

NOT FOR PUBLICATION UNTIL RELEASED
BY THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON READINESS
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
UNITED STATES AIR FORCE

PRESENTATION TO
THE ARMED SERVICES SUBCOMMITTEE ON READINESS
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SUBJECT: The Fiscal Year 2023 U.S. Air Force Budget Request for Readiness

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INTRODUCTION

Chairman Garamendi, Ranking Member Waltz, and distinguished members of this committee, on behalf of the Secretary of the Air Force, the Honorable Frank R. Kendall III, and the Chief of Staff of the Air Force, General Charles Q. Brown, Jr., thank you for another opportunity to testify on Air Force readiness.

For over seven decades, our Air Force has been an indispensable contributor to our national security. We exist to defend the homeland, rapidly deploy combat power globally, and fight as part of a joint, ally, and partner team. With the inherent attributes of speed, range, agility, and lethality, along with responsibility for two-thirds of the nuclear triad, we provide unique options for our nation's leaders. We remain the world's premier responder in times of conflict, crisis, and contingency. Our mission—to “Fly, Fight, & Win...Airpower Anytime, Anywhere” –is underwritten by our readiness, today and in the future.

With the strong support of this Congress, we have made tangible strides on initiatives to restore and strengthen readiness. However, the progress has also shown these strides are insufficient to meet the ever-changing and complex security environment we face. A sound and purposeful readiness strategy with steady and sufficient resources will prevent erosion of our enduring advantage and continue to move us forward with regard to current and future challenges.

In FY22, we are deliberately accelerating readiness efforts to field the forces we need to fight and win against our pacing challenge. The FY23 President's Budget builds on last year's collaborative efforts to restore U.S. military readiness and construct the combat forces necessary to deter and win any war while protecting our vital interests. We will continue advancing force modernization to meet these threats and retiring less relevant systems to reallocate additional resources.

As our Air Force balances and ensures its readiness for today and tomorrow, four factors stand out among many that influence our ability to do so. The first factor is our aging fleet of aircraft. Our average aircraft are 30 years old, with 44% of those well past their expected service life. The second factor is the high utilization rate of our aging fleet in support of high-demand joint force missions. Third is the pace at which China is advancing its capabilities. In many areas significant to national security, China is progressing faster than we are, thereby eliminating the technology and capability gap we have historically enjoyed. Their rapid advancement of

capabilities is making the relevance of our aging fleet diminish even faster. Fourth, due to inflation, the complexity and sophistication of our systems, and the unpredictability of costs, we face a perpetually daunting challenge to our readiness. The cumulative effects of these four factors provide the undercurrent for enhancing our state of readiness, operational agility, and long-term strategic readiness investments.

CURRENT READINESS

Aircrew Manning

The national pilot shortage we discussed last year continues to challenge our Air Force. We briefed that at the end of FY20, the Air Force was 1,925 manned pilots short of the 21,000 required to meet global requirements—a decrease from FY19. FY21 continued the positive trend of reducing pilot vacancies to 1,650. While we believe some of the improved retention in FY20 and FY21 was due to a reduction in airline hiring during the pandemic, initial estimates suggest airlines are seeking 9,000 new pilots in 2022. This is predicted to negatively impact our pilot and aircrew retention rates for FY23. To improve retention, we have also initiated several monetary and non-monetary incentive programs to address quality of life and quality of service concerns for our aircrew.

Monetarily, we continue with the Aviator Bonus, Aviator Incentive Pay, Special Duty Pay, and Critical Skills Pay. These include long and short-term contracts, with the former offering more money upfront for a longer commitment. We continue to focus on non-monetary programs as well because we understand we may recruit the individual, but we retain the families. We have continued with spouse licensure initiatives, which support and reimburse spouses obtaining new licenses or certifications to work in their current professions while moving to a new state. We secured contractor administrative support at the squadron level to reduce non-flying duties for Airmen (965 contractors support 229 operational squadrons). Additionally, we have reduced the number of 365-day deployments by 29% (from 330 to 231), increased assignment transparency, and removed Below-the-Zone promotions to provide additional time for Airmen to develop professionally, while increasing the Service's ability to recognize emerging talent and potential. We appreciate this committee's sustained support for these vital retention programs.

Along with aircrew retention, we are investing in pilot production. In FY21, Undergraduate Pilot Training (UPT) programs produced 1,381 pilots—118 more than the year prior, but still 119 pilots short of the 1,500 goal. Low instructor pilot manning in key locations exacerbates the inability to meet pilot production quotas. To fulfill our goal of recruiting and training 1,500 pilots, we have implemented numerous programs to accomplish this increase through non-traditional means. These initiatives include Pilot Training Next, which integrates various technologies to produce pilots in an accelerated manner through biometrics, advanced analytics, human performance, and advanced learning strategies. UPT 2.5 modernizes pilot training to improve the quality and readiness of graduates for the challenges of 5th-generation aviation. UPT 2.5 is operational at Vance, Columbus, and Laughlin Air Force Bases with full capabilities projected by November 2022.

Rotary-Only Undergraduate Helicopter Training departs from the traditional paradigm of requiring initial fixed-wing training before proceeding to rotary wing training, and the initial results show meaningful savings with no impact on quality. Accelerated Paths to Wings allows student pilots to remain in a single airframe, reducing pilot training timelines by five months. As of April of this year, Accelerated Path to Wings has graduated 30 pilots with 26 in training. Additional programs include the Civil Paths to Wings program, which provides qualified pilot candidates credit for civilian flight training and experience. Civilian Simulator Instructor hiring aims to increase training environment manning, freeing up military instructor pilots for operational units. Finally, the Remote Simulator Instructor program will maximize the ability to facilitate remote learning from preferred locations to attract and retain top talent. Collectively, these programs continue to mature and yield results. We will continue to monitor, assess, and improve to ensure we are getting the maximum production in quantity and quality that our current resources enable.

Flying Hour Program (FHP)

The FHP continues to be a valuable metric of aircrew readiness. In FY21, the Air Force executed 1.16 million (93%) of planned flight hours. While we met a high percentage, several factors continue to challenge our ability to fly programmed hours. For example, 9% of our maintenance positions are currently unfunded, approximately 50% of our aircraft maintenance personnel have less than six years of experience, and there is a 20% fighter pilot shortage.

Additionally, unforeseen events such as natural disasters, fleet groundings, or the pandemic, also influence our ability to satisfy our FHP requirements. Each year, we execute a study that refines our database to help forecast reasonable FHP levels. The FY23 budget corrects the forecasted FHP levels based on the FY22 and FY21 studies. Despite the challenges with executing FHP, we continue to search for innovative ways to generate aircraft and quality aircrew training. These include Weapon System Sustainment programs and virtual training environments to complement real-world training and to replicate complex scenarios.

Weapon System Sustainment (WSS)

The Air Force maintains substantial investments in capabilities within the WSS portfolio. WSS spans 109 weapon systems from the oldest B-52 to emerging cyber systems. The WSS portfolio has grown as a result of sustaining old aircraft beyond design life, fielding new weapon systems with increased technical complexity, increasing operational requirements in Contract Logistics Support platforms, and navigating above inflation increases in labor and material costs. We have launched an exhaustive study of the Air Force WSS to find the best measures to control cost growth and maximize return on investment in terms of the sustainment dollars we spend.

In FY23, the United States Air Force WSS funding request grew to \$16.6 billion, representing an increase of \$1 billion over FY22. Despite that growth, the FY23 budget funds 85% of all WSS requirements, maintaining what was enacted in FY22, but at a lower level than previous years: FY21 (86%), FY20 (87%), FY19 (89%), FY18 (92%), or FY17 (93%). This gradual but continuous decrease in the percentage of sustainment funding makes it necessary for the Air Force to prioritize weapon systems that are most relevant for deterring and defeating a peer adversary in a future conflict. Moreover, underfunding WSS means less capacity for an aging fleet, which drives us to limit our FHP. The Air Force's overall objective is to ensure a balance between modernization, recapitalization, and readiness in support of the National Defense Strategy.

ENHANCED OPERATIONAL READINESS AND AGILITY

Air Force's Force Generation (AFFORGEN) Model

Over the past two years, the Air Force has introduced a new AFFORGEN model in coordination with the Office of the Secretary of Defense and the Joint Staff. The new model

realigns forces within four categories: available to commit, reset, prepare, and ready. With China identified as our pacing challenge, we anticipate our forces will operate in complex, disconnected, and decentralized environments. These situations will require robust preparation and training. AFFORGEN allows the Air Force to generate its forces, build readiness, and modernize to meet peer adversaries in future fights. The model expands the traditional 1:2 deploy-to-dwell rotational model to a 1:3 model, thereby creating sustainable capacity that satisfies the requirements of the National Defense Strategy. FY22 Global Force Management decisions laid the groundwork for implementing AFFORGEN in FY23. AFFORGEN provides discipline to the process, ensuring we have sufficient time to train against the highest end threat, avoid over-utilization of the force (crews and platforms), and provide clarity to the Joint Force as to what the Air Force can provide to the fight.

Dynamic Force Employment (DFE)

DFE effectively utilizes airpower for strategic effect allowing us to assure our allies and partners while affording our forces time to recover and build combat readiness. Last year, we briefed that FY20 represented the first use of DFE in a proactive readiness-building role supporting USNORTHCOM. In FY21, the Air Force accomplished six rapid execution events in USINDOPACOM, USCENTCOM, USEUCOM, and USSOUTHCOM. We expect FY23 to mirror FY22 in the number of execution events, but differ in timing and location. DFE is integrated into the AFFORGEN model to provide sustainable readiness today and tomorrow, building an appropriate force offering to the nation. These DFEs allow the Air Force to maximize the Service's agility and support the broader objective of the Department of Defense. While strategically impactful, DFE capacity is finite, and the Air Force will need to balance the use of DFE with the need for long-term readiness planning.

Agile Combat Employment (ACE)

ACE is the Air Force's innovative concept for dispersing and fighting in contested environments. Through ACE, the Air Force is transitioning from an extensive, centralized, unhardened infrastructure to smaller, dispersed, resilient, and adaptive basing that includes active and passive defenses. The concept complicates the adversary's wartime calculus and denies them the lucrative targeting opportunities that known, fixed, and unprotected locations provide.

As discussed last year, sustainable ACE combat operations have been validated through multiple exercises across the Pacific and European theaters. The Air Force continues to fine-tune doctrine, test tactical employment concepts, define strategic requirements, as well as establish the organization and training for the Multi-Capable Airmen initiative—the foundation of the teaming approach necessary for small footprint operations. In FY23, we are requesting \$482 million towards the implementation of ACE. Specifically, the budget designates \$95 million for investments like advanced maintenance training, military deception, and counterintelligence capabilities.

STRATEGIC READINESS INVESTMENTS

Nuclear Modernization

Readiness both today and tomorrow are inextricably linked. Ensuring viable options in a changing strategic environment is a commitment our Service holds sacred. We understand in order to follow through on our promise to our nation we must provide a robust readiness portfolio fully integrated with our nuclear operations.

The FY23 President's Budget funds nuclear modernization at \$7.9 billion, which enables a long-term course correction and a modernization of the nuclear enterprise that continues to deter well past its design life. We will use this funding to continue enhancing the Nuclear Command, Control, and Communications (NC3) systems and to transition from the aged Minuteman III to the LGM-35A Sentinel weapons system, previously referred to as Ground Based Strategic Deterrent (GBSD). We will progress in developing the nuclear-capable B-21 bomber; a foundational, strategic-level capability that is part of our long-range strike family-of-systems. These systems, along with others, provide the flexible and responsive nuclear capabilities needed to deter modern threats.

Operational Test and Training Infrastructure (OTTI)

The Air Force uses a number of physical training ranges to sharpen the combat effectiveness of aircrews; however, the current operational training infrastructure does not deliver the high-end training capability the Air Force and the joint force need. The Air Force is improving select ranges based on the Threat Matrix Framework to address this shortfall. The FY23 President's Budget will allow us to continue the FY22 plan to modernize the Nevada Test

and Training Range as well as the Joint Pacific Alaska Range Complex and emulate a peer or near-peer adversary environment by FY30. In addition, we plan to upgrade six primary test ranges and maximize operational airspace for 5th-generation tests and training, while maintaining a flexibility to accommodate military, public, and environmental concerns. The planned improvements include high-fidelity threat emitters, jammers, and improved targets, as part of an integrated system that allows ranges to function as realistic and reactive adversaries.

To meet the National Defense Strategy priorities, the Air Force requires additional investment in synthetic virtual, or synthetic, training capabilities. For example, the Air Force Common Synthetic Training Environment (CSTE) concept will enable aircrew and other operators to train and maintain readiness against our near-peer adversaries using a robust, dependable, and cost-effective synthetic training capability. CSTE also helps us overcome real planes live-fly training limitations such as range size constraints restricting our ability to replicate threats and allowing adversaries to observe our training. While we will always leverage the opportunities for synthetic training, we believe that some airmanship can only be gained in the air, and we will continue to refine the balance.

Installation and Infrastructure Resilience

Protecting our Airmen, civilians, contractors, families, and resources is paramount. We are addressing the dynamic threat environment through various initiatives starting with integrated base defense (IBD). IBD encompasses a three-layer defense network comprised of: air base air defense, cyber defense, and ground defense that form a multi-domain architecture so Airmen can detect, evaluate, and act on threats. The FY23 budget request includes over \$1.3 billion in funding to enhance base resiliency. This includes funds to enhance rapid runway repair capacity, capability development to build a solid foundation for modern battle management command and control for air base defense, further development of promising technological solutions for missile defense, and further development and fielding of scalable counter-small unmanned aerial system (drone) capability for our commanders in the field. The request also includes various MILCON projects that are critical to improving Air Force infrastructure resiliency within the Indo-Pacific and European theaters. These projects will increase our runway and ramp space at key airfields and create storage for war reserve material, which contribute to making our forward bases harder targets for our potential adversaries.

Second, over the past several years, we have seen first-hand the risks and impacts that extreme and unpredictable weather conditions can pose to our installations, operations, readiness, and Airmen. As a result, the Department of the Air Force is developing a comprehensive Climate Action Plan that explains our climate priorities and actionable goals. To help address these challenges, the Air Force is leveraging data and analytics to make climate-informed decisions. We will continue to incorporate climate considerations into our guidance, plans, policies, and infrastructure development to ensure we promote resiliency while reducing our energy footprint.

Lastly, our Service is committed to modernizing its organic industrial base (OIB), focusing on depot resources and technology. Between FY18 and FY21, through working capital funds, MILCON, and procurement appropriations, the Air Force invested nearly \$1.5 billion in depot infrastructure and equipment. The FY22 budget supports an estimated \$605 million, and in FY23, the President's Budget projects \$642.7 million. While adhering to statutory mandates, we are leveraging new technologies such as advanced manufacturing, information technology infrastructure, and process improvement initiatives to create secure and intelligent depots. Combined with numerous other initiatives, our Air Force takes a multi-faceted approach to installation and infrastructure resilience to eliminate potential vulnerabilities.

CONCLUSION

As our Air Force celebrates its 75th anniversary, our Airmen are confronted with unprecedented strategic uncertainty and a pace of change that demands responsiveness—our Airmen are answering that call. Their devotion to duty, resilience in the face of adversity, collective enthusiasm, and innovative spirit deserve our admiration and our unwavering support. Our Service members will provide the intellect and energy we require to overcome any challenge—at home or abroad. Our continued responsibility is to make sure those members are ready to meet that future.

Modernization is readiness—*tomorrow's* readiness. We are clear-eyed about the tension between the resources needed to maintain our readiness today against existing threats and the resources required to meet the advancing threats of tomorrow. We must leave an Air Force our successors can prevail with well into the future. This tension has required our Service to make tough choices and we will continue doing so; however, these tough choices are not limited to just

the Air Force. We will work collectively across the Department of Defense and look forward to the continued partnership with this committee and this Congress to accurately assess the impact of our decisions and to deliberately assume and mitigate risks accordingly.

On behalf of the 689,000 Total Force Airmen, civilians, and families, thank you for helping us advance the momentum and resources to get our forces optimized and ready.