

DRAFT: 4/29/21

**Testimony of Congressman Jodey Arrington (TX-19)
House Committee on Armed Services
FY 2022 National Defense Authorization Act
May 5, 2021**

Chairman Adam Smith and Ranking Member Mike Rogers, thank you for this opportunity to testify before you today on the national defense priorities of Texas' 19th Congressional District. We are the proud home of Dyess Air Force Base in Abilene, TX. The base has approximately 5,700 dedicated military and civilian personnel and is under Global Strike Command. Dyess serves as the home for the Air Force's 7th Bomb Wing, which has B-1B bombers. Dyess is the B-1B Training Base and has a B-1B Operational Squadron, a B-1B Training Squadron, and a B-1B Classic Associate Reserve Unit. Dyess's missions also include two Active Duty C-130J squadrons with a total of 33 of these highly-capable aircraft.

Since 2001, the B-1B has played a major role overseas, including in Afghanistan and Iraq. The Air Force has stated that the B-1B is the "backbone" of America's long-range conventional bomber force and carries the largest payload of both guided and unguided weapons in the Air Force inventory. Despite the B-1B's important role and significant capabilities, the Air Force will be retiring 17 of the B-1Bs by the end of this year, which will reduce the fleet by 25 percent, from 62 aircraft to only 45.

Maintain the Remaining B-1Bs. With this substantial reduction in the B-1B fleet, it is essential that the Air Force properly maintain the remaining B-1Bs to ensure that our Nation can preserve its long-range strike capabilities. As you consider the FY 2022 NDAA, I request that the Committee require the Air Force submit a five-year plan for maintaining the remaining B-1Bs. Such a plan should include the Air Force's goal for the B-1B fleet's Mission Capable Rate and how it will achieve and, crucially, continue to sustain that Mission Capable Rate into the future.

Hypersonic Weapons Capability and Other Upgrades for the Remaining B-1Bs. Most importantly, the Air Force needs to provide the reduced B-1B fleet with Expanded Carriage, Hypersonic Weapons capability and other improvements. The recent MITRE U.S. Air Force Inventory Study recommended maintaining our fleet of 157 bombers, the B-1Bs, B-52s, and B-2s, until at least 50 new B-21s are in the inventory in the mid-2030s. Despite this recommendation, the Air Force is proceeding to reduce our overall bomber fleet. With the retirement of 17 valuable B-1Bs, we need to ensure that remaining B-1Bs have the increased capabilities to make up for this substantial decrease in numbers. I consider these steps critical for ensuring that our reduced bomber fleet can meet the needs of our national defense until the B-21 is operational in sufficient numbers. Accordingly, I request that the Committee require the Air Force to provide its five-year plan for upgrades and improvements for the remaining the B-1Bs.

With respect to Hypersonic Weapons capability, our adversaries are moving forward with this technology and we need to ensure that we maintain our lead. Since we do not yet have the President's FY 2022 Budget request, it is unclear how much funding the Administration will

propose for this important program and how much will be dedicated to the B-1B. In any case, I urge the Committee to ensure that there is sufficient FY 2022 Research, Development, Test and Evaluation funding for the B-1B to be able to have Hypersonic Weapons capability as soon as possible. I would also like to point out that the B-1B can carry the largest payload of any aircraft in our Nation's inventory and the B-1B was one of the initial platforms for the Long-Range Anti-Ship Missile. Given these capabilities, it makes sense for the B-1B to be one of the first aircraft to carry Hypersonic Weapons and I request that the Committee make this a priority in the FY 2022 National Defense Authorization Act and subsequent bills.

Continued Development of the B-21 Raider. As a final point, I note that the Air Force has been making steady progress with the development of its new long-range strike aircraft, the B-21 Raider. I appreciate that the Committee has been supportive of this important program and request continued support to keep the B-21 program on track.

I would like to thank you again, Chairman Smith and Ranking Member Rogers, for the opportunity to testify before you today and I'm happy to take any questions.