

DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
PRESENTATION TO THE COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
SUBCOMMITTEE ON READINESS
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SUBJECT: READINESS OF THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE

STATEMENT OF: GENERAL CARROL H. CHANDLER
VICE CHIEF OF STAFF, UNITED STATES AIR FORCE

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Introduction

Today, the United States confronts a dynamic international environment marked by security challenges of unprecedented diversity. Along with our Joint partners, the Air Force will defend and advance the interests of the United States by providing unique capabilities to succeed in current conflicts while preparing to counter future threats to our national security. Over the last year, the Air Force made progress in strengthening not only our readiness for today's operations, but also in fostering the flexibility required for the uncertain requirements of tomorrow. Through increased balance, our Service can maintain its readiness to meet the obligations set forth in the Quadrennial Defense Review: prevail in today's wars, prevent and deter conflict, prepare to defeat adversaries and succeed in a wide range of contingencies, and preserve and enhance the all-volunteer force.

Daily Operations and Readiness

The Air Force is committed to readiness and on-going operations. After 19 years of continuous deployments and nine years of operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, these operations continue to stress both people and platforms. Since the events of 9/11, the tempo of our operations has continued to increase: we have executed more than 50,000 sorties supporting Operation IRAQI FREEDOM and almost 66,000 sorties supporting Operation ENDURING FREEDOM, delivered over 1.73 million passengers and 606,000 tons of cargo, and employed almost 1,980 tons of munitions. Additionally, we have transported nearly 70,000 patients from the CENTCOM AOR, and our combat search and rescue forces met the "golden hour" goal of transporting seriously wounded warriors to treatment facilities within 60 minutes of injury nearly 98 percent of time. Lastly, our aeromedical evacuation sorties moved critically injured warriors to regional hospitals within hours of injury, contributing to the 95 percent battlefield injury survival rate.

We are a global force that is dedicated to supporting combatant commander requirements from both the continental U.S. and overseas bases. Nearly 40,000 of America's Airmen, or about 7 percent of the force, are deployed to 263 locations across the globe, including 63 locations in the Middle East. Also, deployed Airmen currently fill about 5,300 Joint Expeditionary Taskings, helping the Joint team with critical combat and combat support functions. In addition to those deployed, nearly 219,000 Airmen--fully 43 percent of the force--support combatant commander requirements from their home stations in the continental U.S., Europe, and the Pacific each day. These Airmen operate the Nation's space and missile forces, process and exploit remotely collected ISR, provide national intelligence support, protect American airspace, actively engage with our allies and partners, and contribute in many other ways. Finally, defense of the homeland is a total force mission with a minimum of 40 aircraft from 18 locations engaged in operations at any given time.

FY11 Budget Request Overview

The FY11 Air Force budget request of \$119.6B reflects our commitment to the Joint fight, and contributes to a refocused investment strategy emphasizing Joint force activities. This request balances providing capabilities for today's commitments and posturing for future challenges. We chose to improve existing capabilities whenever possible, and to pursue new systems when required. This approach to modernization and recapitalization keeps pace with threat developments and required capabilities, while ensuring responsible stewardship of resources. In developing this budget request, we also carefully preserved and enhanced our comprehensive approach to taking care of Airmen and Air Force families. In FY11 we will stabilize end strength at 332,200 active duty Airmen, reserve component end strength at 71,200, and Air National Guard end strength at 106,700.

Our FY11 \$45.8B operations and maintenance (O&M) budget request supports operations at 80 major installations and funds air, space, and cyber operations, as well as intelligence, logistics, nuclear deterrence, special operations, and search and rescue capabilities. This O&M request is 8.5 percent above

the FY10 authorization due largely to fuel price increases, growth in enabling functions such as intelligence and communications, force structure transformations such as Joint basing and in-sourcing, and shifting focus toward new missions such as cyber capabilities supporting the stand-up of U.S. Cyber Command.

Personnel Readiness

Our dedicated Airmen are the foundation of the Air Force. Recruiting, training, and retaining an all-volunteer force requires significant investment. This investment drives the very effectiveness of our highly skilled and technically proficient force.

Deployed Forces

The Air Force can, at times, support combatant commands without forward deploying personnel. Some tasks, however, require physical presence. Nearly 40,000 airmen are forward-deployed to combatant commands on any given day, 55 percent for 179 days or longer. Approximately 75 percent of deployed Airmen support operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. Due to the capabilities required by current conflicts, a relatively small portion of our total force deploys more frequently than the force as a whole. Sixteen of the 132 enlisted specialties and eleven of the 125 officer specialties are considered “stressed” due to their deployment operations tempo. A number of programs are in place to bolster the manning in these career fields as well as mitigate potential negative effects on their families and personal wellbeing.

We will continue to provide the full range of air, space, and cyber capabilities to meet combatant commander requirements. Remotely piloted aircraft currently provide 41 continuous combat air patrols to U.S. CENTCOM. This number will grow to 50 by the end of FY11, and to 65 by the end of FY13. Over the last year we developed and fielded the Project Liberty program, providing additional airborne ISR capability. We are also increasing our deployed capacity in explosive ordnance disposal, intelligence, security, provincial reconstruction teams, tactical air control parties, and air liaison officers. As the surge

in Afghanistan ramps up, the Air Force will not only increase its presence in Afghanistan, but also increase our strategic airlift commitment, including mobilizing 2,400 guard and reserve Airmen.

Recruiting and Retention

We continue to meet both our recruiting and retention goals for nearly every Air Force career field. Recruiting among the active, guard, and reserve components has been solid. Active duty recruiting met FY09 goals and is on track for FY10 in all but the medical and health specialties. Officer recruiting for health professions dropped to 70 percent of the goal, and enlisted health specialties fell to 60 percent. The Air National Guard exceeded their enlisted recruiting goals in FY09, and they are on track to meet or exceed their desired number of accessions in FY10. However, the Air National Guard recently initiated a new campaign to improve officer accessions which are approximately 25 percent below their target.

Both officer and enlisted retention remain strong. Enlisted retention is well above 95 percent overall, and in excess of our goals for mid-career enlisted Airmen. Although retention of mid-career officers in the contracting, special tactics, and health-related specialties is challenging, efforts are underway to mitigate shortfalls through targeted accession and retention bonuses. The FY11 budget request allocates \$685M for targeted bonuses and retention incentives in part to fund Critical Skills Retention Bonuses for the specialties critically short of officers between 8-14 years of commissioned service, and Selective Retention Bonuses (SRB) for the enlisted force in 91 specialties. Enlisted SRBs remain our most effective and targeted retention tool, and this budget will improve this program's effectiveness by increasing the maximum enlisted retention bonus to \$90,000. In the short-term, however, dealing with fewer Airmen exiting the force may be more challenging than meeting our recruiting and retention goals.

Total Force Integration

The Air Force is maximizing our capacity by leveraging the strength of National Guard and Reserve Airmen through associations with the active duty force. We are currently executing 142 Total Force Integration (TFI) initiatives that pool active, guard, and reserve personnel and equipment. Many of

these associations result in new missions for total force personnel as we seek greater balance. In conjunction with the National Guard Bureau and AF MAJCOMS, we are currently conducting a top-to-bottom assessment of our TFI processes to maximize the effectiveness of current and future associations.

Year of the Air Force Family

Air Force families bear the greatest burden at home when Airmen deploy. The Secretary of the Air Force and Chief of Staff established July 2009 through June 2010 as the Year of the Air Force Family. More than half way into this effort, we have completed our assessment of existing programs and are now recalibrating family support efforts. As part of this focus, we are on course to eliminate the known child care deficit at our Child Development Centers by 2012, increase spouse employment referral assistance, and add 54 school liaison officers to assist school transitions for the almost 175,000 school-age Air Force dependents. We augmented our exceptional family member program which supports more than 15,000 Airmen with special-needs family members. We also increased the quality of programs providing deployment and re-integration support to our Airmen and their families, and foresee adding a number of initiatives designed to enhance the resiliency of Airman in the face of emotional and psychological hardships related to the stress of deployments.

Suicide Prevention

Despite our focus on resiliency, too many Airmen are lost to suicide each year. There have been 16 suicides among active, guard, and reserve forces in the first quarter of CY10, three more than this time last year. In response, our Air Force Suicide Prevention Program is focusing on clinical and non-clinical intervention as well as leadership involvement at all levels. As part of this emphasis we fielded new training programs, improved access to mental health providers in primary care settings, and increased training for military chaplains. In the coming months we will roll out an updated clinical guide to managing suicidal behavior, tailor training for our higher risk populations, and emphasize suicide prevention in forthcoming Airmen resiliency initiatives.

Wounded Warriors

The Air Force is committed to taking care of its wounded Airmen. We fully support the Office of the Secretary of Defense programs designed to keep highly skilled men and women on active duty. If this is not feasible, the Air Force will ensure Airmen receive enhanced assistance through the Air Force Wounded Warrior program. We have 17 Recovery Care Coordinators at 15 locations dedicated to aiding the recovery, rehabilitation, and re-integration of Airmen, and we are adding 10 more care coordinators this year. This program, currently serving 664 Wounded Warrior Airmen, will provide lifetime support.

Aircraft Readiness

Although our aircraft inventory has seen extensive use in contingency operations and its average age continues to increase, the dedicated work and professionalism of our Airmen ensures we are ready. After retiring many of our oldest and most maintenance-intensive aircraft such as all KC-135Es and a fourth of the C-130Es, less than one percent of Air Force aircraft are grounded and fewer than five percent are flying with operational restrictions. Although we continue to meet combatant commander requirements, operations tempo continues to take a toll and many of our aircraft are increasingly unavailable due to required maintenance.

Consequently, modernization and recapitalization remain priorities. By accelerating the planned retirement of 257 legacy fighter aircraft, we are committed to a smaller, but more capable fifth-generation fighter force. These retirements freed more than 4,000 personnel to operate remotely piloted aircraft and to process, exploit, and disseminate intelligence. This shift accepts a moderate amount of warfighting risk due to decreased capacity, but is necessary to move forward to more capable and survivable next generation platforms. Within our mobility fleet, the recent release of a KC-X request for proposal began the process of recapitalizing our aerial refueling aircraft. The planned acquisition of 179 KC-X aircraft will help provide refueling capability for decades to come. Similarly, the recent release of the Mobility

Capabilities Requirements Study-2016 indicates that there is excess strategic airlift capacity.

Consequently, the FY11 budget request proposes the early retirement of 17 of our oldest C-5As.

Combat Air Forces

The readiness of Combat Air Forces aircraft is adequate despite challenges from accumulating hours on our fleet faster than envisioned when these aircraft were fielded. The B-1, B-52, and F-15E did not meet aircraft availability standards due to maintenance and depot-related issues, and the F-22 fell short of the projected availability due to low observable maintenance requirements. Recent improvements in many F-22 system components and increased durability of low observable materials resulted in a 32-percent reduction in maintenance man-hours per flying hour.

Mobility Air Forces

The readiness of the Mobility Air Forces remains high while meeting robust and dynamic operational requirements. Our airlift fleet continues to provide strategic airlift as well as theater and direct support airlift missions moving personnel and a wide variety of equipment and supplies. We recently concluded a successful demonstration of direct support for the Army in Iraq, validating both the operating concept and the use of C-130s and C-27Js for that mission. The direct support mission is a matter of trust for the Air Force, and we are committed to providing this capability for the Joint Force. In addition, we will continue direct support through aerial delivery--a mission that airdrops supplies to isolated locations and is essential to the success of the Afghanistan strategy. Our airdrop requirements increased seven-fold in the last year.

Exercises

Green Flag and Red Flag are the primary pre-deployment close air support and large force composite training opportunities for most units deploying to contingency operations. These exercises continuously incorporate lessons learned from on-going operations. Both exercises include other services and more than 20 partner nations, contributing to Joint and Coalition interoperability.

Flying hour program

This is the first year the Air Force recalibrated our annual flying hour submission to reflect the amount of executable flying hours in light of deployment-related pilot availability. This change decreased the flying hour request by 162,000 hours, and is consistent with recent under-execution of peacetime flying hours and over-execution of overseas contingency operations hours. The revised request for 1.2M flying hours is fully funded within our budget request.

Nuclear Deterrence

Today we continue to strengthen the nuclear enterprise, which remains the number one priority of our Service. Air Force Global Strike Command, established in August of 2009, provides a renewed vigor and energy to the operation, training, and equipping of ICBM and nuclear-capable bomber forces. The stand up of a fourth operational squadron of B-52s in October 2009 enhances our readiness to perform nuclear deterrence missions, as well as support conventional mission requirements.

The sustainment of nuclear weapons was consolidated in the Air Force Nuclear Weapons Center (AFNWC), which manages nuclear weapons system life cycle sustainment. AFNWC is instituting a positive inventory control methodology for weapon system components and 100% accountability of all nuclear weapons related material. Finally, Air Force leadership instituted a more robust, standardized inspection capability that increased the rigor and intensity of the inspection and verification process to ensure our Air Force maintains the high standards required by the critical nuclear mission.

Of all the missions the Air Force ably accomplishes every day, none is more critical than providing strategic deterrence. Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM) crews sit nuclear alert everyday in underground facilities, just as they have for the last fifty years, and nuclear-capable fighter and bomber crews and their highly-capable weapon systems contribute to our deterrence posture.

Conclusion

Despite 19 years of sustained Air Force deployments, the personnel and aircraft of the U.S. Air Force are ready to face any challenge with precision and reliability. Although ongoing operations affect a portion of our readiness, we are balancing our force to ensure our personnel, weapon systems, equipment, and organizations are prepared for today's operations and tomorrow's uncertain challenges.