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FOR ENERGY, INSTALLATIONS, AND ENVIRONMENT

BEFORE THE
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
SUBCOMMITTEE ON READINESS
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SUBJECT: ENERGY, INSTALLATIONS, AND ENVIRONMENT UPDATE

MARCH 4, 2026

Introduction: The Foundation of American Air and Space Power

Chairman Bergman, Ranking Member Garamendi, and distinguished members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I appreciate your continued leadership and oversight of the readiness of our Joint Force. It is an honor to represent the Airmen, Guardians, and civilians of the Department of the Air Force (DAF) who sustain, power, and enable the world's greatest Air and Space Forces.

The President and the National Defense Strategy make clear that the United States (U.S.) faces a defining era of strategic competition. The People's Republic of China is rapidly modernizing its military and seeking to undermine U.S. advantages across every domain. Russia remains a persistent and disruptive threat, while North Korea and Iran continue to pursue destabilizing capabilities. A feature of these competitors is their recognition that American military power depends not only on advanced platforms and personnel, but on the logistics, infrastructure, energy, and communities that sustain them.

Our adversaries know that going toe-to-toe with the greatest Air Force and Space Force the world has ever seen will result in their swift destruction. But a fighter aircraft cannot generate sorties, a satellite cannot be launched and controlled, and myriad other air, space, and cyber operations cannot be executed without secure, resilient, and ready installations. Our adversaries understand this reality, and they are actively developing long-range precision fires, cyber capabilities, and other asymmetric means to hold our bases, energy systems, and critical infrastructure at risk.

The Department of the Air Force's global network of installations is therefore not simply a collection of facilities. These installations are power-projection platforms and strategic assets from which we train, generate combat power, command and control forces, execute intelligence and space operations and launch, and sustain global readiness. They are

foundational to deterrence, and they are indispensable to winning in any conflict anywhere in the world at any time.

My priorities within the energy, installations, and environment portfolio are directly aligned with the National Defense Strategy's mandate to build a more lethal, resilient, and ready Joint Force. Every dollar requested and every reform pursued is focused on one outcome: delivering combat capability to the warfighter at speed and scale. My priorities are threefold.

Department of the Air Force Readiness

First, we must ensure the readiness of the force. Readiness is the cornerstone of credible deterrence and effective warfighting. For the DAF, this begins with our installations, which serve as platforms for projecting air and space power. We must modernize the physical infrastructure and energy systems that enable the mission, deliver increased capability through strategic operational energy use, and ensure the well-being of the Airmen and Guardians who execute the mission and the families that support them.

DAF readiness requires fully capable airfields, resilient space and cyber infrastructure, modern ranges and airspace, and high-end, immersive training environments, both live and synthetic, that reflect the complexity of modern warfare. All these capabilities require vast amounts of reliable, adaptable, and secure energy to operate – and demand is only growing with the expansion of artificial intelligence (AI) and data centers. The DAF is aggressively pursuing energy readiness, security, and independence. Our vision of “Mission Assurance through Energy and Water Assurance” drives us to ensure every one of our installations has safe, reliable, resilient, and affordable energy and water. We are conducting "black start" exercises at our bases to test our ability to operate independent of the commercial grid, identifying vulnerabilities before they can be exploited.

To this end, we have relied primarily on Military Construction (MILCON) and Facilities, Sustainment, Restoration, and Modernization (FSRM) appropriations as the tools for providing ready and resilient installations. However, decades of assuming risk in our infrastructure budgets has led to enterprise degradation and created a substantial maintenance and repair backlog now valued at \$55 billion. We are tackling this through data-driven approaches to focus enterprise funding on our most critical infrastructure needs. Lastly, we are appreciative of new authorities provided by Congress in fiscal year (FY) 2026, and we welcome Congressional legislative action that provides greater flexibility in our budgeting and execution in the future.

Readiness also depends on the well-being of our Airmen, Guardians, and their families. Mission success is inseparable from quality of life. Our service members of all ranks must live in safe, suitable homes free from health and safety concerns. Our unaccompanied housing strategy is focused on restoring and modernizing facilities using FRSM, MILCON, enhanced use leases (EULs), and Intergovernmental Support Agreements (IGSAs). The DAF is fully aligned with the recommendations from the Secretary of War's Barracks Task Force, which is squarely focused on improving the quality of life for our unaccompanied personnel. For our families, we are focused on eliminating enough housing and correcting health and safety deficiencies in our 15,200 DAF-owned units and providing enhanced oversight for over 52,000 privatized homes. Where our Military Housing Privatization Initiative (MHPI) projects have fallen short of financial expectations due to unforeseen market changes or operating costs, we have requested and received funding over the last several budgetary cycles to restructure them. We will continue to need help with these restructures. I am also committed to holding our project owners accountable to uphold their obligations to our members and their families.

As the largest consumer of fuel in the Department of War, our readiness hinges on the ability to increase the 'lethality-per-gallon' of each drop of fuel consumed. We are implementing a full range of strategies that enhance operational agility, mitigate logistics risks in the fuel supply chain, and allow our warfighters to fly greater distances while increasing capability for aviation assets. This strategy includes but is not limited to leveraging improved mission planning tools and software, advancing our aircraft performance with cutting-edge aerodynamic technology, and adopting engine optimization technology currently deployed by commercial airlines.

Finally, a commitment to readiness means a commitment to the health and safety of our communities and their surrounding environments, both on and off base. We are aggressively addressing the challenge of Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS) by using a risk-based approach and prioritizing responses to the most significant and immediate risks, or "worst first", to maximize the protection of human health and the environment. Our proactive PFAS strategy includes transitioning to fluorine-free alternatives and fulfilling our cleanup responsibilities through the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA). This is part of our comprehensive cleanup program, which continues to address a variety of legacy contaminants to protect our communities. We continue to investigate, mitigate, and remediate the on- and off-installation impacts of PFAS releases from Department of the Air Force activities. In addition, we are actively working to meet the new Environmental Protection Agency maximum contaminant levels for drinking water by investing in on-base water infrastructure.

Strategic Infrastructure and Force Posture

Second, we must align infrastructure with strategy. That means deliberately posturing the right capabilities in the right locations, collocating where mission integration demands it, and dispersing where survivability, operational flexibility, and geographic reach require it. The DAF is deeply committed to executing our strategic basing process in a manner that is transparent, repeatable, and predictable, as directed by statute. This disciplined, data-driven methodology ensures all basing and mission-move decisions are rooted in mission requirements, operational effectiveness, and the best interests of national defense. By adhering to this established framework, we remove subjectivity and ensure our decisions are fair, equitable, and defensible, but retain the focus on best military judgment to prioritize national security interests in the DAF's basing posture.

At the same time, we must be willing to demolish excess or obsolete infrastructure that no longer supports the needs of a modern Air Force and Space Force. Strategic infrastructure choices demand discipline. The DAF currently carries significant excess infrastructure, which contributes to our growing maintenance backlog and diverts precious resources. Since 1990, the Department has reduced its Active-Duty end strength by nearly 40% but has only reduced its CONUS footprint by 15%. To address this, we are aggressively increasing our demolition investments to remove obsolete facilities. The DAF is also exploring innovative and collaborative ventures with our communities through strategic real estate opportunities for the mutual benefit of both the community and the DAF.

We will also deepen partnerships with state and local communities to pursue compatible, commercial development through long-term ground leases and other real estate authorities. These partnerships strengthen installation resilience, expand local tax bases, and support mission assurance without increasing the federal footprint. We are also leveraging the use of IGSA's to achieve shared solutions to shared challenges. For example:

- At the United States Air Force Academy, we partnered with the City of Colorado Springs through an IGSA to address stormwater runoff and creek damage, allowing for a flexible, decade-long plan to prioritize repairs.
- At Tinker Air Force Base, an IGSA with the Association of Central Oklahoma Governments allows the base to join the regional 9-1-1 system, enhancing emergency response and interoperability while avoiding the high cost of a system upgrade.
- At Andersen Air Force Base, we entered our first-ever IGSA in a U.S. territory with the Guam Department of Agriculture for stray animal management, a shared service

partnership that saves manpower and serves as a model for future agreements in the Pacific.

Furthermore, we are leveraging the Defense Community Infrastructure Program (DCIP), a competitive grant program that addresses infrastructure deficiencies outside our fence lines in support of military readiness. In FY25, strong community relationships were instrumental in securing approximately \$30 million in DCIP grants for DAF-affiliated communities, funding critical projects such as electrical grid upgrades at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson and Eielson Air Force Base in Alaska. These partnerships are mission force multipliers, stretching taxpayer dollars and strengthening the bond between our installations and the communities we call home. The DAF appreciates Congress's strong support for the DCIP program.

Policy Reform and Delivery at Speed

Third, we must fundamentally transform how we deliver infrastructure to match the speed and adaptability required in today's strategic environment. Traditional military construction processes are too slow, too rigid, and too costly to support the dynamic demands of modern conflict and rapid force posture adjustments. To close this gap, we will aggressively leverage the use of the recently expanded Congressional authorities for non-traditional delivery models that enable us to align with industry-proven best practices and compress timelines, reduce cost growth, and accelerate capability to the field.

A key element of this reform is the institutionalization of standardized, modular, and rapidly deployable facility solutions. Tension fabric shelters provide a proven, scalable, and mission responsive option for operational, training, and industrial requirements. Their speed of assembly, ability to be relocated, and lower lifecycle cost allow us to posture forces, protect assets, and expand capacity far faster than traditional construction. When paired with standard designs and modular systems, they form a repeatable infrastructure toolkit that can be deployed globally with predictable performance and cost.

We will employ these approaches as baseline solutions wherever practical. Standardization enables speed; modularity enables flexibility; and tension fabric shelters enable rapid, resilient capacity at a fraction of the time and cost of conventional builds. Together, these reforms allow us to deliver the infrastructure our warfighters need at the pace of the mission demands.

In accordance with the President's nuclear energy agenda, we are leading the Department of War in the development and deployment of advanced nuclear energy. At Eielson Air Force Base, we are pioneering the first commercial application of a microreactor on

Department of War property. This project, along with our Advanced Nuclear Power for Installations (ANPI) initiative in partnership with the Defense Innovation Unit, and capturing lessons from the Department's investment in microreactors, will accelerate the deployment of small modular and microreactors to provide even our most strategic and austere installations with safe, reliable, and grid-independent power.

Conclusion

The priorities of the Energy, Installations, and Environment portfolio fully support the National Defense Strategy. They are the foundations that connect our strategy to our forces. Resilient infrastructure, assured energy, environmental responsibility, and a commitment to our people are not separate lines of effort; they are a single, integrated system that generates American air and space power.

We invest in our ability to deter and win. By securing our energy, we ensure mission continuity under fire. By protecting our environment, we help maintain the trust and health of society and the long-term viability of our training and operations. And by caring for our service members and their families, we strengthen the very heart of our force.

This is a pivotal moment for our national defense. The challenges are great, but the resolve of your Air Force and Space Force is greater. The Department is laser-focused on restoring peace through strength. I look forward to working with this Subcommittee to deliver the infrastructure, energy, and environmental capabilities our Airmen and Guardians need to deter aggression today and prevail in conflict tomorrow.