

**DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE  
PRESENTATION TO THE SUBCOMMITTEE  
ON  
READINESS AND MANAGEMENT SUPPORT  
UNITED STATES SENATE**

**SUBJECT: CURRENT READINESS OF U.S. FORCES**

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## Introduction

Chairman Inhofe, Ranking Member Kaine, members of this committee, thank you for allowing me to testify before you today. Moreover, thank you for your leadership to begin the return to regular fiscal order.

It is our top priority to restore readiness to win any fight at any time. Nearly three decades of non-peer, non-traditional conflict has consumed our readiness attention. Today's world requires an Air Force ready for great power competition.

As conveyed by the National Defense Strategy (NDS), our nation's competitors are moving at a speed and scale unseen in recent periods. Air Force advantages are at risk. We must act with urgency. Speed will win in preparation, just as in battle.

We will remain relentless in our pursuit of readiness, and by extension lethality. The selfless efforts of America's sons and daughters will benefit from your continued help with added speed "left of the fight" in five 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 sharpen America's edge

For our part, as we arrest the decline, we are working to turn the corner, and accelerate the climb to full-spectrum readiness.

## Arrest the decline

Thank you for your decision to pass the FY17 Request for Additional Appropriations (RAA). With the additional funds we began to arrest our readiness decline. This was done with targeted efforts to address shortfalls across people, equipment, and training. Notably, your appropriation of the \$5.6 Billion RAA led to the following improvements:

- **People** – The FY17 RAA funded 4,000 additional active-duty Airmen. While it will take another 5-7 years to develop these Airmen into seasoned professionals, this began the turn back to full-spectrum readiness. We also executed our multi-year Remotely Piloted Aircraft (RPA) Get-Well Plan to achieve sustainable, agile capability in this critical mission area.
- **Equipment** – 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%. Additional funding went to new vehicles to support weapons loading, maintenance, emergency services, cargo movement, and aircraft fueling. Furthermore, we replenished a mix of BLU-117 MK-84 ("mark 84") bombs, due to significant increase in expenditures for current operations.
- **Training** – We made investments in pilot production and F-16 Formal Training Unit bed down to address pilot shortfalls. Additional training and weapon systems sustainment funding will increase readiness by establishing a strong foundation for improved aircraft availability and higher 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 enough readiness to project power across the globe. Airmen conducted more than 172,000 sorties and 98,000 precision air strikes to support Iraqi and partner forces in Syria and Iraq in 2017. These teams were ready and lethal. They would not have been successful without your additional support. However, these same Airmen are not as lethal nor as ready as they **could** be for pacing threats – ***the scenarios with the least margins for error and greatest risks to lives and our nation's security.***

### **Turn the corner**

Readiness and lethality are derived from stable funding and we are heartened by the recent progress in budgetary matters. Unfortunately, FY17 gains are eroding under the continuing resolution (CR). This self-imposed penalty grants competitors a cumulative head start, year after year. We must get back to, and maintain, regular fiscal order.

Notably, a year-long CR would bring lasting consequences. We may be forced to scale back the engineering and development phase of the B-21 bomber. In addition to out-year delivery impacts, this would slow contractor staffing, engineering design, and supply chain development in ways that are only recoverable in years. Scenarios like this are prevalent throughout our force. Airmen are required to redirect scarce time and energy from readiness to navigate the pitfalls of each budgetary delay. **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 will add 2,300 active duty Airmen in FY18 to get to a total of 325,100. In addition, we will add 1,000 reservists and 900 guardsmen. We are focused on quality of life improvements for our Airmen and their families; as soon as the FY18 budget is signed it will include a 2.4% increase in military pay, a 2.2% increase in basic allowance for housing, and a 3.4% increase in subsistence. ***Growing our end strength to fill existing manpower requirements is the most important step to turn the corner and accelerate the climb.***
- **Nuclear Deterrence** – We are steadfast in providing the nation a safe, secure, and effective nuclear deterrent including the air and ground-legs of the triad along with 75 percent of the command, control, and communications capability. We prioritize sustainment of the ICBM force and Air Launched Cruise Missile, as well as integrated design and development of their replacements - the Ground Based Strategic Deterrent (GBSD) and Long-Range Stand-Off cruise missile (LRSO). To the maximum extent possible under the CR, we've continued bomber modernization efforts to include additional investment for the B-52 Radar Modernization Program and B-2 Defensive System Modernization programs.
- **Space Superiority** – 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 concludes incremental funding of the Space Based Infrared Systems (SBIRS) 5 and 6 satellites block buy. We are

proceeding with the purchase of terminals, control systems, and communications security for satellites. We will also procure additional launch services as part of the Evolved Expendable Launch Vehicle (EELV) program.

- **Air Superiority** – Training to confront pacing threats has suffered in exchange for flying hours in current operations. We are at the beginning of this climb. Through the FY18 budget we will leverage \$6.2 billion to fully fund executable peacetime flying hours. That will pair with \$12 billion for key enabling weapons system sustainment (parts, maintenance and logistics) near maximum executable levels.
- **Cyber** – We will fund all of our offensive and defensive cyber teams to full operational levels. This includes training and equipping 1,700 additional cyber operators. In parallel, we will increase our reliance on contractors for basic information technology and cloud services. This will enable our military members to focus on their readiness for advanced threats as part of the joint force.
- **Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR)** – 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 will remain committed to our RPA Get Well Plan with increased training, leadership opportunities, and basing options including a new RPA wing and two operational squadrons across the five year plan.
- **Infrastructure** – We have roughly \$2 billion set aside this year for military construction. Priorities include the bed down of new missions, combatant command requirements, and strengthening the nuclear security enterprise. We will also improve ranges at the Utah Test and Training Range and Red Flag in Nevada so combat airpower can train with full F-35A capabilities. Additionally, we continue to pursue virtual Operational Training Infrastructure (OTI), to test and train against advanced threats at reduced cost.
- **Munitions** – Our use of munitions continues to out-pace assembly. Working with industry, we are maximizing production of critical types, including the Advanced Precision Kill Weapon System, Joint Direct Attack Munition, Hellfire missile, and Small Diameter Bomb. This effort to regain munitions readiness is no small feat and represents a whole-of America example to reclaim the competitive edge.

### **Accelerate the climb**

The FY19 President's Budget, informed by, and synchronized with, the new National Defense Strategy, will accelerate our multi-year climb to full-spectrum readiness. That climb begins with people.

The requirements for national defense are out of balance with the number of Airmen we have to meet them. In FY19 we will address imbalances in critical fields like aviation, maintenance, ISR, cyber, and RPA while also expanding training capacity. Further, we will support Air Force families with a military pay raise, increased housing and subsistence allowances, and bolstered family support programs.

It is also critical that we increase aviator production and seasoning through expanded flying hour and weapons system sustainment programs. By extension, operational training infrastructure is needed to provide relevant and realistic training for multi-

domain, full-spectrum readiness. Those trained Airmen will need munitions on hand. To support current operations and prepare for future requirements, we must fund armament delivery at industry capacity.

Further, recapitalization of our aging nuclear capability is vital to deterrence. Development of the Ground-Based Strategic Deterrent and Long Range Stand-Off Missile, while modernizing bomber fleets, are key steps. We also aim to invest in nuclear command, control, and communications (NC3) systems. This will ensure resilient and survivable connectivity between the President, national command leadership, and nuclear forces.

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 also begin transformative initiatives to expand lethality. Examples include our light attack aircraft experiment and emphasis on multi-domain command and control.

Programs for innovation and talent management will find footing. Executing in the spirit of General Hap Arnold and Dr. Von Karman 70 years ago, our year-long science and technology review seeks partnerships across academia and defense. Findings will inform decades of Air Force investments, and where helpful, national investments.

Likewise, new mechanisms to incubate innovation -- such as AFWERX -- will enable teamwork with America's strong entrepreneurial base. This will pair well with our new methods of rapid capability development to drive modernization at the speed of relevance. Finally, we will seek pliable talent policies to grant today's Airmen more career control while harnessing their patriotic commitment to service.

Today's modernization is tomorrow's readiness. These iterative efforts in FY19 and beyond will accelerate the climb to full spectrum readiness and provide a force that is ready, lethal, and efficient in this era of great power competition. Each year -- truly each month -- of progress builds on the previous. Conversely, delays compound exponentially in their lasting impacts.

## **Conclusion**

Readiness is not static. It is inherently in decline or on the rise. Our military advantages and readiness shrunk due to the longest continuous stretch of combat in our nation's history, coupled with years of inconsistent and insufficient funding. At the same time, our strategic competitors, notably China and Russia, have closed gaps in capability and capacity. The result is an overstretched and under resourced United States Air Force.

As the Secretary of Defense has made clear, America can afford survival. Prolonged budgetary stability is the most reliable way to ensure yesterday's winning force does not become irrelevant tomorrow. To that end, we are deeply appreciative of recent efforts to begin the return of fiscal order and look forward to classified dialogue to fully enable your stewardship while frustrating the surveilling efforts of our competitors.

On behalf of 670,000 American active, guard, reserve, and civilian Airmen and their selfless families, thank you for your continued leadership and partnership in defense of this great nation.