

DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE

PRESENTATION TO THE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE

UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SUBJECT: STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

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I. Introduction

America's Air Force is engaged around the world, fighting terrorism and insurgents in the Global War on Terror (GWOT) and fulfilling our roles and missions as Airmen for the joint team. Simultaneously, we also shoulder much of the burden as our nation's strategic deterrent. We fly and fight in three war fighting domains – air, space and cyberspace – giving our nation sovereign options to employ military force no other nations possess.

While we are fighting the war we are also preparing for an uncertain future by doing all we can to become an even more efficient and effective instrument of national power. While the GWOT is the near-term priority, we firmly believe that the nation and the Air Force must prepare for emerging *global* threats at all levels of warfare. While we expect to be engaged in CENTCOM for another ten or more years, we must also continue to be able to detect, deter and dissuade other potential enemies – both state and non-state actors – and fight battles across the spectrum of conflict. We remain convinced that the future security environment will be more complex, lethal and demanding than today's operating environment, and that the Air Force and our Department of Defense will require the full range of military capabilities to maintain our relevance and our advantages. In fact, we believe it's time to re-focus on and increase the asymmetric advantages the Air Force offers the nation. Our nation expects and deserves no less.

II. Mission

Since becoming Secretary of the Air Force and Chief of Staff of the Air Force, our first priority has been fighting the long war against terrorism and ensuring that our Total Force – including Active Duty, Guard, Reserve, and civilian – is prepared for the next war. The Air Force's strategic roles call for us to maintain the ability to detect, deter, dissuade, and defeat those who seek to harm America.

Today's GWOT missions are only the latest in a string of nearly 17 years of continuous combat, beginning with our initial Operation DESERT SHIELD deployments in August 1990 through ongoing operations in Iraq, Afghanistan and the Horn of Africa (HOA) today. Today's Air Force provides the Joint Force Commander a range of capabilities, from traditional ones like close air support and armed reconnaissance, to non-traditional ones like presence, infrastructure protection, and election support. The Air Force flies approximately 430 airlift;¹ aeromedical evacuation; air-refueling; Command and Control and Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (C2ISR); strike; and electronic warfare sorties daily as part of Operations IRAQI FREEDOM and ENDURING FREEDOM (OIF/OEF).

Of the approximately 25,000 Airmen deployed in the CENTCOM AOR, approximately 6,100 are considered "in lieu of" (ILO) taskings – meaning we are filling

¹ In Iraq alone, USAF airlift delivers approximately 3,500 trucks' worth of cargo in an average month, taking more than 8,600 people off dangerous roads and providing the Army and Marines the flexibility to re-mission those vehicles and associated support troops to alternate missions.

other Services' billets in some of their stressed skill areas and taking on tasks outside Air Force core competencies.² Since 2004 we have deployed approximately 24,000 Airmen in support of such ILO tasks, and we expect a steady increase in that total.³

But our engagement in CENTCOM is only the “tip of the iceberg.” In addition to the 25,000 Airmen deployed to CENTCOM’s AOR at any one time, we also have approximately 213,000 Airmen (183,000 Active Duty plus an additional 30,000 Guard and Reserve) fulfilling other daily COCOM tasks.⁴ That equates to about 40% of our Total Force and about 53% of the Active Duty force.⁵ From controlling satellites to flying Predators, Airmen influence events worldwide every day without actually physically being around the world.

Our Total Force Airmen are also busy defending our homeland, having flown over 50,000 fighter, tanker, and Airborne Warning and Control sorties since 11 September 2001, and having flown over 3,500 counter-drug sorties since 1991.

III. People

Another priority is developing our Airmen and caring for them and their families. Airmen are our most precious resource – our “number one weapon system” – and make the Air Force the instrument of national power it is today. So this priority is aimed at ensuring our Total Force Airmen are well-trained and ready for their expeditionary warfighting responsibilities by charting out a career full of education and training for each Airman. Because it is clear that, while *we recruit the individual, we retain the family*, our “People” priority also includes ensuring that Air Force quality of life standards remain the highest of any service.

However, fiscal constraints are tightening as health care costs continue to skyrocket. With Program Budget Decision (PBD) 720, the Air Force planned to reduce by 40,000 Active Duty, Guard, Reserve and civilian Full-time Equivalents (FTEs) in order to self-finance the critical re-capitalization and modernization of our aircraft, missile and space inventories. Because our Airmen are so important, this self-financing decision was difficult, but we saw it as our only viable re-capitalization option in this extremely tight budgetary climate. During the 1990s the Air Force suffered a seven year “procurement holiday” that we believe must be addressed. With increased fuels and maintenance costs dramatically reducing our buying power, and with our TOA cut significantly from planned and promised levels, we saw reducing our own end strength

² Examples include detainee operations, convoy operations and protection, explosive ordnance disposal, civil engineering, security, interrogators, communications, fuels, medical, logistics, intelligence, and base operating support (BOS).

³ The Air Force ILO footprint has grown from about 1900 in 2004 to 5000 in 2007, and is projected to reach approximately 6000 ILOs in 2008. (AFPC/A1P) On top of ILO tasks, the Air Force also supports another 1,200 Individual Augmentee (IA) joint manned positions.

⁴ Other COCOM tasks include such missions as space control and situational awareness, counter-drug, homeland defense, nuclear deterrence, and national C⁴ISR.

⁵ As of December 2006, the Air Force comprises approximately 347,400 Active Duty, 105,600 Guard and 73,800 Reserve, or 526,800 Total Force uniformed Airmen. We also have 165,700 civilian Airmen.

by 40,000 full-time equivalents over a 3-year period as the “lesser of evils” alternative to generate the vitally needed investment capital.

Our force drawdown efforts have placed us on a glide slope to meet our PBD 720 end strength targets of 334,200 in FY07 and 328,400 in FY08. But personnel changes of this magnitude come with a degree of uncertainty and difficulty for our Airmen and their families. We are making every effort to use voluntary measures to shape the force with the right skills mix, increase manning in stressed career fields, leverage new technologies, and lean our internal processes to reduce workload and reduce or eliminate unnecessary work through Air Force Smart Operations 21, or AFSO21. Ultimately, our goal is to ensure the Air Force maintains the right size and mix of forces to meet the global challenges of today and tomorrow. While our force size is getting smaller, we are making every effort to do business smarter. For that reason education and training remain top priorities.

We believe voluntary education (tuition assistance) makes Airmen even smarter, better American citizens during their enlistment(s), and better air, space and cyberspace combatants for the nation. Tuition assistance also continues to be a strong incentive that helps ensure we meet our recruiting and retention goals. For every one Air Force enlistee we turn 99 others away, so we continue to be able to choose the cream of America’s crop. Our recruiting and retention figures remain impressive. Our challenge is to reprioritize funded Air Force professional education opportunities to better reflect a balance between the fight today and the fight tomorrow.⁶

Since 2001 the Active Duty Air Force has reduced its end-strength by almost 6% but our deployments have increased by at least 30% – primarily in support of GWOT. To accomplish the increasing “in lieu of taskings,” many of our Airmen require a great deal of additional training. Such extra training means even more time away from families and from units already stretched thin by the Air Force’s high OPSTEMPO and force drawdown. These ILO tasks add significant levels of stress on the deployed Airmen as well as the rest of our force. Because ILO-tasks units and Airmen are no longer available for core Air Force or home-station missions, and because our core missions must still be accomplished, the workload shifts to other Airmen at home and abroad. But the issue goes beyond strain on people. Airmen’s skills in their core competencies are perishable, and we must give them time and training to hone those skills.

Additionally, faced with more austere budgets and a reduced inventory of support personnel, commanders are assessing how they can operate base support functions more efficiently given fewer resources. Inevitably, commanders may be required to consolidate capabilities on some bases to maintain services to our people. We must face these tough decisions today, so that tomorrow’s Air Force will be better than today’s. In our profession, the mission must come first, but in today’s high OPSTEMPO

⁶ Institutions include the Air Force Institute of Technology (AFIT) and AFIT-sponsored degree programs, intermediate and senior developmental education (IDE/SDE), Basic Military Training and professional continuing education (PCE). Re-emphasized priorities include irregular warfare, homeland security, regional affairs strategists, foreign language programs, science and technology, and the faculty requirements the Air Force Academy, AFIT, and Air University need to create tomorrow's Airmen.

environment it's critical we take care of our Airmen and their families so they can better focus on the mission.

We have trimmed our Air Force using a methodology that preserved a strong expeditionary capability, but at considerable risk of "burning out" our Airmen. Any significant growth planned for active duty ground units – such as announced by the President and Secretary of Defense – would inherently drive a commensurate need to increase Air Force strength to directly and indirectly partner with these larger ground units. Our airlift units, for example, are intrinsically tied to our Army and Marine teammates. We give the nation's ground forces the logistical reach to be delivered, supplied, re-supplied, and extracted via air anywhere in the world. Our weather teams, tactical air control parties, and other forces are embedded or closely tied with ground forces. And, of course, the Air Force provides the Joint Force Commander the full range of our air assets as part of the interdependent joint fight.

Some of our most successful initiatives have led to even more seamless integration of all elements of our Total Force, and leveraging to a greater extent than ever the capacities inherent within our Total Force. Though the Air Force is already the model for melding its Active Duty elements with its Guard, Reserve, and civilian elements, there is still more we can do to ensure our governors, states and Nation get the most combat effective, most efficient force possible – to accomplish our mission more quickly and with greater capacity.

IV. Tomorrow

Our final priority is to maintain well into the future the same advantages over existing and emerging competitors that we enjoy today. Because these competitors are not sitting idle, we must act now to replace obsolete air and space systems. Our Airmen and their equipment have been in combat for the past 17 straight years, and the years of flying and fighting have taken a toll on our people, our machines, and our organization. Our old aircraft are harder and more expensive to maintain than newer ones, they require a larger footprint when they are deployed, and most importantly, they are significantly less combat-capable in today's lethal environment. Further, every one of our major satellite systems must be replaced in the next ten years. Because of the significant lead times associated with developing, acquiring, and fielding new systems, we *must invest today to ensure tomorrow's air, space and cyberspace dominance*. We have therefore accelerated the move from Cold War infrastructure and platforms, and we are doing our best to resource the change to fielding a force that is prepared for 21st Century challenges.

We are saddled with air and space inventories that are the oldest in our Air Force's history. As of the end of September 2007, our aircraft are, on average, 24 years old, with selected genres and platforms being considerably older. For example, our tankers average 44 years old, with the oldest KC-135E entering active service on 28 December 1957. Our venerable B-52H bombers average nearly 46 years old, and the oldest of them entered service on 28 January 1960. The Air Force has not purchased significant quantities of new aircraft since the 1980s. With the funds we have available,

have programmed, and have tried to free up with personnel endstrength cuts, we are attempting to halt, then reverse the steadily aging trend.

In the 1990s, the Air Force deliberately chose to assume risk in modernization and, instead, sustained aging weapon systems throughout continual combat operations. The tragedies on 9/11 and resulting War on Terror regrettably coincided with the period when the Air Force expected to recover and begin a true force-wide re-capitalization. While victory in the war on terror is our number one priority, the nation cannot afford to take another procurement holiday that places our future at grave risk. We will not win tomorrow's fight without re-capitalization, and we cannot sacrifice victory in today's fight to prepare for tomorrow.

Perhaps more worrisome, the procurement holiday the entire Department of Defense took during the 1990s is already impacting our ability to meet the ends we have been assigned. For example, the B-52Hs that comprise more than half our total bomber inventory and the "newer," sleeker B-1Bs (even they average more than 20 years old each) do not have the ability to penetrate modern integrated air defense systems. They are great bomb trucks and serve today's GWOT needs well, but they are not survivable platforms in contested airspace. Recognizing this, our enemies and potential competitors have gone about upgrading their air defenses by purchasing new 4th generation and generation 4.5 fighters and sophisticated anti-access weapons. Lest anyone think this reality is a long way off either in physical or temporal terms, Venezuela's leaders have embarked that country on a path that might deny us access to that country or its neighbors in the near future. Clearly, we need a new penetrating bomber with the range, payload, survivability and lethality to project our nation's power.

Similarly, the HH-60G PAVE HAWK helicopters we use for Combat Search and Rescue (CSAR) average over 17 years old, with the oldest entering service on 8 Dec 1982. Today's HH-60Gs lack the range, payload, power, and survivability required for today's operating environments – ranging from extreme altitudes and frigid cold of the mountains of Afghanistan to the brutal heat and sand of the deserts of Iraq – let alone tomorrow's. We owe it to our nation's Airmen – and to our Joint and Coalition brethren – to be able to penetrate defenses and fly to extreme ranges to pick them up should they become isolated. We owe them a new CSAR helicopter.

Thus, our approach has been two-pronged: first, since 2005 we have been pushing to divest the Air Force of significant numbers of old aircraft that are either too costly to operate or obsolete. We appreciate Congressional language in the 2007 National Defense Authorization Act supporting our efforts to retire our older aircraft. However, legislative restrictions on aircraft retirements remain an obstacle to efficient divestiture of our older, least capable, and costly to maintain platforms and equipment. We are still encumbered with language that prevents us from smartly managing our own inventories of C-5A, C-130E/H, KC-135E, U-2S, and B-52H, which will cost us \$229 million in operations and maintenance in FY2008.

For example, the Eisenhower administration-era KC-135Es that have served our nation so well for 50 years have exceeded available engineering data and we can no

longer accurately anticipate what element of the weapon system will fail next. We know for certain that KC-135Es have a problem with engine strut corrosion. Years ago we tried to temporarily fix the problem, but that stopgap measure has itself now worn out.⁷ Twenty six of them have therefore been grounded, and yet we are prohibited from retiring any KC-135E aircraft during fiscal year 2008. We desperately need to retire these KC-135Es and move forward procuring a new, more reliable, more agile KC-X. Our *Global Reach* is at risk without it.

Likewise, our inventory of C-130Es is, on average, more than 43 years old (oldest entered service 28 June 1961). More than 20% of them are grounded or have flight restrictions preventing them from being useful to the Air Force, and the Fleet Viability Board has recommended monitoring C-130Es closely and retiring them as they become non-flyable. Considering we have an open C-130J production line, it makes sense for them to be retired. Yet we are prohibited from retiring any C-130E/H aircraft in fiscal year 2008 and are required to maintain each C-130E tactical airlift aircraft retired after 30 September 2006 in a condition that allows recall of that aircraft to future service even though they may not be flyable.

Second, we are in the midst of the Air Force's biggest, most complex, and most important recapitalization and modernization effort in history. This sweeping effort aims to equip our Airmen with fewer numbers of dramatically more capable systems to meet the needs of our nation at war as well as to ensure our Total Force's readiness for future conflict. Successfully executing our re-capitalization plan requires carefully balancing the requirement to continue to meet today's operational needs while also ensuring future Airmen fly and fight in an Air Force that is relevant, capable and sustainable.

The Air Force's top five procurement priorities – the new jet tanker (KC-X); replacement rescue helicopter (CSAR-X); new space systems for early warning, communications, weather, and position, navigation and timing; F-35 Joint Strike Fighter; and the next generation bomber we'll field by 2018 – will begin to address our re-capitalization and modernization needs. We must field 5th generation platforms with increased stealth, survivability, stand-off, reach, integration, speed, lethality, and precision capabilities if we are to maintain dominance in tomorrow's battlespace and if we are to maintain interoperability and partnerships with our international partners and allies.

V. Conclusion

America's Air Force is the most powerful air force on the planet, with *Global Vigilance*, *Global Reach*, and *Global Power* to be envied. Yet we cannot – and will not – rest on the laurels of our current dominance. We anticipate a future security environment that is fundamentally different from the Cold War-era, so we are building a 21st Century Air Force prepared to:

⁷ An EIR (Enhanced Interim Repair) was instituted to provide a 5 year extension of engine strut serviceability. As of 30 Sep, 26 aircraft have exceeded their PDM and/or EIR expiration dates.

- Harness and exploit new technologies, and adapt our strategies, organization, tactics, and training to meet both current and future warfighting requirements
- Project power into a theater from locations in the United States through and from the air, space, and cyberspace
- Detect, deter, dissuade, and defeat our Nation's enemies, no matter *who* they are, *where* they are, or *what* their weapons
- Dominate our three warfighting domains for the United States of America, her interests, and her ideals, alongside our global partners – strategically, operationally, and tactically

We appreciate the Congress's continued partnership in making that happen.