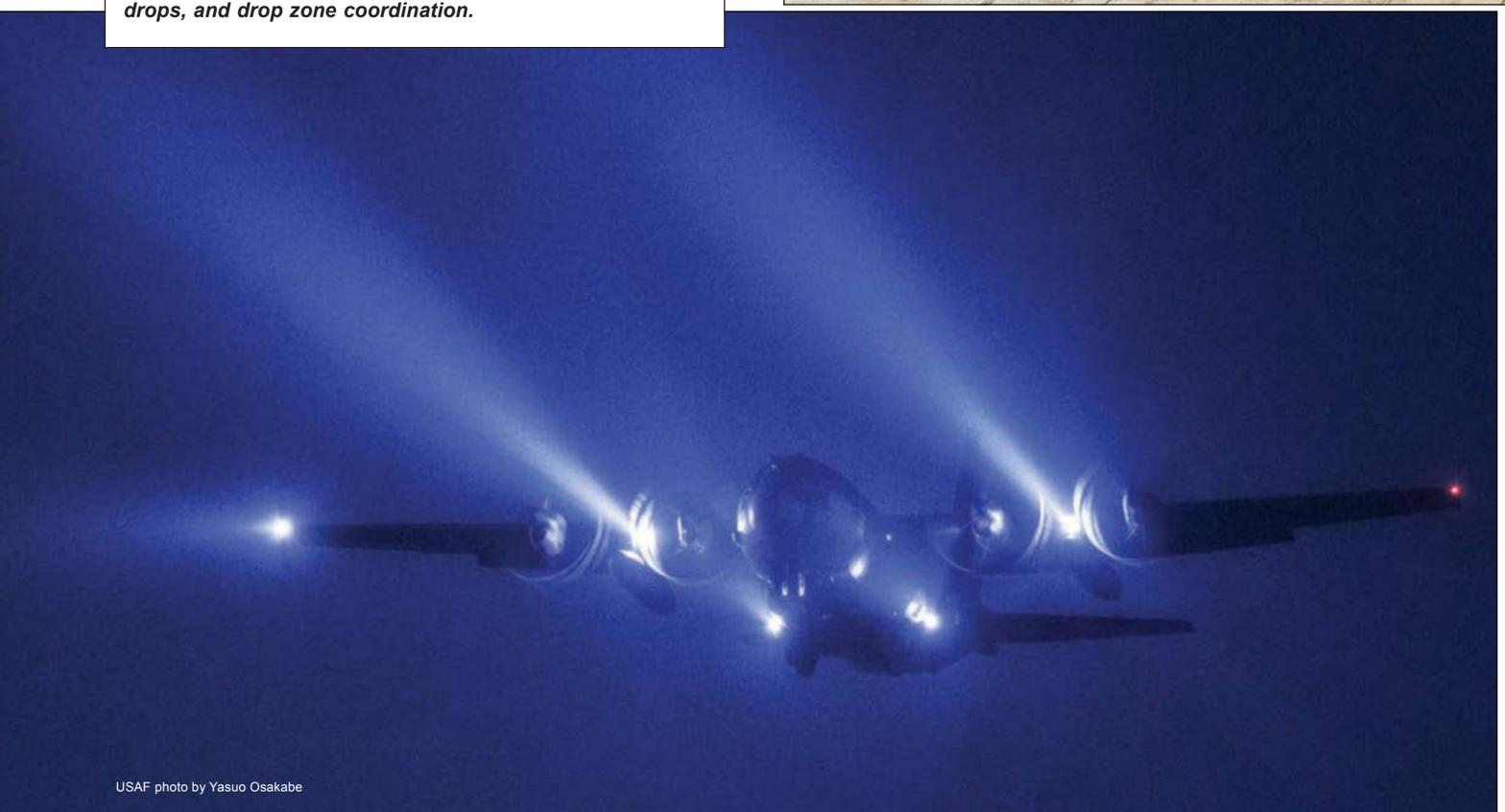
Congress restored some money to keep A-10s in service after rejecting USAF's plan to retire the jet and transition A-10 maintainers to the F-35. That took care of the flying hour shortfall but "would not have included money to do contract maintenance ... so we've had to carve that out of all the other O&M [operation and maintenance] accounts," Pawlikowski said

The situation won't be fixed quickly, either, because even though USAF is looking to grow by several thousand airmen, it can't simply put new people to work on the F-35. The jet is too complex for newbies, and it takes "seven to nine years" to grow a maintainer to a high experience level, she said. Using contractors will "give ourselves time to build the organic workforce" needed.

**Night Vision:** A C-130 conducts a night flight over Yokota AB, Japan, as part of annual Jump Week training in May. The 36th Airlift Squadron provided support all week long for US marines from III Marine Expeditionary Force, who were maintaining parachuting proficiency. The aircrews, in turn, trained in flight tactics, timed-package drops, and drop zone coordination.



USAF photo by TSgt. Travis Edwards



USAF photo by Yasuo Osakabe



**Warthogs and Vipers Take an Elephant Walk:** A-10s and F-16s line up on the runway at Osan AB, South Korea, for “an Elephant Walk”—a demonstration of USAF’s ability to generate combat airpower quickly and in huge numbers. The Warthogs came from Osan’s 25th Fighter Squadron. The F-16s came from Osan’s 36th Fighter Squadron and the 179th Fighter Squadron deployed from Duluth Arpt., Minn. They were all participating in Exercise Beverly Herd 16-01.

### ■ Adjusting Missiler Career Trajectory

The Air Force is restructuring the missiler career path in an attempt to retain officers longer. Air Force Global Strike Commander Gen. Robin Rand, in concert with the service’s Strategic Deterrence and Nuclear Integration Directorate, directed a review of the nuclear and missile operations (13N) career field with the goal of creating a self-sustaining force that places a premium on experience and expertise at the wing level, according to an April 7 news release.

In the past, instructors, evaluators, and flight commanders were all officers still in their first four years of service.

The restructuring will attempt to balance accessions with retention and will adjust grade structures across the field, redistributing the O-4 and O-5 billets.

### ■ Upgraded AWACS Goes to the Pacific

The Air Force’s upgraded E-3G Sentry made its Pacific debut in March. The 552nd Air Control Wing at Tinker AFB, Okla., deployed the Airborne Warning and Control System Block 40/45 aircraft to Pacific Air Forces, flying the first E-3G sortie over the Korean peninsula on March 18, according an April 15 Tinker press release.

The aircraft was stationed at Kadena AB, Japan, from March 12 to 22 and flew missions alongside the Japanese Self-Defense Forces. The AWACS helped control other aircraft in aerial interdiction, counterair, and suppression of enemy air defenses training missions, 964th Airborne Air Control Squadron Detachment Commander Maj. Jonathan Ritsema said in a news release.

The updated AWACS made its combat debut in November. The aircraft’s \$2.7 billion program includes modern communications, enhanced computer processing, and improved threat tracking.

### ■ Night Vision Goggles Case Caused Fatal C-130 Crash

A misplaced night vision goggles case led to the C-130J crash that killed 14 at Jalalabad Arpt., Afghanistan, in October 2015, Air Mobility Command investigators found.

After landing at Jalalabad, the crew conducted engine-running on-load/offload operations. To assist with offloading, the Super Hercules’ pilot placed the hard-shell case in front of the yoke to hold the horizontal stabilizer elevators in a raised position, but did not remove it before the nighttime takeoff, according to an April 15 news release announcing the finding.

The aircraft entered an excessive upward pitch just after takeoff, and the copilot misidentified a trim malfunction as the cause, resulting in improper recovery techniques. The aircraft crashed just off the runway 28 seconds after liftoff and struck a perimeter guard tower, killing all personnel aboard and three Afghan Special Reaction Force members on the ground.



USAF photo by S/A. Nigel Sandridge

**Ready?** A 56th Rescue Squadron HH-60G crew from RAF Lakenheath, UK, carries out a preflight check during Exercise Joint Warrior at RAF Lossiemouth, Scotland, in April. One of Europe's largest NATO exercises, Joint Warrior involved 14 nations, more than 60 aircraft, 30 ships and submarines, and some 6,500 personnel. Joint Warrior provides NATO forces with threat-reaction training. It takes place twice a year—the second iteration comes in October—and lasts for three weeks.

The crew consisted of the pilot, copilot, and two loadmasters assigned to the 39th Airlift Squadron at Dyess AFB, Texas. Two fly-away security team members assigned to the 66th Security Forces Squadron at Hanscom AFB, Mass., and five civilian contractor passengers were also onboard.

**More Than Just a Terrorist Group**

The biggest change in Operation Inherent Resolve, from an air perspective, is that ISIS is no longer just looked at as a terrorist group, Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Mark A. Welsh III said May 4.

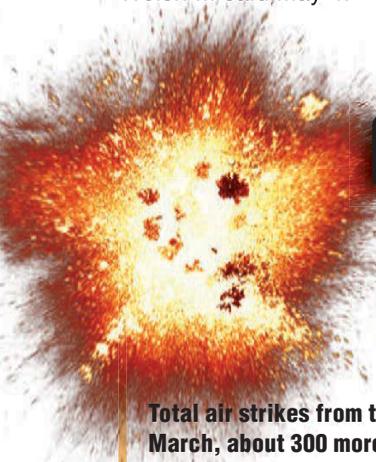
Speaking at a discussion with all the service Chiefs at the Council on Foreign Relations in New York, Welsh said the original strategy in Iraq and Syria allowed ISIS to “have a vote” and “kind of direct activity” for the first six to eight months. Then, he said, the US realized ISIS looked like “something much more than a terrorist group,” because they had “training infrastructure, recruiting infrastructure, financial infrastructure, governance infrastructure,” and “what looked like fielded military forces,” in addition to the terrorism component.

“From an Air Force perspective, you can attack all those different pieces simultaneously,” he said, and the air coalition has done so.

**Carter To Reconsider OIR Campaign Medal Criteria**

DOD needs to reconsider the criteria for the new Operation Inherent Resolve medal to include those supporting the mission from outside Iraq and Syria, Defense Secretary Ashton B. Carter said during a trip to Al Dahfra AB, United Arab Emirates—one of the bases most involved in the mission.

Al Dahfra is a large USAF installation with thousands of troops deployed for OIR, though many are not qualified for the medal based on existing criteria, which states they must have served inside Iraq, Syria, or within contiguous airspace or waters, extending out 12 nautical miles (13.8 miles).



**By the Numbers**

**1,982**

**Total air strikes from the US-led coalition targeting ISIS in March, about 300 more than this time last year. As of April 1, aircraft have conducted 6,730 strikes against ISIS in Iraq and Syria. Tanker sorties have stayed steady as well, with 194 million pounds of fuel offloaded through 3,129 sorties. Intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance aircraft flew 2,117 sorties so far this year, according to statistics from US Air Forces Central Command.**

# The War on Terrorism

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

### Casualties

As of May 18, a total of 22 Americans had died in Operation Freedom's Sentinel in Afghanistan, and 20 Americans had died in Operation Inherent Resolve in Iraq and Syria.

This 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.

There have been 103 troops wounded in action during OFS and 14 troops in OIR.

### OIR Goes Multidomain

The US has begun to use "our exquisite cyber capabilities" in the fight against ISIS, the campaign's deputy commander for operations and intelligence told reporters April 26.

Air Force Maj. Gen. Peter E. Gersten said cyber operations "are cloaked in the highest of secrecy." They are "highly coordinated [and] it has been very effective, and Daesh will be definitely in the crosshairs as we bring that capability to bear against them." Gersten, who has been in theater about a year, said that when he first arrived it was estimated that there were roughly 1,500 to 2,000 foreign fighters streaming into Iraq and Syria each month. That number is now thought to have dwindled to around 200 per month—plus there has been an increase in desertion rates among ISIS fighters.

"In every single way, their capability to wage war is broken," he said of the terror group.

### Service Members Disciplined for Kunduz Strike

Sixteen service members, including a general officer involved in the October 2015 air strike on a Doctors Without Borders hospital in Kunduz, Afghanistan, have been punished for their conduct. Forty-two civilians were killed in the attack.

A US Central Command investigation released April 29 found that "certain personnel"—none of them identified—did not comply with the law of armed conflict and

rules of engagement, but none of the failures constitutes a war crime. Five of the service members were sent home to the United States, including an officer who was removed from command.

US Special Operations Command boss, Army Gen. Joseph L. Votel, directed boards to evaluate the flight certification of three aircrew members, according to a CENTCOM press release.

"The personnel involved did not know that they were striking a medical facility. The intended target was an insurgent-controlled site which was approximately 400 meters [a quarter-mile] away from the MSF Trauma Center," stated the CENTCOM release, referring to the Médecins Sans Frontières site.

"The investigation found that an AC-130U Gunship aircrew, in support of a US Special Forces element that was supporting a partnered Afghan ground force, misidentified and struck the MSF Trauma Center. The investigation determined that all members of both the ground force and the AC-130U aircrew were unaware the aircrew was firing on a medical facility throughout the engagement," the statement continued.

"This tragic incident was caused by a combination of human errors, compounded by process and equipment failures. Fatigue and high operational tempo also contributed to the incident."

Army Gen. John F. Campbell, then commander of US Forces Afghanistan, ordered additional training on rules of engagement and tactical guidance, directed a review of the targeting process, and issued an updated tactical directive and targeting standard operating procedure, among other measures.

Votel extended his condolences to the victims and said the US is "fully committed to learning from this tragedy." Meinie Nocolai, the president of Doctors Without Borders Belgium, said an "independent and impartial investigation by the International Humanitarian Fact Finding Commission" was still necessary.

Under this criteria, pilots who fly missions into Iraqi or Syrian airspace qualify for the medal, but maintainers and other airmen who worked on the aircraft or supported the mission outside of the countries will not. "You guys are fighting the war, too, as far as I'm concerned," said Carter on April 16 when asked about the medal by a major serving on the base. "I definitely really need to give some thought to that."

Carter then visited Iraq and awarded the first five Inherent Resolve Campaign medals to one airman, one marine, one sailor, and two soldiers.

### ■ USAF Patrols South China Sea From the Philippines

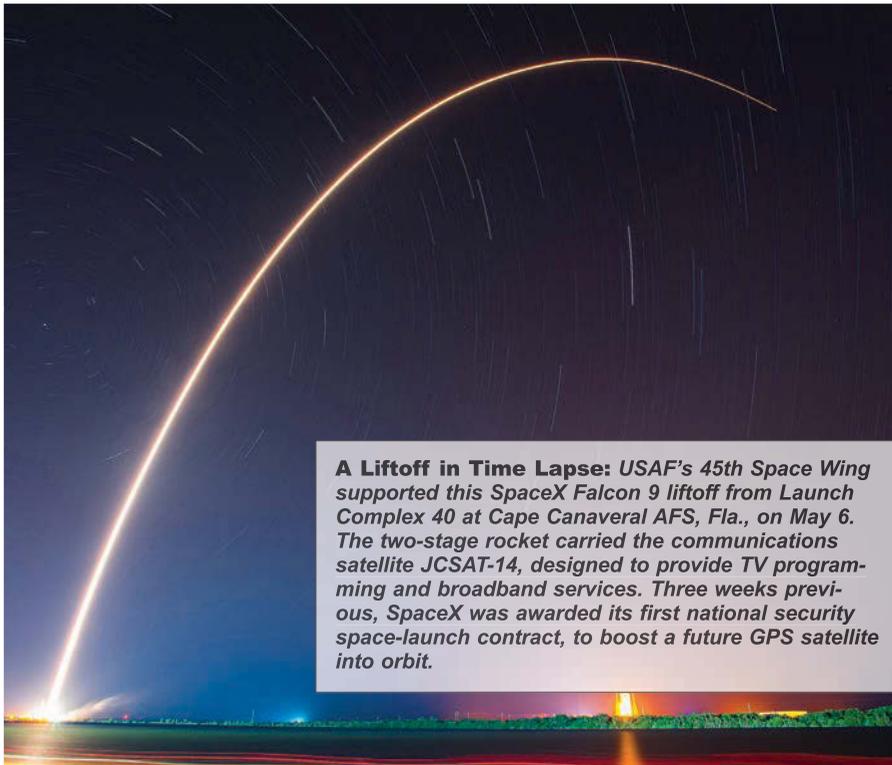
Five A-10 attack jets, three HH-60G rescue helicopters, one MC-130H, and about 200 airmen would stick around for an extended deployment in the Philippines following the annual Balikatan exercise to help patrol the South China Sea, Defense Secretary Ashton B. Carter said.

The airmen and USAF aircraft would remain in the country for the rest of April to fly joint training and conduct flight operations in the South China Sea and establish "the foundation" for joint air patrols, said Carter during a joint news conference with his Filipino counterpart in Manila on April 14.

Carter also announced that a "command and control node made up of American personnel" would remain behind and continue exercising with the Filipinos. In addition to the A-10 rotation, the Air Force will deploy newer fighters to the island nation in the near future, though officials did not immediately say what variant.

### ■ Fighting Drug Smugglers With Bombers

The Air Force is going to coordinate training flights in the Caribbean and Latin America to assist with drug enforcement efforts, sending aircraft such as B-1s and B-52s on flights that could help deter trafficking.



**A Liftoff in Time Lapse:** USAF's 45th Space Wing supported this SpaceX Falcon 9 liftoff from Launch Complex 40 at Cape Canaveral AFS, Fla., on May 6. The two-stage rocket carried the communications satellite JCSAT-14, designed to provide TV programming and broadband services. Three weeks previous, SpaceX was awarded its first national security space-launch contract, to boost a future GPS satellite into orbit.

Air Force Secretary Deborah Lee James said a B-1 was flying a training sortie in the Caribbean in March, when its sensors picked up a boat in the waters below it. The crew, working with other aircraft and the Joint Interagency Task Force-South, were able to identify it as a “go fast” drug running boat. The Lancer then flew low over the boat, scaring the crew, which then threw about 500 kilograms of cocaine into the water, she said.

The Air Force needs to look at “additional ways to replicate” this flight using other training sorties that are being flown anyway, said James.

Lt. Gen. Mark C. Nowland, commander of 12th Air Force and Air Forces Southern, said missions could include aircraft such as the E-8C Joint Surveillance Target Attack Radar System, Navy P-8s, and B-1 and B-52 bombers. The aircraft could use sensors to find ships, and then relay that information to Coast Guard ships with the legal authority to interdict. Currently, these flights happen sparingly, but James said she wants to “redouble” efforts to conduct more.

### ■ More RPA Changes

The Air Force has approved two more changes to the remotely piloted aircraft community: redesignating Predator units as attack wings and allowing RPA pilots to log combat hours even though they are not physically in a combat zone, the service announced April 11.

The changes are a part of the continuing Culture and Process Improvement Program that aims to improve the service's RPA community and welfare of the airmen in related career fields. “The airmen who perform this essential mission do a phenomenal job, but we learned from the RPA pilots, sensor operators, and their leaders that these airmen are under significant stress from an unrelenting pace of operations,” Air Force Secretary Deborah Lee James said in a news release announcing the changes.

Previously Air Force MQ-1B Predator squadrons were designated as reconnaissance, while MQ-9 Reaper squadrons were attack. Now squadrons with either aircraft will be attack squadrons, part of the service's anticipated shift to an all-MQ-9 fleet. Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Mark A. Welsh III also approved the change to let pilots log combat time while flying an RPA in hostile airspace, even though the aircrew is not physically in a combat zone.

### SpaceX Wins GPS III Contract

SpaceX will launch the second GPS III satellite in May 2018. The Air Force on April 27 awarded the first competitively sourced National Security Space launch services contract to SpaceX; the firm-fixed price contract is valued at \$82.7 million.

The contract award “achieves a balance between mission success, meeting operational needs, lowering launch costs,” and reintroducing competition into NSS missions, said Space and Missile Systems Center Commander Lt. Gen. Samuel A. Greaves in a written release.

Under the terms of the contract, SpaceX will be responsible for launch vehicle production, mission integration, launch operations, and spaceflight certification for the GPS III satellite. The Pentagon inspector general in March launched an investigation into United Launch Alliance, after ULA failed to bid for the GPS III contract and a ULA employee said the company wanted to avoid a “cost shoot-out.” That employee later resigned. ❌

### Editor's Note

In September 2015, the Air Force Association's *Wingman Magazine* published an article about John Weston, an Air Force veteran and AFA member who had recently retired from the State Department's Diplomatic Security division.

Major portions of this article, which was submitted by Fred Lash and appeared under his byline, were essentially identical to a 2008 article about John Weston that had previously been published in an internal State Department newsletter, “DS Update Online.” Lash and the author of the 2008 article, Marcy Mason, both previously worked in State Department public affairs. The September 2015 *Wingman Magazine* article misled our readers and took Mason's work without attribution.

The Air Force Association and *Air Force Magazine* take accuracy, fairness, and intellectual honesty very seriously. For contributing to this act of plagiarism, we would like to apologize to our readers and to Marcy Mason, and we have removed the article in question from our website.—THE EDITORS