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HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON SEAPOWER AND PROJECTION FORCES
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE

PRESENTATION TO
HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITEE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON SEAPOWER AND PROJECTION FORCES
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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SUBJECT: Contributing Factors to C-130 Mishaps and Other Intra-Theater Airlift Challenges

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Introduction

Chairman Wittman, Ranking Member Courtney, distinguished Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to provide you with an update on legacy C-130 sustainment and readiness. On behalf of our Secretary, the Honorable Heather Wilson, and our Chief of Staff, General David Goldfein, thank you for your continued support and demonstrated commitment to our Airmen, Air Force Civilians, Families, and Veterans.

Since its creation as part of Air Force Materiel Command's reorganization in 2012, the Air Force Sustainment Center (AFSC) executes lethal air power through logistics processes, part of which sustains legacy aircraft like the C-130; manages the global supply chain; and sets the theater as the engine of readiness. We directly support every combatant commander, service, and interagency partner, as well as 63 allied countries with depot-level maintenance, supply chain management, and power projection for legacy and 5th generation weapons systems. By achieving the right results the right way through our disciplined "Art of the Possible" leadership and constraints-based management methodology, we continue to yield significant results.

Our nearly 40,000 Total Force Airmen who are laser focused on providing cost-effective sustainment and logistics capabilities within available resources. We are finding ways to sustain legacy weapons systems using 21st century processes. Our Air Logistics Complexes provide depot-level maintenance, engineering support, and software development to multiple weapon systems, including 19 variants of the C-130 aircraft. Our depot-level maintenance is executing our Service's program office modernization schedule and depot-level maintenance actions

designed to ensure the safe operation of the C-130 fleet; namely, aircraft maintenance, commodity and software production, fabrication and manufacturing facilities and labs to support U.S. Air Force (USAF) and Department of Defense aircraft and equipment, including C-130 aircraft and components for the U.S. Navy (USN) and U.S. Marine Corps (USMC). We also provide maintenance on C-130s outside the DoD; namely, for the Coast Guard (Department of Homeland Security) and the Forest Service (Department of Agriculture). Finally, we install modifications on the aircraft in conjunction with depot-level maintenance work. For example, we upgrade the avionics suite as well as provide electronic countermeasure upgrades. We also extend the service life of the USAF's C-130Hs and C-130Js by replacing center wing boxes as they approach life limits.

The AFSC—with its organic industrial base—is a readiness and war sustaining insurance policy. But we continue to experience significant readiness challenges due to aging infrastructure, increasing costs and complexities of weapon system sustainment, and a federal work force hiring process that is not totally in line with today's environment. It is a national imperative to continue to have an organic industrial base supporting aircraft such as C-130.

Transition of C-130 Workload

In March 2017, the AFSC made the strategic decision to transfer all C-130 workload currently at Ogden Air Logistics Complex (OO-ALC) at Hill AFB, UT to the Warner-Robins Air Logistics Complex (WR-ALC) at Robins AFB, GA, with the transition completed by FY22. Because all three Complexes (including Oklahoma City Air Logistics Complex at Tinker AFB,

OK) operate as an enterprise, the USAF is able to achieve greater economies of scale.

WR-ALC is the single complete overhaul facility for all 54H60 four-bladed propellers for the USAF, USN, and USMC. These propellers are used on USAF C-130H aircraft, including derivative aircraft (AC-130U, AC-130W, EC-130H, HC-130N, HC-130P, LC-130H, MC-130H, MC-130P, and WC-130H), and USN/USMC C-130T and KC-130T aircraft. A slightly different version of the 54H60 propeller is also used on USN P-3 aircraft. This P-3 version of the propeller is also overhauled at WR-ALC.

Based on the recommendation of an Independent Review Team (IRT), the USAF and USN Program Offices are updating propeller overhaul requirements, and once finalized, the propeller OEM is expected to adopt these same requirements for their commercial manual. The updated requirements bring together the best practices from each manual as well as adding new inspection procedures developed by and under the direction of the IRT.

Overhaul procedure updates are complete for all of the propeller components except the propeller blade. Using these updated procedures, WR-ALC resumed build-up and delivery of 54H60 propellers on 12 March 2018. These propellers are assembled with newly manufactured propeller blades procured from the OEM. The OEM is currently delivering at maximum capacity of approximately 30 blades per month. Efforts are underway by the OEM to increase production capacity to approximately 48 blades per month by October 2018. While propeller blade overhaul requirements continue to be updated and refined, it is expected that WR-ALC will not reach full capacity for propeller blade overhaul until early 2019.

We continue to proactively identify and mitigate safety issues within the C-130 fleet. These efforts include Program Office participation in mishap safety investigations, implementing recommendations from previous safety investigations, analysis of discrepancy reports, and reviews of findings from the field and depots. As a result of these efforts, C-130 Engineering continually identifies safety issues and develops mitigations to address these issues. As an example, C-130 Engineering issued eight (8) safety-related inspections/mitigations over the last 12 months to address issues that were identified. In addition, the Program Office proactively monitors the health, safety, and service life of all USAF C-130 aircraft through various programs such as the Aircraft Structural Integrity Program (ASIP), corrosion prevention and control programs, multiple inspection programs at the unit and depot levels, and more.

Civilian Workforce Hiring Initiatives

A key component of sustaining and modernizing legacy weapon systems such as the C-130 is a trained and technically proficient depot workforce. The AFSC depends on a 78% civilian workforce; 89% if our contractor teammates are included. Our civilian Airmen serve and sacrifice for our nation as passionately as those who wear our uniforms. As we evolve and adapt our weapons systems and concepts of operation, we must evolve and adapt our workforce. A 5th Generation Air Force requires a 5th Generation workforce. Requirements for a Science-Technology-Engineering-Math (STEM) educated workforce and advanced manufacturing and technical skills are ever increasing. Each weapon system we sustain brings with it an increasing requirement for software development and maintenance to perform almost every function on the aircraft, from manipulating flight controls, interfacing with weapons, navigation and

communication, recording system health and status, etc. Our need for scientists and engineers to sustain these software-intensive weapons systems is increasing dramatically. In addition to developing and sustaining new weapons systems, our engineers must also find ways to sustain our aging legacy systems like the C-130. From understanding airframe stress, metallurgy, non-destructive inspection techniques, and reverse engineering parts, it takes a talented pool of engineers to help us sustain our legacy Air Force. As we continue to sustain our legacy fleet, our civilian engineers are a pivotal component of readiness. As we project a steady increase in the technical workforce needed to support critical warfighting systems, any barriers to recruiting and retaining a skilled workforce are detrimental to our readiness.

While recent authorities like Direct Hiring Authority (DHA) and Expedited Hiring Authority (EHA) have given us new tools for hiring strategies, we operate within an antiquated civilian hiring system that constrains our ability to effectively compete with industry for a qualified workforce. The ability to hire critical skill sets to sustain our USAF is a strategic issue for national defense. Even so, we devote significant resources to recruiting efforts. WR-ALC, where the C-130 programmed depot maintenance is performed, hired 834 new employees in FY18, most of which have been assigned to the C-130 workload. We are now 100 percent manned for that platform for FY19 workloads. The use of the depot DHA and EHA empowered our supervisors to provide on the spot job offers, thereby allowing us to compete with industry to secure top talent. Thank you for your active role in obtaining these critical authorities and your continued support of extending their use. Completion of training for this newly hired workforce is imminent, which will help get the C-130 schedule back in line with projected production and delivery schedules.

Our workforce challenges are not just confined to engineers and scientists. We also rely on a very large labor force of highly skilled technicians and mechanics that work in our depots and supply chain management. We are concerned the U.S. will not have enough highly skilled technicians to support the replenishment and increasing workload demands, and worry the Federal government will not be able to compete for the talent we need to secure a robust workforce. While we work very closely with vocational training centers around our Air Logistics Complexes, they can only supply entry-level skills. The AFSC would benefit from creating an on-ramp for recently retired military personnel. These skilled journeymen provide vital, mature skill sets and years of experience that act as a buffer to develop our entry-level personnel. It is imperative for AFSC to tap into these skills early and often in order to counteract retirements and support the right operational mix of candidates. A holistic approach to proactively solve this problem would be to make an exception for the 180-day waiting period in support of hiring federal wage system personnel and some lower level general schedule employees involved in the logistics and supply chain management categories. As it stands today, the 180-day waiting period puts AFSC at a disadvantage against corporations competing for this experienced workforce.

Closing

We take seriously any aircraft mishap, and perpetually strive to do our absolute best to carry out our mission as safely and effectively as possible and prevent future mishaps. The C-130s are a safe, effective aircraft for its missions, and we have programs in place to ensure these conditions going forward. We take our responsibilities very seriously. Our service

members are our greatest asset and we are absolutely committed to their safety as we continue to deliver combat power to our combatant commanders.