

**Remarks of Chairman Wittman
Hearing of the Committee on Armed Services
Readiness Subcommittee
“Readiness Posture of the United States Air Force”
April 24, 2013**

Welcome to today's hearing on the Readiness Posture of the United States Air Force. I'd like to extend a warm welcome to our witnesses today:

- Lieutenant General Michael Moeller, Deputy Chief of Staff for Strategic Plans and Programs;
- Lieutenant General Burton Field, Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations, Plans and Requirements;
- Lieutenant General Judith Fedder, Deputy Chief of Staff for Logistics, Installations and Mission Support;
- Lieutenant General Stanley Clarke, Director of the Air National Guard; and
- Major General Richard Haddad, Deputy to the Chief of the Air Force Reserve.

Thank you for joining us. One administrative note before we get started. I'd like to ask you to please keep your opening comments to 3 minutes so we can get to questions as quickly as possible and engage in a meaningful dialogue on the important readiness challenges we face.

Generals, in your statement, you noted that "allowing the Air Force to slip to a lower state of readiness requiring a long buildup to regain full combat effectiveness negates the essential strategic advantages of airpower and puts joint forces at risk." There is no better example of such unacceptable risk than on the Korean Peninsula where the Air Force and the Army work hand-in-hand to secure our interests.

I was alarmed when General Odierno testified before the Senate Armed Services Committee yesterday that we are heading toward a hollow force and that budget cuts could threaten Army readiness levels on the Korean peninsula.

In your statement, you indicated that 1/3 of fighter and bomber forces are currently standing down and that more and more pilots are not "ready" or trained and qualified to meet operational mission requirements such as those in Korea where the Air Force and Army work as critical partners to assure peace and stability.

The pressing concern in my mind is: what is the level of risk we're assuming by these actions? When will we have assumed too much risk and essentially emboldened an already bellicose and unpredictable leader. Have we reached this point already? I hope you'll address this issue in your opening comments and highlight other direct mission impacts that have resulted because of sequestration and the budget crisis.

With that, I'd like to turn things over to my distinguished ranking member, Mrs. Bordallo.

