

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

SUBJECT: TOTAL FORCE READINESS

STATEMENT OF:

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INTRODUCTION

Since our establishment more than 70 years ago, your United States Air Force has secured peace throughout the full spectrum of hostilities with a decisive warfighting advantage in, through, and from air, space, and cyberspace. This advantage remains foundational to joint and coalition success. Today's 670,000 active duty, guard, reserve, and civilian Airmen meet these challenges by deterring threats to the United States, assuring our allies, and defeating our adversaries 24/7/365. We provide unwavering homeland defense and operate a robust, reliable, flexible, and survivable nuclear enterprise, as the bedrock of our national security. This steadfast watch, however, comes at a price. Continuous, worldwide combat operations since 1991 have taken a toll on our Airmen, equipment, and infrastructure and the overall readiness of our Air Force.

Our number one priority in the Department of Defense is restoring readiness to increase the lethality of our total force--to win any fight, at any time. The National Defense strategy is clear: we are in a new era of competition. And just as there are multiple levels of competition, there are multiple levels of readiness. So the most important question when discussing readiness is, "Ready for what, ready with what, and ready when?"

We will remain relentless in our pursuit of readiness, lethality, and efficiency. We will act rapidly to leverage the progress we made in FY17, and we need your continued support to move progress "left of the fight" in six key areas:

- Budget stability to halt the primary cause of readiness erosion
- The continued delegation of program authorities to enable modernization speed
- Competitive personnel policies to attract and retain America's best talent
- Continued support for risk-taking innovation to outpace the competition
- National research efforts in science and technology to regain America's edge

- Classified dialogue to fully enable your stewardship and frustrate pacing threats

For our part, we are moving out at speed to arrest the readiness decline, turn the corner, and make the climb.

WE ARRESTED THE DECLINE

The Air Force leveraged the FY17 Department of Defense Appropriations Act and Request for Additional Appropriations (RAA) to arrest the readiness decline. Targeted efforts addressed shortfalls across people, equipment, and training.

- People – People are the foundation of readiness. We increased total force end-strength to prioritize manpower against growing mission demands. Most importantly, we funded 4,000 additional active-duty Airmen. It will take another 5-7 years to develop these Airmen into seasoned professionals, but this begins to close the gap. We also executed our Remotely Piloted Aircraft (RPA) Get-Well Plan to achieve sustainable, agile capability in this critical mission area.
- Equipment – With your help, we funded infrastructure improvements on our highest priorities and increased weapon system sustainment by 7 percent from the previous year. In concert, we purchased vital equipment for our Airmen who contribute to joint warfighting operations. In concert, we secured new, integrated digital targeting systems for our Battle Field Airmen, reducing the risk of fratricide, increasing lethality, and lowering the weight our Airmen carry in the fight against violent extremists by 30%. \$177M purchased new vehicles to support weapons platforms, installation maintenance, emergency services, weapons loading, cargo movement, aircraft fueling, and deployment of operational forces. Furthermore, we used \$60M to maximize munition production, replenishing a mix of BLU-117 and MK-84 bombs expended during current operations.
- Training – We made investments in pilot production and F-16 Formal Training Unit bed

downs to address pilot shortfalls. Weapon systems sustainment funding accelerated repairs and equipment maintenance while we funded our flying hour program at executable levels. These improved aircraft availability and increased flying hour execution rates. Further, the space enterprise began executing the Space Mission Force construct, expanding space operator training and lethality toward an increased focus on contested space domain operations.

Despite diverting critical resources to arrest the decline, your Air Force still maintained the fight against global violent extremism. Airmen conducted more than 172,000 sorties and 98,000 precision air strikes to support our coalition forces in 2017. These teams were ready and lethal against the current threat, and they would not have been successful without your support. However, our victories against ISIS came at a cost. Constant rotational deployments sacrifice readiness for future fights against pacing threats – the scenarios with the least margin for error and greatest risk to lives and our nation’s security.

WE CAN TURN THE CORNER

Stable, predictable funding is paramount to regaining readiness and lethality. With a stable budget, we can rapidly build on recent gains and begin turning the corner with more speed. Unfortunately, every day that we operate under a continuing resolution (CR) erodes the gains made with the FY17 Defense Appropriation and the FY17 RAA. This is a self-imposed penalty “left of the fight” that yields time to our competitors to close the technological gap.

These delays constrict America’s competitive space beyond the current year. For example, we may be forced to scale back the engineering and development phase of the B-21 bomber. In addition to out-year impacts to delivery, this would slow contractor staffing, engineering design, and supply chain development—effects where recovery is measured in years, not days or months. These impacts across multiple programs leave industry capacity unused, ultimately increasing

costs for American taxpayers and warfighting risk to our Airmen. Further, managing contingency scenarios due to budget instability strains our already stretched financial, contracting, and acquisition expertise. This takes our attention away from the competition, while they remain laser focused on us.

Should we receive a Defense Appropriation for FY18 in time to execute within this fiscal year, we will pursue the following readiness improvements to turn the corner:

-People – We continue to rebuild the force by adding 2,300 active duty Airmen in FY18 to reach a total of 325,100. We will add an additional 1,000 reservists, 900 guardsmen, and 3,000 civilians. We are focused on quality of life improvements for our Airmen and their families – the FY18 budget includes a 2.4% increase in military pay, a 0.7% increase in basic allowance for housing, and a 0.3% increase in subsistence. Growing our end strength to fill existing manpower billets is a critical step, but just as important is how those billets are filled. Our reserve components need full-time support, specifically in maintenance fields, to generate aircraft for training. Fixing personnel issues is to turn the corner and start the climb to warfighting readiness.

-Nuclear Deterrence – Our 2018 budget focus on proving the nation with safe, secure, and effective air and ground-based legs of the nuclear triad, along with 75 percent of the command, control, and communications capability, remains steadfast. We prioritize sustainment of the ICBM force, as well as integrated design and development of its replacement – the Ground Based Strategic Deterrent (GBSD). To the maximum extent possible under the CR, we've continued bomber modernization efforts to include additional funding for the B-52 Radar Modernization Program and B-2 Defensive System Modernization programs.

-Space Superiority – Underwriting every joint operation across the globe is our ability to operate within the space domain at the time and place of our choosing. But our freedom of action in, through and from space can no longer be taken for granted. The FY18 budget represents a 27% increase in research, development, testing and evaluation (RDT&E) for space systems and a 12% increase in space procurement. The budget includes a fixed price block buy of Space Based Infrared Systems (SBIRS) 5 and 6 satellites. We are pressing forward with the purchase of terminals, ground control systems, and related communications security for satellites, and funding for three launches as part of the Evolved Expendable Launch Vehicles (EELV) program.

-Air Superiority – We need more maintainers and pilots. Training to confront pacing threats has suffered in exchange for flying hours to defeat ISIS overseas. Through the FY18 budget we will continue to restore readiness by using \$6.2 billion to fund flying hours at maximum executable levels and \$12 billion to fund weapons system sustainment (parts, maintenance and logistics support) to near the maximum executable level.

-Cyber – We plan to fund 39 fully operational offensive and defensive cyber teams and meet USCYBERCOM requirements in Fiscal Year 2018. This includes training and equipping 1,700 additional cyber operators. In parallel, we will increase reliance on contractors for basic information technology and cloud services so that military members can focus on advanced threats and warfighter missions as part of the joint force.

-Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) – Combatant Commander's demand for continuous ISR presence is insatiable and ever growing, and our ISR enterprise is strained. Over the past 15 years we grew the RPA enterprise 1,200%, and today we support 60 continual combat lines of persistent attack with RPAs. Within current constraints, we are committed to improving quality of life and work for our Airmen. We continue to modernize

the medium-altitude ISR Remotely Piloted Aircraft (RPA) fleet and rebalance the ISR portfolio to meet the challenges we will face in future contested environments. Specifically, we remain committed to executing our RPA Get Well Plan with increased training, leadership opportunities, and basing options. We fund a new RPA Wing and two operational squadrons across the five year plan.

-Infrastructure – We project airpower from a network of globally positioned bases, and we must focus on maintaining these bases as part of our strategic force posture. We have \$2 billion set aside this year for military construction. The bed down of new missions, combatant commander needs, and strengthening the nuclear security enterprise are prioritized with the funding available. In addition, we are funding the construction at the Utah Test and Training Range and the Nevada Test and Training Range so units can use the full range of capabilities available with the F-35A. We also continue to modernize our Operational Training Infrastructure (OTI) with a blend of live, virtual, and “synthetic” platforms. This synthetic capability provides opportunities to test and train against the world’s most advanced threats at a reduced cost. Additionally, \$38M was dedicated towards a state-of-the-art Virtual Test and Training Center.

-Munitions – Our use of munitions continues to outpace production. Working with industry, we’ve maximized factory production of the most critical munitions, including the Advanced Precision Kill Weapon System, Joint Direct Attack Munition, the Hellfire missile, and the Small Diameter Bomb. This has been no small feat, but this military and civilian partnership to regain munitions readiness is an example of a whole-of-America effort to regain our competitive edge.

ACCELERATE THE CLIMB

Today’s modernization is tomorrow’s readiness. The recently released FY19 President’s

Budget Request fully supports the National Defense Strategy and focuses on our ability to compete, deter, and win as a nation. Specifically, we will build on the progress made to arrest our readiness decline in 2017 while turning the corner to make the climb in FY19 and beyond. That climb begins with people.

With your support, our FY 2018 and FY 2019 Budget requests will create the capacity and capability in your Air Force that our nation requires. Our requests will grow our end-strength and give our Airmen the time and resources they need to train and equip for the future high-end fight. We aim to focus on addressing gaps in critical career fields like aviation, maintenance, ISR, cyber, and RPA Airmen while expanding training capacity. But more important than recruiting, we need to retain our talented Airmen that take years and millions of dollars to develop.

We plan to support our Air Force families with a military pay raise, increased housing and subsistence allowances, and bolstered family support programs. The current process to move airmen into the reserve component is so time intensive that we lose qualified, experienced professionals to commercial companies that can hire with velocity. We must manage our talent effectively in order to compete in today's economic environment.

Increasing aviator production and seasoning through expanded flying hour and weapons system sustainment programs are critical measures towards our goals. By extension, operational training infrastructure is needed to provide relevant and realistic training for multi-domain, full-spectrum readiness. Keeping an adequate store of munitions requires Federal support to optimize industry capacity to support current operations and prepare for future requirements.

Further, we will remain committed to steward a safe, secure, and effective nuclear deterrent. The continued development of the Ground-Based Strategic Deterrent and Long Range Stand-Off Missile, while modernizing legacy bomber fleets, are vital steps to that end. In

support, we aim to invest in nuclear command, control, and communication system modernization to ensure resilient and survivable connectivity with the President and national command leadership.

Additionally, our FY19 budget continues funding priority modernization initiatives with the purchase of jam-resistant satellites, F-35As, KC-46As, and the development of the B-21. We begin a number of other transformative initiatives that reflect our commitment to provide dominant air and space power and command and control. Examples include our light attack aircraft experiment and emphasis on multi-domain command and control.

These are examples of the many iterative efforts to make the climb and provide a force that is ready, lethal, and efficient in this era of competition. Each year, truly each month of progress builds on the previous. Conversely, delays compound in their lasting impacts.

CONCLUSION

In closing, we can build the force we need for tomorrow's fight ... but we need your help to sustain the long-term development of our Airmen, continue to modernize our weapon systems for the technically-advanced conflicts of the future, and sustain the decades of investments that the American people have made to build the world's greatest air power. Readiness is inherently in decline or on the rise, often proportional to the level of competition. Our force structure, based on a Cold War foe, was able to meet the competition of non-peer conflict for nearly three decades. However, pacing threats have now expanded the competitive space to new levels. They have closed gaps in their capability and capacity, and they've made clear their intent to seize advantages, at speed.

We are eager to work together to develop solutions in areas such as budget stability, program speed, and talent management. We owe this to our nation, our joint teammates, and our allies. The nation requires full-spectrum ready air, space, and cyber power, now more than ever.

America expects it; combatant commanders require it; and with your support, Airmen will deliver it. To that end, we are deeply appreciative of recent efforts to begin the return of fiscal order and look forward to classified dialogue where we can convey plans to improve readiness to offset the competition's increasing capabilities. On behalf of 670,000 active, guard, reserve, and civilian Airmen and their selfless families, thank you for allowing us to testify before you today. We look forward to your continued leadership and partnership in defense of this great nation