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HEARING
ON
NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT
FOR FISCAL YEAR 2019
AND
OVERSIGHT OF PREVIOUSLY AUTHORIZED
PROGRAMS
BEFORE THE
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
ONE HUNDRED FIFTEENTH CONGRESS
SECOND SESSION
SUBCOMMITTEE ON READINESS HEARING
ON
AIR FORCE READINESS POSTURE

HEARING HELD
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AIR FORCE READINESS POSTURE

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON READINESS,
Washington, DC, Wednesday, February 14, 2018.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to call, at 3:32 p.m., in room 2212, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Joe Wilson (chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. JOE WILSON, A REPRESENTATIVE FROM SOUTH CAROLINA, CHAIRMAN, SUBCOMMITTEE ON READINESS

Mr. WILSON. Good afternoon. Ladies and gentlemen, I call this hearing to order of the Readiness Subcommittee on the House Armed Services Committee. And our sound system apparently is not——

Mr. KELLY. It does not work.

Mr. WILSON. Good afternoon. In the interest of proceeding without a sound system, we will all speak a bit louder, and for those of us from the Southern States, this may be a challenge. But, fortunately, Ranking Member Bordallo is from Guam, so she can be heard across the Pacific.

But good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. I call this hearing to order of the Readiness Subcommittee at the House Armed Services Committee. Thank you for being here today. This hearing is the first in a series of Readiness hearings on the services' budget request and readiness posture.

Today, I look forward to hearing how the Air Force's budget request enables a readiness recovery plan where we continue to take risks and how this request supports our men and women in uniform who put their lives on the line every day.

Over the course of the past 2 years, this subcommittee has met with Air Force leadership to understand the depth of the readiness challenges facing the Air Force. We expect that this budget attacks the most critical challenges; namely, those issues most essential to halting the readiness decline and rebuilding and restoring the Air Force.

Our Air Force remains the most powerful in the world; however, it will take years to rebuild and restore. The purpose of this hearing is to clarify the Air Force's choices for its budget requests, to address funding priorities and mitigation strategies, and to gather more detail on the current and future impacts of these decisions on operations, maintenance, training, and modernization.

More importantly, does the Air Force have the resources it requires in order to rebuild and restore readiness? Can it support the largest sustainment bills looming in the future? We firmly believe

the primary responsibility of the national government is to provide for the national security of its citizens, and that is especially true of our airmen, who freely risk their lives to serve this Nation.

Therefore, it is our responsibility, as members of this subcommittee, to understand the readiness situation and how the budget request assisting the Department of the Air Force in correcting any deficiencies in restoring and rebuilding the capabilities this Nation needs.

I welcome all of our members and the distinguished panel of the senior Air Force leaders present today. This afternoon, we have Lieutenant General Mark Nowland, the Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations, U.S. Air Force; Lieutenant General Scott Rice, the Director of the Air National Guard; and Major General Derek P. Rydholm, the Deputy to the Chief of the Air Force Reserve.

Thank you for testifying today, and we look forward to your thoughts and insights on these important issues.

Now I am very grateful to turn to our distinguished ranking member, Congresswoman Madeleine Bordallo, of Guam, for any remarks she would like to make.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Wilson can be found in the Appendix on page 25.]

STATEMENT OF HON. MADELEINE Z. BORDALLO, A DELEGATE FROM GUAM, RANKING MEMBER, SUBCOMMITTEE ON READINESS

Ms. BORDALLO. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

This committee is full of advocates for the Air Force. We look forward to the opportunity to help you. To our witnesses, our gentlemen, thank you for being here this afternoon. And with the release of the budget request for fiscal year 2019 earlier this week, today's hearing marks the first step in this subcommittee's work to develop this year's National Defense Authorization Act.

Over the past year, the subcommittee has heard details of the Air Force's readiness challenges: spare parts and munition shortages, talent retention issues, and overall aircraft sustainability challenges. These issues culminate in fewer ready people, aircraft, and squadrons to meet operational requirements.

The Secretary of the Air Force has identified restoring readiness as a primary objective of the fiscal year 2019 budget request. However, I have some initial concerns of how this budget request will support that goal. Specifically, I note that the base operations and maintenance request remains relatively flat between fiscal year 2018 and 2019, despite significant increases to overall defense spending.

While procurement of new hardware and advanced research draw significant interest, it is the operations and maintenance accounts that play a critical role in generating and restoring readiness by supporting training, maintenance, and sustainability of the current and future force.

So, with that in mind, the central question I believe that members of this subcommittee must ask is, how will this budget request increase the Air Force's readiness? And I hope that our witnesses can help provide answers to that question today.

So I want to thank you very much, and I look forward to the testimony and the discussions this afternoon.

And I yield back.

Mr. WILSON. Thank you, Ranking Member Bordallo.

General Nowland, we now turn to you for your remarks and briefing on the incidents.

STATEMENT OF LT GEN MARK C. NOWLAND, USAF, DEPUTY CHIEF OF STAFF FOR OPERATIONS, HEADQUARTERS U.S. AIR FORCE

General NOWLAND. Chairman Wilson, Ranking Member Bordallo, members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today, along with my distinguished counterparts from the Air Force Reserve and the Air National Guard, on the state of your United States Air Force.

On behalf of the Secretary, Chief, and 670,000 airmen protecting our Nation, it is an honor to be here with my Total Force partners. The Air Force is our Nation's asymmetric advantage in defending our Nation. We defend the homeland. We dominate the air, space, and cyber domains. And we project decisive combat power forward with the joint team to defend American interests and our allies worldwide.

The relentless pace of nonstop operations for nearly 30 years affected high-end readiness for the Active Duty, National Guard, and Reserve forces. But make no mistake: we stand ready together to answer our Nation's call to provide multidomain superiority to the joint fight.

The newly released defense strategy is clear: we are in a new age of competition. Driven by our Secretary and Chief's priorities, the Air Force is on course to change the way we assess and resource readiness for full-spectrum operations.

As the A-3, I have a team sequestered in the Pentagon today working at a 45-day deep dive in how we report readiness that we hope to share in the future. With your help, we can modernize our capabilities in a cost-effective manner to ensure your Air Force is ready to win any engagement in the future.

As you know, quickened by your assistance and with additional funding in 2017, we have arrested the readiness decline. We have begun to do so with a keen focus on our most powerful resource: people.

Thanks to your help, we added 4,000 airmen to begin to close our manpower gap. We are also funding more flying hours, munitions, new equipment and parts, depots, training, and training infrastructure. With stable, predictable funding, we will begin to turn the corner this year and accelerate into a multiyear climb towards full-spectrum readiness.

However, as you noted, there are always challenges. We have our T-6 fleet grounded right now, and as I reported last week, we are moving forward. We have two technical change time orders that are being executed right now that we expect to be done on the 16th of February.

Next week, we expect to start flying—24 crews will start to fly the airplane to test our on-board oxygen-generating system to see

if we have the appropriate repairs and we can get back to flying operations.

The team is also testing an alternative method with an oxygen disconnect from the on-board oxygen-generating system and also flying in a restricted flight envelope so that we could get back to flying.

In other words, we have a two-prong attack to try to get back to flying in our T-6, which is our primary trainer, which we have lost 82 pilots this year already because we have canceled one class. You all know that we are in a pilot crisis, so the Air Force is laser focused on this effort.

General Pawlikowski, our AFMC [Air Force Materiel Command] commander, has established a two-star in charge of it; and General Kwast, our AETC [Air Education and Training Command] commander, is making this his number one priority.

With your help, we look forward to moving forward and continuing to increase the readiness of the United States Air Force, and I look forward to any questions.

[The joint prepared statement of General Nowland, General Rice, and General Rydholm can be found in the Appendix on page 27.]

Mr. WILSON. And thank you very much, General Nowland.

And we now turn to General Rice for your opening remarks.

STATEMENT OF LT GEN L. SCOTT RICE, USAF, DIRECTOR, AIR NATIONAL GUARD, HEADQUARTERS U.S. AIR FORCE

General RICE. Thank you, Chairman Wilson and Ranking Member Bordallo and the committee members all. Thank you for the opportunity to talk about our Nation's Air National Guard.

I am here with a small team from my staff, including Command Chief Master Sergeant Ron Anderson, our Command Chief of the Air National Guard, that serves right alongside with me, along with all of our airmen.

First, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to all those airmen, the men, women, and families of the Air National Guard for their unwavering dedication to serving this Nation.

Over 106,000 uniformed Guard airmen of the Total Force provide operational and strategic depth to our Nation's defense strategy, ready to deploy in the homeland or around the world, as the threat dictates. The Air National Guard cost-effectively employs experienced airmen who comprise about 21 percent of the Total Force and contribute to every one of the Air Force core missions.

Currently, we have about 7,700 dual-use Guard airmen deployed around the world in support of global and domestic operations. The demands are high, but the honor to selflessly serve our Nation is a significant motivator.

Last year, the Air National Guard supported deployment requirements in 56 countries; filled 46 percent of the Total Force's overseas requirement for civil engineers; safeguarded American skies from 15 of 16 aerospace control alert sites; dropped 7.3 million gallons of water and fire retardant on fires; and provided lifesaving rescue, support, and comfort for the victims of Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria, to include 2,300 sorties flown and 11,600 passenger movements and 15,000 tons of cargo moved.

It is my job to ensure our Guard airmen are organized and equipped with the right sources, tools—the right resources, tools, and training to do what our Nation asks. My focus is clear: support the National Defense Strategy through continued readiness recovery, improving our operational depth and capacity, and enhancing the lethality of our operationally proven Reserve force.

To accomplish this task, we are focused on three Air National Guard priorities: number one, readiness for today's fight, to ensure we are manned, sized, and equipped to support a more lethal total joint force; two, 21st century Guard airmen, to foster a more innovative, agile, and resilient warrior; and three, build for tomorrow's fight, to continually evaluate mission areas, concepts, recapitalization and modernization of force structure to more efficiently accomplish our objectives.

I also want to extend my deep appreciation and acknowledge your support of NGREA, the National Guard and Reserve Equipment Account. NGREA is essential to modernize our combat equipment to remain interoperable, reliable, relevant, safe, and available to respond to any crisis anywhere in the warfight or domestic environment in a timely and efficient and effective manner.

The Air National Guard is committed to serve, excel, and accomplish Air Force missions with integrity, respect, pride, and honor. However, fiscal unpredictability creates significant additional stress and high operational tempo of our Reserve force. We need your continued support to restore readiness with fiscal stability and focused funding so that we can build for tomorrow's fight.

Ultimately, our task is to ensure the Guard airmen are prepared and ready for the task we expect them to perform in the defense of our Nation. Thank you for inviting me here today, and thank you for your continued support of the Air National Guard support mission and its members.

I look forward to your questions, sir.

Mr. WILSON. Thank you very much, General Rice.

And we now will be proceeding to General Rydholm.

Ms. BORDALLO. The speakers are working.

General RICE. We are back on the air, so to speak. No pun intended.

Mr. WILSON. Thank you, General Rice.

I now proceed to General Rydholm.

STATEMENT OF MAJ GEN DEREK P. RYDHOLM, USAF, DEPUTY CHIEF OF AIR FORCE RESERVE, HEADQUARTERS U.S. AIR FORCE

General RYDHOLM. Yes, sir.

Chairman Wilson, Ranking Member Bordallo, and distinguished members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I am extremely honored to represent America's Reserve citizen airmen on behalf of Lieutenant General Maryanne Miller, Chief of Air Force Reserve and Commander, Air Force Reserve Command, who is unable to be here today due to obligations at Arlington National Cemetery.

Mr. Chairman, your Air Force Reserve is lethal, resilient, and always ready to answer our Nation's call. Each day, we have over

6,000 Reserve citizen airmen serving on full-time orders around the world in all the core missions of the Air Force.

As we sharpen our edge to compete, deter, and win in the fight tonight, there are two concerns that have my attention because they impact our ability to strengthen our competitive edge for the future. Our first concern is the impact of continuing resolutions on the training and retention of our Reserve citizen airmen. The second is the loss of our full-time pilots and maintainers to commercial industry.

Continuing resolutions negatively impact our training, retention, and ultimately our readiness. Our Reserve citizen airmen rely on predictability to effectively balance their civilian employment with their critical contributions to our Nation's defense.

Reservist's availability must be matched with a predictable funding stream or critical training is postponed. Delayed training is difficult to reschedule and places an increased burden on the one resource we can't buy back, that being time.

Our second concern as we continue to strengthen our competitive edge is the loss of our technician force of pilots and aircraft maintainers to the contract and commercial industry. Retention of our technician force is essential to maintaining our lethality and combat effectiveness. We have taken steps over the past year to increase the retention of our technician force, but work still remains.

One area this committee can be of great assistance is to support legislation to authorize dual-status Air Reserve technicians medical coverage under TRICARE Reserve Select. Your support is vital to enhance continuity of care for our Air Reserve technicians and their families while they perform our Nation's call.

Supporting this initiative would do more for the retention of our critical technician force than any action over the past few years, and the time is now. TRICARE Reserve Select for Air Reserve technicians bolsters the Nation's defense by retaining seasoned airmen through a continuum of care measure with enduring impact.

On behalf of Lieutenant General Miller, I thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today, and for your unwavering support of our incredible Air Force, our Reserve citizen airmen, and their families. I look forward to answering your questions.

Mr. WILSON. Thank you, General Rydholm.

We appreciate your first appearance before this subcommittee, and best wishes for your continued success. And thank you, you returned the sound.

Each member of the subcommittee will have 5 minutes of questions to our panel. It will be strictly maintained by Ms. Margaret Dean, and beginning with me, strictly maintained.

General Nowland, the Air Force is approximately 2,000 pilots short of their requirement. This pilot shortfall continues to worsen, and essential training aircraft, like the T-6 and T-38, have been plagued by increasing maintenance challenges.

And most recently, the entire T-6 fleet was grounded due to the onboard oxygen-generating system failing to provide adequate oxygen to these trainee pilots. I have serious concerns about training these pilots of the aircraft with an average age of 55 years old and over 16,000 flight hours. Congress supports a new trainer aircraft, the TX; yet the contract award has been delayed.

How is it possible for the Air Force to adequately address the pilot shortfall without an on-time delivery of the TX training aircraft?

General NOWLAND. Congressman Wilson, thank you for that question. It is a fabulous question and one that I am deeply concerned about also.

Our T-6 fleet, as I said, is critical towards our ability. It is our basic trainer. We are looking holistically to solve that from a material solution, from an education solution, from a training solution to get that fleet back up—that aircraft back up on its feet as soon as possible and back up into the air.

The TX, the good news for the TX is the decision was delayed a little bit because of our acquisition professionals want to make sure we got it correct, but we have money in this budget to move forward on the TX. And I am with you: we need to have that airplane delivered on time.

We, the Air Force, believe, because of the nature of the aircraft, we are hopeful that there will be little to no delays as we move through that. And part of the delay is to—the decision, I understand, was to make sure that we have the best choice, so if a protest came, we could move it forward as quickly as possible.

And as far as our numbers, sir, and retention, you are exactly right. We know that retention is critical. But guess what? Production is critical. The way we really get out of this situation is we have to—and our Secretary said it yesterday—increase our production to 1,400 undergraduate pilot training graduates per year and grow out of this problem.

Retention numbers are difficult to chase. Industry is always there. We have over 60 initiatives, one of which is a monetary bonus, and we are using the authority that you have given us to try to adjust that bonus to maximize the potential.

But in the end, we believe growing pilots for America and for the United States Air Force is in our best interest, and that is what we intend to do.

Mr. WILSON. Appreciate your commitment on that. And as we talk about the TX contract, what would be the timeframe which you anticipate that a decision will be made?

General NOWLAND. Mr. Chairman, I am not in the acquisition. What I have seen is just what you have seen. I believe it is in the spring or summertime is when the selection will be made, and then hopefully we will move in a rapid acquisition. And as you see in the money—in our budget, we have a large section of money as we move into the future to start purchasing that airplane.

Mr. WILSON. Well, that is very encouraging. And, again, we appreciate your efforts to expedite.

And then, for each of you, the latest projections for rebuilding the readiness are based on setting conditions for readiness recovery. What percentage of readiness will the Air Force reasonably attain and by what timeframe?

Are there particular core functions that are more at risk than others in terms of the readiness recovery efforts? How does the fiscal year 2019 Department of Air Force budget request impact the recovery plan for the operational readiness? And, actually, I will begin with General Rice.

General RICE. Thanks for that question, Chairman.

In light of things the Guard is specifically doing to increase readiness, first, we are hand in hand with the Air Force in growing our end strength and filling in those gaps and seams.

The second thing was, not only did General Nowland talk about production of brand-new pilots, but the other two pieces that we have a big part in is the training of advanced pilots in our formal training units, as well as the next step, which is absorption of those pilots into our force.

To increase our ability to observe across the Total Force—Guard, Reserve, and Active Duty—we have increased things like second-shift maintenance to get after some of these. So we put resources of people and part supplies and flying hours into that to increase our readiness.

Mr. WILSON. Thank you very much.

And my time is up. But, General Rydholm, thank you again for being here. And I was particularly happy to see you are a graduate of the Naval Academy. As a Naval Academy grad dad, I am very appreciative, so best wishes.

And we now proceed to Guam with Congresswoman Bordallo.

Ms. BORDALLO. All the way to Guam? You said proceed to Guam.

Mr. WILSON. It is so close.

Ms. BORDALLO. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

And before I begin, I have two questions for General Nowland. But I just want to say, General Rice, thank you for paying such great attention to the Guard units on Guam, particularly Air Guard.

General Nowland, as I mentioned in my opening statement, I am concerned about what I see in the fiscal year 2019 budget request for operations and maintenance funding and specifically in key readiness-enabling accounts, such as those that support weapon system sustainment, and note that, in the sum, the fiscal year 2019 request appears to be roughly the same amount as fiscal year 2018 levels.

However, approximately \$5 billion has been shifted from the base request to OCO [overseas contingency operations]. Now, can you explain to us the reason for this shift and also quantify the level of risk the Air Force is taking in weapon system sustainment compared to the full requirement?

General NOWLAND. Madame Bordallo, that is a great question, ma'am.

So the exact answer of the shifting of the money I will take for record and will answer, because we moved some money around as the budget was moved around. But in end, we are upping our weapon system sustainment by \$400 million this year. We are also upping our flying hour money that we are paying for.

So the answer is, as we are moving forward, 3 years ago, we started to build maintainers. We anticipate, next year, we will grow those three levels, which are apprentice into craftsmen, into five levels.

So we have put money into weapon system sustainment so that we can hopefully increase our aircraft utilization rate by up one per sortie per month across the fleet, which will help us get an additional training.

In addition, we have put money into our adversary air program at Nellis. So, when pilots go to Nellis, every sortie they fly will be a blue air sortie is the goal so that they are not taking their precious training time to act as an adversary but act as a primary.

We think those two actions will help us increase our readiness level as we move forward, ma'am.

Ms. BORDALLO. Thank you. Thank you very much.

The second question also is for you, General. The quarterly readiness report to Congress identified three lines of effort to return Air Force pilot manning to required readiness levels. Now, one of those efforts included a significantly increased take rate for the pilot bonus, almost double that of last year.

Now, I understand that the Air Force is pursuing a holistic approach to the retention problem and that the service has not found financial compensation to be a root cause of the pilot shortage. However, neither the quarterly report nor any Department leadership has identified what changes will be made between last year and this year to achieve increased take-rate percentage goals.

So, if pilot bonus take rate is one of the service's three main lines of efforts, how exactly do you expect to meet your fiscal year 2018 goal?

General NOWLAND. That is a fantastic question. Thank you.

The numbers that you—may have appeared, I think, were mistaken. There was a number of 65 percent in there, which is what we used to measure what we thought we had to retain. Our actual retention, as you identified, is 43 percent last year, and it went down a little bit. But it only went down 1 percent, so that was—we thought that was a win.

So how we are going to do, given the authorities you have given us, we are going to try to realign our bonus rate to try to keep our most important people, which are our instructors and our evaluators, across our weapon system to incentivize it as we look at the business case analysis. That's the first thing we are going to do.

The second thing we are going to do is we are going to focus on that production because we cannot ultimately control what the airlines are going to do and how much money they are going to, but we are going to work on that production to try to increase the maximum production we can get to while simultaneously improving the quality of life with those 60 initiatives that we have to improve the quality of life so that their quality of service is what they want to accomplish.

Ms. BORDALLO. Thank you, General.

And I do have just a few seconds, but I am going to yield back in the interest of time.

Mr. WILSON. Thank you very much for your thoughtfulness, Congresswoman Bordallo.

And we now proceed to Congressman Austin Scott of Georgia.

Mr. SCOTT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Gentlemen, thank you for your service. I am disappointed in the recommendation—some of the recommendations from the Air Force. I would just ask you, on one of our other weapons systems, the Air Force proposed several years ago and unfortunately Congress allowed the canceling of the F-22 contract based on the promise that another plane was going to be available.

Do you think it was a good decision to cancel the F-22 contract?

General NOWLAND. Congressman Scott, I assume that's for me, right?

Mr. SCOTT. Yes, sir.

General NOWLAND. The F-22 is—I am an air superiority pilot. The F-22 has proved to be one of our greatest air superiority assets.

Mr. SCOTT. So would you agree that it was a mistake to cancel the contract?

General NOWLAND. I was not in the Secretary's decision space at that time. I know there were a lot of different factors that worked into that at that time.

Mr. SCOTT. Let me rephrase it. Do you wish that we had maintained the contract? Do you wish that we had more F-22s? Would we be a stronger Air Force today if we had more F-22s?

General NOWLAND. The F-22 is an absolutely incredible air superiority as we look to the future and great power competition. Additional F-22s, I would estimate all combatant commanders would like to have more.

Mr. SCOTT. One of the other things that our combatant commanders would like to have is more ISR [intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance] platforms. So, every year, the Armed Services Committee, we have heard from the combatant commanders that they don't have the necessary ISR assets to support the geographic commands. The JSTARS [Joint Surveillance Target Attack Radar System] continues to be a highly requested asset inside the Department of Defense.

General Nowland and Rice, what is the rationale behind the Air Force's decision to impose risk on combatant commanders with the divestment of three E-8C JSTARS aircraft in the fiscal year 2019 proposed budget?

General NOWLAND. Congressman Scott, the long-term—the goal is to increase lethality and effectiveness for the combatant commanders by trying to disaggregate the moving target indicator capacity across the force.

So we are going to maintain the JSTARS through the mid-twenties, with—that is a while away, as we look at this idea of disaggregation to see if we can create an advanced battle management system that gives combatant commanders greater capacity and dismounted moving target indicator by modifying the MQ-9.

Mr. SCOTT. Thank you for that answer, General. But if I may, the Air Force's decision, they have told us repeatedly, is based on the fact that they don't believe that it is survivable in a contested airspace. So the—we have been told that the primary reason is that it is not survivable in a contested airspace.

General NOWLAND. There are increased threats from our great power nations that do make it in a higher threat environment.

Mr. SCOTT. Well, General, if I may, just continuing along that, would you agree that those nations like Russia and China, that space is a contested environment and they are working on advanced technologies that would make—may make our ability to communicate from space impossible?

General NOWLAND. There is no doubt that space is becoming contested environment, and our Air Force space is looking at how we

get in warfighting constructs. And to say impossible communications, sir, it is beyond the level of my knowledge, but certainly I think there will be challenges in space.

Mr. SCOTT. But you would agree that they will have the ability to break our lines of communications?

General NOWLAND. I am not—

Mr. SCOTT. There is a risk that they will be able to break our lines—

General NOWLAND. There is a risk towards our communications, of course. We know that they will always try to go after our communications capability.

Mr. SCOTT. All right. I know I am getting a little short on time.

And, General Rice, I apologize that I cut you out of that.

But I do need to go again, General Nowland, to the weapon system sustainment accounts. What steps are you taking to expedite the hiring in the depot workforce, the direct hiring as well as the retention at our depots?

General NOWLAND. Our Air Force Materiel Command General Pawlikowski, in working with our A-1, is attempting to streamline that and reduce that timeline. Our goal, as you know, is to reduce that and get the skilled workers that we need to get out on the flight line as much as we can.

So the efforts and the authorities that you have given us, the Air Force is acting on those and trying to implement those procedures.

Mr. SCOTT. Gentlemen, thank you.

And I would point out to the committee that it was a mistake to cancel the F-22 contract. It would have been a mistake to allow the Air Force to get rid of the A-10 as they had proposed to. And it will be a mistake to allow the Air Force to stop the recapitalization of the JSTARS program.

And, with that, I yield the 6 seconds that I don't have.

Mr. WILSON. Thank you, Congressman Scott.

And we now proceed to Congressman Salud Carbajal of California.

Mr. CARBAJAL. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to all the witnesses for being here today.

My question is regarding the sustainment of the F-35s. I don't understand how we can plan to sustain over 250 F-35 aircraft while we try to triple the size of the fleet by 2021 when there continues to be serious ongoing challenges to the program.

Currently, F-35 repairs at the depots are 6 years behind schedule. There is a part shortage leaving the aircraft unable to fly about 22 percent of the time in 2017, and the Autonomic Logistics Information System, ALIS, is facing development delays. We are essentially building new aircraft to be quickly deemed not mission capable.

This is a readiness challenge as we will not have full-functioning F-35s for our pilots to train or operate on. It is my understanding that ALIS has yet to be rolled out because of key remaining deficiencies.

What is the status of ALIS? How is all of this impacting our readiness and the ability of our pilots to train and deploy with these aircrafts?

General NOWLAND. Congressman Carbajal, thank you for that question.

We have deployed a squadron, the 34th Fighter Squadron, on a theater security package into the Pacific AOR [area of responsibility]. So the problems that you highlight talk about the system in general, and as we look at the system in general, they are absolute challenges in sustainment and cost.

And our Secretary of the Air Force is actively working with the Deputy Secretary of Defense to try to drive cost down and performance measures on the ALIS, Autonomic Logistics Information System.

However, what we have seen from our deployed forces is that those F-15s that are forward, the Air Force, as well as the Marine F-15—I mean F-35s, are performing well downrange, and they are actually making fourth generation better.

So it is a challenge as we grow the system with the parts because we are still building airplanes, and it is an international program. They are trying to work through it. Our logisticians are working with the joint program office to streamline that as best they can.

Mr. CARBAJAL. I appreciate your answer, but I will tell you that it would be great if we could somehow get some kind of action plan that identifies all these deficiencies and some timelines by which we hope to be able to overcome these challenges.

Because if not, your statement, as great as it sounds, it is pretty hollow. So it would be great for us to know, what is the Air Force action plan to address these issues and the timeframe by which to do it?

General NOWLAND. We will take that and give you a written answer on that so that way we can provide that to you.

[The information referred to was not available at the time of printing.]

Mr. CARBAJAL. Thank you very much.

Mr. Chair, I yield back my time.

Mr. WILSON. Thank you, Congressman Carbajal.

We now proceed to Congressman Dr. Scott DesJarlais of Tennessee.

Dr. DESJARLAIS. I thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And thank you, gentlemen, for being here today.

General Rice, good to see you again. As you know, Tennessee has a strong Guard presence all across the State. It is something we are very proud of. And our Air Guard in particular carried out an exceptional set of important missions that contribute to our national security on a daily basis.

General James Hecker of the U.S. Central Command recently stated that we have 50 percent more MQ-9 drones providing ISR capabilities in Afghanistan than we had a year ago. For obvious reasons, RPAs [remotely piloted aircraft] have become very popular with our combatant commands, and the Air Force budget reflects that demand with its request to procure 8 peacetime and 21 OCO Reaper drones.

My question is, what does the combat line growth and procurement increase mean for National Guard RPA missions?

General RICE. Thanks for that question, sir. And bottom line, thanks for your support too of our Guard. We can't do it alone. We

need your help as we work hand in hand on how we present forces across the Total Force, Guard, Active, and Reserve.

As far as RPA specific, it is a building-block approach. So not only is it just the platforms to put up, but it is also the ground control stations, and it is the processing, exploitation, and dissemination of the data. And so parts and pieces of that are growing in Tennessee, and we are putting in platforms, newer platforms of MQ-9s into Tennessee as we field those over in the next few years. That is our part. That is our role right now: to expand that capability within the National Guard across all of our units that we have fielded, which includes Tennessee.

Dr. DESJARLAIS. Okay. And followup to that, in regards to RPA launch and recovery elements [LREs], during the recent California wildfires, we saw firsthand the critical role RPAs can have in assisting first responders. How many domestic LREs do we currently have, and are there plans to prop up more LRE missions?

General RICE. Our goal is to have 5 units with LREs. We have two at each one of our training units in New York in March, and then we have three other units that are receiving the launch and recovery elements too.

Once we get to that level, I think we will be able to maintain the weapons system for a while and a good balance between home-station training and response in the homeland as well as be able to deploy one of the five at any time to meet Air Combat Command missions.

Dr. DESJARLAIS. We would be happy to host one of those at Nashville, by the way.

General RICE. Noted, sir. Duly noted.

Dr. DESJARLAIS. And also because we are on that subject, we would love to have you back down to Tennessee soon. And I want to reiterate how perfectly situated the 164th is to host an AERO-MED [aeromedical] squadron should there be mission growth in that area.

General Nowland, yesterday, this group was at an Armed Services retreat, and the Deputy Secretary of Defense Patrick Shanahan used an anecdote talking about the repair times for aircraft. And he gave an example of a Southwest airliner, 737, if it had a part problem, I think he used a flap as an example, that that could be procured, replaced, and the plane could be flying within 24 hours. But put that same 737 in a military skin, it might take 6 months just to get the part and 3 months to repair it.

First of all, is that an accurate description? And if so, considering that 50 percent of our airplanes are in poor repair and not ready to fly, how do we solve that problem?

General NOWLAND. Thank you very much. It is an interesting question for me. I am not positive, given the facts, that I can say if it is true or not true. Certainly, we have unique part sets where our logistics system doesn't where we sit. And we measure that, and remember, we call it S time and then B time, which is technical term for how much we are sitting.

Our older airplanes absolutely have part problems. Our WC-135s, our older boutique airplanes have logistics challenges. Some of our newer airplanes, as was pointed out, F-35. But for the most part, we have invested in weapon system sustainment. So our parts

supply and our Defense Logistics Agency and our A-4 is managing it, I would say, fairly well if you look at our metrics across.

The other thing that we do in our small airplanes is we have what is called a CANN [cannibalization] rate, which is where we take a part out and we take it and we move it. And, right now, our cannibalization rate is very good. We are not doing that. So all indicators are, across the majority of the fleet, we are looking pretty well. Our older airplanes, though, challenges.

Dr. DESJARLAIS. Thank you. I yield back.

Mr. WILSON. Thank you very much, Doctor.

We now proceed to Congressman Don McEachin of Virginia.

Mr. MCEACHIN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And, Generals and Major General, thank you all for being here.

And if you have already covered this, I apologize for my tardiness, but as we think about readiness and as we think about readiness particularly where the Air Force is concerned, can you speak to me about pilots? And do you have enough pilots? Is there a pilot shortage? And how can we help you address that shortage if it exists?

General NOWLAND. That is one of my favorite questions, so thank you very much for asking it.

Where we can help, yes, we do have a pilot shortage. As you know, the numbers were about 2,000 pilots short, about 1,300 fighter pilots short. Where it really manifests itself mostly right now is in our staffs, which are our organizations which oversee, because we are continuing to reduce our staffs to keep our cockpits manned, which has a second-order effect.

Where we need help and I think that we are going to come to ask Congress for some help, is to increase our capacity. As we said, our Secretary said, our capacity needs to be at 1,400 per year, and we need to hold that steady.

The question is: As was noted with the T-6, we are challenged right now because that fleet is grounded; the TX is coming onboard. So we have a group of ideas on how we could increase our production, and we are working through those ideas. And we would love to come into the future, once we get them mature, to share those with the committee on how we think we might need some help to continue to get after it.

The other thing we are doing is we are experimenting. Our Air Education and Training Command, General Kwast, is running an experiment on how do you increase, reduce the amount of time that it takes to train a pilot, which therefore would increase your throughput. So we are looking at all avenues as we move forward.

Mr. MCEACHIN. Okay. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I yield back.

Mr. WILSON. Thank you, Congressman McEachin.

We now proceed to Congressman General Trent Kelly of Mississippi.

Mr. KELLY. Thank you, Chairman. And thank you, all, for being here.

General Nowland, just real quickly, you talked about the number of pilots, increasing the throughput and the training of pilots on the entry level. Is that including the number included for the Na-

tional Guard and Reserve to make sure that we have training seats?

Because it doesn't matter. We have got to have the capacity to train, but it can't just be the Active Component. It has got to be also—that capacity has to include those same pilots to go into the Guard and Reserve. Does your number you gave me include that—earlier, the number you gave earlier?

General NOWLAND. Congressman Kelly, thank you. Great question.

Absolutely includes our Total Force—Reserve, Guard, Active Duty—and it also includes a small sliver because our strategy says “in, with, and through international partners.” So there is some international development—I mean production in there also.

General RYDHOLM. Congressman, could I pick up a piece of that too, if I could, sir?

Mr. KELLY. Yes.

General RYDHOLM. To General Nowland's point, one of the things that we see across the Air Force Reserve is that we lose roughly—we have 3,500 pilots, and we lose roughly 10 percent per year. We get 100 training slots, so we need to be able to affiliate 250 Active Component airmen as they come off the Active Duty and come to us.

One of the ways that we are looking at doing that is through a number of initiatives, one of them being special salary rates for our Air Reserve technicians, another being some other incentive bonuses and things.

And then, in addition to that, with the pure production piece that was just stated, we have contributed a number of airmen to the enterprise, maintenance airmen in particular, seasoned airmen in the Air Force Reserve that are helping some of our large production formal training unit locations, such as Luke Air Force Base and the F-16.

Mr. KELLY. Thank you.

And, General Rice, you talked about the TRICARE Reserve Select and our Federal technicians. I understand that. I am actually looking at that, and that is something that is very important.

It is important to me that when we have soldiers, sailors, airmen, and Marines, whatever, Reserve or National Guard or Active Component, if we are doing the same job on a daily basis, we shouldn't have different benefits. They should be exactly the same.

And we shouldn't tell people, “Because you are a Fed tech, you can't get this TRICARE, you have got to pay more and have less benefits than someone else,” when their part-time—their full-time job supports the part-time job, and it is the same. And so I am supportive of that.

And, General Rice, I just want to ask you: Do you feel like you have the adequate number of training slots to make sure that we have the right number of Air Guard pilots trained and ready to go on a moment's notice?

General RICE. Absolutely, sir. We definitely have the right number of training slots. As General Nowland referenced, this is a Total Force effort on getting ahead on producing pilots, and we are right there hand in hand with them.

Mr. KELLY. And, General Rice, I guess, this is for all of you all, but I will start with you. We shouldn't have the part problems that we have in getting parts there on time. And I understand PLL [production load list] from an Army issue, and I don't know what you guys call it, but we call it PLL, and that is our basic load of parts that we know are going to break. And that is delegated way too far down to the level on some of those things.

We should know what is breaking on F-35s. We should know what is breaking on A-10s and F-22s. And that has got to be readjusted every year at the highest level, but we should never be caught by surprise and have to wait 6 or 8 months for the same part 100 times in a year.

That is poor management at some level. And so we really got to get better. With all the computer systems, we know across the world what the break rate on A-10s are or on F-35s or C-17s, and so I just want to make sure.

And the final thing is, General Rice, allocating new planes, are we getting the right mix of getting the C-17s and the F-35s to the Guard and the Reserve to make sure that we can respond in a moment's notice? Are we getting the right mix in the acquisition and fielding of all of our planes?

General RICE. Mr. Kelly, we have five capstone principles that define what the Air National Guard brings to the table, things like we are experience based; we are dual-role mission and doing domestic ops [operations] and overseas. And one of the things that provides us the ability to serve as an operational part of the force in the Reserve Component is the fact that we get concurrent and balanced modernization and recapitalization. And I am here today to tell you, yes, we are getting concurrent and balanced modernization and recapitalization from the Air Force. Great support.

Thank you, sir.

Mr. KELLY. And very briefly, General Nowland, make sure you are letting these guys know, all the guys who are leaving in the Active Component, I hate to lose that. They should go to the Reserves. There is varying levels of which people can serve at points in their life. I am a victim of that at some time.

So make sure we don't lose a pilot, that we can maintain those years of experience that can go to the Guard and Reserve. And I have to yield back, but thank you, Mr. Chairman.

General NOWLAND. Yes, sir.

Mr. WILSON. And thank you, Congressman Kelly.

We now proceed to Congresswoman Vicky Hartzler of Missouri.

Mrs. HARTZLER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

So, General Nowland, the end of the Cold War, along with other factors, resulted in the early termination of the B-2 program, which is at Whiteman Air Force Base in my district. And, ultimately, as you know, we only have 21. Originally, we were supposed to have 132.

And that, of course, has resulted in ballooning the cost of the—per plane when they were being built, as well as supply chain issues, parts sustainment that we are still dealing with today.

And the B-2 bomber, that was the only aircraft in the bomber fleet that is able to operate in a contested air space. Since we only have 20 B-2s, there is really less than that when you see how

many can be combat coded. So can you comment on the importance of keeping the B-21 program on time and on budget and at the full number requested?

General NOWLAND. Congresswoman Hartzler, that is a great question, and it absolutely is imperative for the United States Air Force that we move into great power competition, that we fully recapitalize our strategic bomber fleet.

The 100 B-21s that General Rand as a minimum would like to buy and our Chief and Secretary fully support is critical towards our future capacity as we think about time-distance problems that we have.

As you know, the B-2 strike that we did last summer all the way in Libya is an example of the ability to reach out and touch a target anywhere in the world and accomplish America's objectives.

The B-2, the B-21, and the B-52 recapitalization with long-range munitions are critical towards our power as we move into great power competition, and keeping it on time is also really important.

Mrs. HARTZLER. So what is your perspective on when to retire the B-1 and the B-2 bomber? Given that the B-2 can penetrate anti-access air space and the B-1 cannot, doesn't it make sense to retire the B-2 last to ensure the maximum amount of stealth bombers are available to prevent any gaps in capacity and capability?

General NOWLAND. Ma'am, I have talked to General Rand, and I have been in a room with the Chief and General Rand were talking about this, and combatant commander requirements are absolutely included in the planning as we move forward to make sure that we have no gaps in our penetrating capacity.

The future of the Air Force is penetrating, nonpenetrating, manned and unmanned, but the strategic bomber capacity to penetrate an enemy's airspace—and we think of the enemy's airspace not as an Iron Dome but as Swiss cheese, so it is a team of team approaches to get in that Swiss cheese, open it, and they are committed not to retire anything and lose that capacity. So they are sequencing that.

Mrs. HARTZLER. Okay. And, General Rice, I am sure you are aware of that as well. I am so proud of the way that Whiteman is certainly a joint force with both the 131st Bomb Wing, the Guard, with Active Duty 509th, totally, totally integrated, work in harmony every day.

Now, airmen leaving the Active Duty Component have an opportunity to continue their service in the Guard. However, if there is not a control grade available, those highly qualified and trained B-2 airmen cannot continue their service in the 131st unit.

So how does the current control grade cap impact the Air National Guard's ability to recruit and retain qualified airmen for full-time Guard positions?

General RICE. That is a very relevant question, ma'am, because that is right in the heart of our personnel issues to grow readiness. We need congressional relief for control grade caps, no doubt.

Mrs. HARTZLER. Okay. That is good. I am glad to hear that clear message from you on that because I believe so as well.

And so you would concur that there is a shortage of control grades, and how do you think that is impacting the Air National Guard?

General RICE. I just would clarify something. I don't think—I don't look at it in terms of a shortage or overage. I look at it as a limit. So, right now, we are limited on the number of control grades we have. That limit is stifling our ability to capture—back to our capstone principles—the experience base that is coming off of the Active service.

So we don't hire a lot of lieutenants and E-1s and E-2s. We hire a percentage, but not a lot. Most of our experience base is at the 10-year point, 15-year point, and more control grades on majors, lieutenant colonels, and colonels, and E-8s and E-9s is critical for us to maintain that experience base.

Mrs. HARTZLER. Okay. Very good. Thank you. Yield back.

Mr. WILSON. Thank you, Congresswoman Hartzler.

I am grateful that Congresswoman Madeleine Bordallo has another question.

Ms. BORDALLO. General Rydholm, I have a question for you. Thank you for taking time to meet with me on Monday, and I appreciate you making multiple trips to my office already this year to advocate for both the Air Force Reserve and the Total Force.

Earlier this week, it was published that the Air Force plans to retire both the B-2 and the B-1 bombers as the B-21 becomes operational. So can you please comment on any intentions of the Air Force Reserve Command to absorb legacy bomber aircraft?

And the second question is, what are the advantages or disadvantages of the Guard and the Reserve Components maintaining a fleet that has been divested by the Active Duty Component?

General RYDHOLM. Okay, ma'am, well, thank you for the question. I would like to answer it kind of in reverse order.

I would say—and General Rice mentioned this one time before—we feel very strongly about the concurrent investment and divestment of weapons systems. So the legacy H model of C-130 is probably a good example of that because when you compare that—and the Guard and Reserve had many of those airframes—when you compare that airframe to the Active Duty J model, the crew complement is different, the training is different, the supply chain logistics are different, everything is different about it. So it is bad, but the Air Force as a whole is doing a great job when we expanded in new weapons systems of going into those weapons systems holistically with the Total Force.

From our perspective in the Reserve Command, we are currently participating in the B-52 at Barksdale and the B-1 at Dyess. We anticipate, as has been stated earlier by General Nowland, that, based on General Rand's plan of keeping a lot of B-52s around for a long time, up to 100 years, for the lifecycle time on that airframe, that growth in that is actually a good thing, and we are looking at small growth in what we are doing at Barksdale.

As far as the B-1 is concerned, our association there at Dyess is fairly small. The footprint is working well for us, and there is talk of expansion there. And our expectation, as has been the case in other weapons systems, is that if we retire a bomber, we will replace it with a new bomber.

And, therefore, our expectation would be that, if we are currently associating in the B-1 at Dyess and the choice is made to divest that aircraft in order to invest in the B-21, that we would invest with our Active Duty partners in that same airframe.

Ms. BORDALLO. Thank you, General. My time is so limited here. As a followup, do you anticipate these changes in the bomber fleet that would have any impact on the continuous bomber presence on Guam?

General RYDHOLM. Well, I am not sure that I can answer, but I think that one of the things that General Nowland mentioned was that we do not want to take down any weapons system until we know that we have at least a similar or a more capable weapon system to replace it.

Therefore, my expectation would be with the investment that we are doing into some of our older bombers, like the B-52, et cetera, that the continuous bomber presence, which provides a tremendous deterrent for our Nation, will continue.

Ms. BORDALLO. All right. Thank you. You know, we really want to keep those bombers there because of all the unrest in the Pacific Asia area at this time.

In a hearing last month with this committee, GAO [Government Accountability Office] identified critical F-35 sustainment challenges, including limited repair capacity and spare part shortages. What steps does the Department intend to take to ensure that the F-35 fleet meets production timelines while stabilizing operation readiness requirements? Would that be you or—

General NOWLAND. Ma'am, that would be me.

So the joint program office, which is led by a one-star for the United States Air Force, is looking into this. And it gets—it has to do with priority. The United States Air Force right now has the most F-35s of anyone out there. Yet the supply system right now kind of distributes them across the force.

So the Air Force is looking, how do we do it, the redistribution of the supply system, towards our priority missions? We have a priority mission overseas, and it demonstrates that, when the airplane gets the part, the airplane flies extremely well. So they are looking at how we hold sustainment costs down while at the same time providing the parts that we need to get.

And I think that when we can provide a plan back, we will provide that to the entire committee, obviously, and hopefully that will help answer that question.

Ms. BORDALLO. Okay. Thank you very much.

And I yield back, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. WILSON. Thank you, Congresswoman Bordallo.

And I am grateful that Congressman Austin Scott has a further question.

Mr. SCOTT. General Rydholm, I think the statement that you made was: Don't take down one system until you know you have a replacement system that works.

General RYDHOLM. Yes, sir.

Mr. SCOTT. I agree with that, just for the record. The JSTARS works, and there is no replacement system that works. I would ask one followup to you.

Would you be supportive of legislation that would ensure that Air Force Reserve mil techs are considered essential during—and hopefully we have taken government shutdowns off the table for the next 2 years with the bill that passed last week—so that they would be exempt from furloughs?

General RYDHOLM. Well, I appreciate your efforts with the bill. And as you know, I was in your office the day before the government shutdown, and it was a difficult day for everyone.

We absolutely support the exemption of mil techs. As most of you are aware, a number of us had—after the Friday night shutdown, a number of Air National Guard, Air Force Reserve organizations had their drill weekends, and that had an impact on folks.

In a large degree, what we do on a drill weekend and the heart and soul of most of our organizations are mil techs. That 30 percent at the unit level are the people that are the bread and butter that run the daily operations in those organizations, and when we have to make decisions about which are exempt and which aren't exempt based on either emerging missions or named operations, it becomes very complicated, and it would be much, much better from our perspective if we, once for all, first and foremost, we get back to a stable budget, and we wouldn't have to worry about it. But if we can't get to that, at a minimum then we would look for support to help us get the exemptions for our Air Reserve technicians.

Mr. SCOTT. Well, I hope that we have an agreement so that continuing resolutions and shutdowns and potential sequester is over with for at least the next 2 budget years, but I do think that we probably should continue forward trying to find a resolution of that in case we end up in the unfortunate scenario that we have been in because of the few hard heads up here that would rather prove a point than make a difference.

So I look forward to continuing to work with you and thank you. Thank you all for your service.

General RYDHOLM. Thank you.

General RICE. And, Congressman, I would like to add that it is not just an Air Force Reserve mil tech issue. It is a Guard and Reserve Total Force issue with dual-status guardsmen as well.

Mr. SCOTT. Yes, sir. Thank you for correcting me, General Rice.

General RICE. Thank you, sir.

Mr. SCOTT. I yield the remainder of my time.

Mr. WILSON. And, Congressman Scott, thank you very much for bringing up that very important issue and your insight.

Also, General Nowland, General Rice, and General Rydholm, thank you for your candid remarks and helping this subcommittee understand how the President's budget request plans to restore and rebuild the U.S. Air Force, which we are so proud of.

This has been a special hearing in that with the sound system on and off, depending on the moment, and I want to thank our stenographer, Kellie Humiston, for being so understanding as she sat there quietly and could hear all of us and correctly record this hearing.

And for this, the hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 4:35 p.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

A P P E N D I X

FEBRUARY 14, 2018

PREPARED STATEMENTS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

FEBRUARY 14, 2018

Statement of the Honorable Joe Wilson
Chairman, Readiness Subcommittee
Hearing: “Air Force Readiness Posture”
February 14, 2018

Good afternoon.

Ladies and gentlemen, I call the hearing to order.

Thank you all for being here today. This hearing is the first in a series of Readiness hearings on the services’ budget request and readiness posture. Today, I look forward to hearing how the Air Force’s budget request **enables** a readiness recovery plan, where we **continue** to take risks, and how this request supports our men and women in uniform who put their lives on the line every day.

Over the course of the past two years, this subcommittee has met with Air Force leadership to understand the depth of the readiness challenges facing the Air Force. We expect that this budget attacks the most critical challenges; namely those issues most essential to halting the readiness decline and rebuilding and restore the Air Force. Our Air Force remains the most powerful in the world; however, it will take years to rebuild and restore. The purpose of this hearing is to clarify the Air Force’s choices for its budget requests, to address funding priorities and mitigation strategies and to gather more detail on the current and future impacts of these decisions on operations, maintenance, training, and modernization. Most importantly, does the Air Force have the resources it requires in order to rebuild and restore readiness? Can it support the large sustainment bills looming in the future?

I fully believe the primary responsibility of the national government is to provide for the national security of its citizens – and that is especially true of our airmen who freely risk their lives to serve this nation; therefore, it is our responsibility as members of this subcommittee to understand the readiness situation and how the budget request assisting the Department of the Air Force in correcting any deficiencies and restoring and rebuilding the capabilities this nation needs.

I welcome all of our members and the distinguished panel of senior Air Force leaders present today.

This afternoon we have with us:

- Lieutenant General Mark Nowland, Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations, U.S. Air Force
- Lieutenant General Scott Rice, Director of the Air National Guard
and
- Major General Derek P. Rydholm, Deputy to the Chief of Air Force Reserve

Thank you all for testifying today and we look forward to your thoughts and insights on these important issues.

I would now like to turn to our distinguished Ranking Member, Congresswoman Madeleine Bordallo of Guam, for any remarks she may have.

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:

LIEUTENANT GENERAL MARK C. NOWLAND
DEPUTY CHIEF OF STAFF FOR OPERATIONS
HEADQUARTERS, U.S. AIR FORCE

AND

LIEUTENANT GENERAL L. SCOTT RICE, DIRECTOR
AIR NATIONAL GUARD
HEADQUARTERS, U.S. AIR FORCE

AND

MAJOR GENERAL DEREK P. RYDHOLM
DEPUTY CHIEF OF AIR FORCE RESERVE
HEADQUARTERS, U.S. AIR FORCE

February 14, 2018

NOT FOR PUBLICATION UNTIL RELEASED
BY THE COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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

Lieutenant General Mark C. Nowland

Lt. Gen. Mark C. Nowland is the Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations, Headquarters U.S. Air Force, Washington, D.C. He is responsible to the Secretary of the Air Force and the Chief of Staff for formulating policy supporting air, space, cyber, and irregular warfare, counter proliferation, homeland security and weather operations. As the Air Force operations deputy to the Joint Chief of Staff, the general determines operational requirements, capabilities and training necessary to support national security objectives and military strategy.

General Nowland is a 1985 graduate from the U.S. Air Force Academy. He previously commanded at the squadron, wing, and numbered Air Force levels. He also served on the Joint Staff, US SOUTHCOM and two Air Force major command staffs. The general has flown combat operations in support of operations Southern Watch and Iraqi Freedom. He is also a graduate of the School of Advanced Air and Space Studies and was a National Security Fellow at the Olin Institute at Harvard University. Prior to his current assignment, General Nowland was the Commander, 12th Air Force, Air Combat Command, and Commander, Air Forces Southern, U.S. Southern Command, Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Arizona.

General Nowland is a command pilot with more than 3,600 flying hours, primarily in the A-10, F-15A/C/D, T-37B, T-38A/C A/T-38B and T-6.

Lieutenant General L. Scott Rice

Lieutenant General L. Scott Rice is the Director, Air National Guard, the Pentagon, Washington, D.C. He is responsible for formulating, developing and coordinating all policies, plans and programs affecting more than 105,500 Guard members and civilians in more than 90 wings and 175 geographically separated units across 213 locations throughout the 50 States, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Guam and the Virgin Islands.

General Rice was commissioned in 1980 through the Reserve Officer Training Corps at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, Troy, New York and graduated from undergraduate pilot training at Reese Air Force Base, Texas in 1982. He is a command pilot with more than 4,300 hours in the F-111 and A-10. Before assuming his current position, General Rice served as The Adjutant General and Commander, Massachusetts Air National Guard.

He has served in various operational and staff assignments including Commander, Air Force Forces, Exercise Eastern Falcon in United States Central Command. He has commanded a squadron, operations group, and fighter wing. He also served as the Assistant Adjutant General for Air, and Commander, Massachusetts Air National Guard.

Major General Derek P. Rydholm

Maj. Gen. Derek P. Rydholm is the Deputy to the Chief of Air Force Reserve, Headquarters U.S. Air Force Washington, D.C. He assists the Chief of Air Force Reserve who serves as the principal adviser on Reserve matters to the Secretary of the Air Force and Air Force Chief of Staff. He facilitates matters pertaining to the oversight of Air Force Reserve appropriations for personnel, operations and maintenance, and construction programs for a force of more than 70,000 personnel. As deputy, he often represents the Chief with other Air Staff agencies in the formulation and development of plans, policies and programs affecting the Air Force Reserve. General Rydholm assists the chief in developing the organizational architecture of the Air Force Reserve in accordance with wartime requirements and budget realities. During mobilization, he advises Air Force officials on capabilities and issues related to plans and policies for recall and mobilization of the Air Force Reserve.

General Rydholm is a 1983 graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy and a 1988 graduate of the U.S. Navy Fighter Weapons School. Upon graduation from the Naval Academy, he completed pilot training at Beeville, Texas, before being sent to fleet replacement training in the F-14 Tomcat at Naval Air Station Oceana, Virginia. After flying F-14s operationally for three years, General Rydholm then flew F-16s as an exchange pilot at Homestead Air Reserve Base, Florida. While there he completed his commitment to the Navy and continued to fly the F-16 as an Air Reserve Technician in the 482nd Fighter Wing. Prior to his current assignment, General Rydholm was the Director of Plans, Programs and Requirements, Headquarters Air Force Reserve Command (AFRC), Robins Air Force Base, Georgia.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MEMBERS POST HEARING

FEBRUARY 14, 2018

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MR. SCOTT

Mr. SCOTT. I'm concerned to see the Air Force still imposing risk in the Weapons System Sustainment (WSS) account in the delivered budget. We need to remain focused on the depot funding to ensure aircraft are available on time to meet combatant commander requirements. One of the largest stumbling blocks is the recruitment and retention of qualified individuals in our depots. What steps are you taking to address expedite depot workforce direct hiring as well as retention efforts?

General NOWLAND. **HIRING:** The Air Force is grateful for the direct hiring authority to expedite hiring at depots that Congress provided in the FY17 NDAA, an authority that has been extended through 2021. While Air Force utilization of the direct hiring authority was delayed in 2017 due to the Presidential Hiring Freeze and delayed DOD implementation guidance, Air Force Materiel Command is now maximizing the use of the authority to expedite hiring in several occupations in its depots (e.g., aircraft maintenance, engineers, firefighters.) As of 28 Feb 2018, 1000+ hires have been on-boarded under this expedited hiring authority. **1. RETENTION:** Retention efforts include maximizing the use of recruitment and relocation incentives and student loan repayments to hire and retain highly qualified depot personnel. These efforts include using expedited advance in hire rate packages to offer competitive salary increases to engineers. Additional retention efforts include the following: a. Two key programs have yielded great benefits in retaining scientists and engineers. First, Section 852 Defense Acquisition Workforce Development Funds have been a valuable resource supporting our efforts to recruit, hire, retain, train, and develop our scientist and engineer workforce. Second, in 2016, the Air Force Materiel Command implemented the DOD Civilian Acquisition Workforce Personnel Demonstration Project (AcqDemo) for the acquisition workforce, including scientists and engineers. Although it is in the initial stages of implementation, AcqDemo provides vital hiring and compensation flexibilities that enable hiring managers to offer competitive salaries and compensate our technical workforce according to performance. b. Additionally, the Air Force authorizes civilian pay incentives to alleviate personnel recruiting and retention problems due to differences in Federal and non-Federal pay for comparable occupations. Retention incentives are paid to an employee if the agency determines that the unusually high or unique qualifications of the employee or a special need of the agency makes it essential to retain the employee and the employee would likely leave the Federal service without a retention incentive. Employees must sign a service agreement prior to receiving a retention incentive. These incentives are based on limited funding pools within the installations. Air Force Materiel Command currently has 35 employees assigned who received ~18K in retention incentives.

Mr. SCOTT. I continue to support the Light Attack experiment and look forward to the results of phase two at the end of July 2018. This program will not only provide a means to avoid the costly operations and maintenance on the 4th and 5th Generation fighter fleet but bolster the opportunities to partner with international countries who might not be able to afford a more pricey jet like the F-35 or F-15. What are the initial assessments on the requirements for pilots to meet the cockpit demand signal in the light attack while not decrementing the readiness levels in other platforms?

General NOWLAND. The procurement of a light attack aircraft (LAA) will initially introduce a minimum demand increase among experienced fighter aircrew (~50-100) over the inaugural years. This will be effectively managed through the deliberate and combined use of Total Force Airmen, transitions from other platforms, and contractor/civilian augmentation. Around year three, the LAA enterprise becomes self-sustaining to meet its demands with experienced LAA aircrew and begins "paying bills" for other communities (e.g., training assignments, deployed staffs, etc.), allowing experienced aircrew in fighters, mobility, special operations, and others to remain in their career fields.