

**Statement of the Vice Chief of Staff of the Air Force**

**Senate Armed Services Committee**

**Readiness Subcommittee**

**9 March 2004**

Chairman Ensign, Senator Akaka, Committee members, thank you for this opportunity to once again appear along side my distinguished colleagues to present the readiness status of the world's greatest Air Force. As the Air Force's Vice Chief of Staff, it is my privilege to report on the our key programs and on behalf of Airmen stationed around the globe and those flying right now, I want to thank this committee for your continued focus on readiness and the challenges facing our airmen today. We are a ready force – expeditionary in nature – and global in execution. Whether operating here at home or supporting the simultaneous joint force commanders across the globe, our mission success has been a testament to our current state of readiness and your dedication. In terms of Air Force readiness, Congressional attention, particularly from this Committee, has paved the way for the substantive increases we saw in our ability to prosecute this nation's National Security Strategy over the past few years. The renewed emphasis on such programs as spare parts, depot maintenance, and munitions stockpiles laid the foundation for readiness and mission capable rates that our Air Force has not seen in some time. At the same time, your Committee's increases to our flying hour, training, and general Operations and Maintenance (O&M) funding made it possible for our force to remain the most proficient Air Force in the world. In short, because of the improvements that Congress supported over the past few years, enemies like the Ba'athist regime of Saddam Hussein could not have picked a worse possible time to confront the United States. They met a joint force composed of the best Airmen, soldier, sailors, and Marines with the best equipment the world had ever seen. With this continued level of support we can reset the force, recapitalize our vital air and space capabilities, and bring technology to the warfighter – all while providing air and space power, one of this Nation's most lethal and responsive capabilities to the fight.

**LOOKING BACK AT 2003**

The year 2003 marked another historic milestone for the U.S. and the Air Force in the Global War on Terrorism. Since September 11, 2001, air and space power has proven

indispensable to securing American skies, defeating the Taliban, denying sanctuary to al Qaeda and other terrorist organizations, and most recently, removing a brutal and oppressive dictator in Iraq. This Global War on Terrorism imposes on airmen a new steady state of accelerated operations and personnel tempo (PERSTEMPO), as well as a demand for unprecedented speed, agility, and innovation in defeating unconventional and unexpected threats, all while bringing stability and freedom to Afghanistan and Iraq. The Air Force and its airmen will meet these demands.

### **Operation NOBLE EAGLE**

High above our nation, airmen protect our skies and cities through air defense operations known as Operation NOBLE EAGLE (ONE). The Total Force team, comprised of active duty, Air National Guard, and Air Force Reserve airmen, conducts airborne early warning, air refueling, and combat air patrol operations in order to protect sensitive sites, metropolitan areas, and critical infrastructure.

This constant “top cover” demands significant Air Force assets above the pre-September 11th tempo. Since 2001, the Air Force has flown over 34,000 fighter, tanker, and airborne early warning sorties. Last year alone the Air Force scrambled nearly 1,000 aircraft, responding to 800 incidents. Eight active duty, eight Air Force Reserve, and 18 Air National Guard units provided 1,300 tanker sorties offloading more than 32 million pounds of fuel for these missions. Last year, over 2,400 airmen stood vigilant at air defense sector operations centers and other radar sites. Additionally, in 2003, we continued to institutionalize changes to our homeland defense mission through joint, combined, and interagency training and planning. Participating in the initial validation exercise DETERMINED PROMISE-03, the Air Force illustrated how its air defense, air mobility, and command and control capabilities work seamlessly with other agencies supporting NORTHCOM and Department of Homeland Security objectives. The integration and readiness that comes from careful planning and rigorous training will ensure the continued security of America’s skies.

### **Operation ENDURING FREEDOM**

Operation ENDURING FREEDOM - Afghanistan (OEF) is ongoing. Remnants of Taliban forces continue to attack U.S., NATO, coalition troops, humanitarian aid workers, and others involved in the reconstruction of Afghanistan. To defeat this threat, aid coalition stability, and support operations, the Air Force has maintained a presence of nearly 24,000 airmen in and

around the region. Having already flown more than 90,000 sorties (over 72 percent of all OEF missions flown), the Air Force team of active, Guard, and Reserve airmen continue to perform ISR, close air support (CAS), aerial refueling, and tactical and strategic airlift.

While fully engaged in ONE and OIF, the men and women of the Air Force provided full spectrum air and space support, orchestrating assets from every service and ten different nations. Of these, Air Force strike aircraft flying from nine bases flew more than two-thirds of the combat missions, dropped more than 66,000 munitions (9,650 tons) and damaged or destroyed approximately three-quarters of planned targets. In 2003 alone, Air Force assets provided more than 3,000 sorties of on-call CAS, responding to calls from joint and/or coalition forces on the ground.

Last year, the Air Force brought personnel and materiel into this distant, land-locked nation via 7,410 sorties. Over 4,100 passengers and 487 tons of cargo were moved by airmen operating at various Tanker Airlift Control Elements in and around Afghanistan. To support these airlift and combat sorties and the numerous air assets of the coalition with aerial refueling, the Air Force deployed over 50 tankers. In their primary role, these late 1950s-era and early 1960s-era KC-135 tankers flew more than 3,900 refueling missions. In their secondary airlift role, they delivered 3,620 passengers and 405 tons of cargo. Without versatile tankers, our armed forces would need greater access to foreign bases, more aircraft to accomplish the same mission, more airlift assets, and generate more sorties to maintain the required duration on-station.

Operations in Afghanistan also highlight U.S. and coalition reliance on U.S. Space capabilities. This spanned accurate global weather, precise navigation, communications, as well as persistent worldwide missile warning and surveillance. For example, OEF relied on precision navigation provided by the Air Force's GPS constellation, over-the-horizon satellite communications (SATCOM), and timely observations of weather, geodesy, and enemy activity. To accomplish this, space professionals performed thousands of precise satellite contacts and hundreds of station keeping adjustments to provide transparent space capability to the warfighter. These vital space capabilities and joint enablers directly leveraged our ability to pursue U.S. objectives in OEF.

### **Operations NORTHERN WATCH and SOUTHERN WATCH**

During the past 12 years, the Air Force flew over 391,000 sorties enforcing the northern and southern no-fly zones over Iraq. With the preponderance of forces, the Air Force, along with the Navy and Marine Corps, worked alongside the Royal Air Force in Operations NORTHERN WATCH (ONW) and SOUTHERN WATCH (OSW). Manning radar outposts and established C2 centers, conducting ISR along Iraq's borders, responding to almost daily acts of Iraqi aggression, and maintaining the required airlift and air refueling missions taxed Air Force assets since the end of Operation DESERT STORM. Yet, these successful air operations had three main effects: they halted air attacks on the ethnic minority populations under the no-fly zones; they deterred a repeat of Iraqi aggression against its neighbors; and they leveraged enforcement of United Nations Security Council Resolutions. Throughout this period, our airmen honed their warfighting skills, gained familiarity with the region, and were able to establish favorable conditions for OIF. For more than a decade, American airmen rose to one of our nation's most important challenges, containing Saddam Hussein.

### **Operation IRAQI FREEDOM**

On 19 March 2003, our airmen, alongside fellow soldiers, sailors, marines and coalition teammates, were called upon to remove the dangerous and oppressive Iraqi regime -- this date marked the end of ONW/OSW and the beginning of OIF. OIF crystallized the meaning of jointness and the synergies of combined arms and persistent battlefield awareness.

In the first minutes of OIF, airmen of our Combat Air Forces (USAF, USN, USMC, and coalition) were flying over Baghdad. As major land forces crossed the line of departure, Air Force assets pounded Iraqi command and control facilities and key leadership targets, decapitating the decision-makers from their fielded forces. Remaining Iraqi leaders operated with outdated information about ground forces that had already moved miles beyond their reach. As the land component raced toward Baghdad, coalition strike aircraft were simultaneously attacking Iraqi fielded forces, communications and command and control centers, surface-to-surface missile launch sites, and were supporting special operations forces, and ensuring complete air and space dominance in the skies over Iraq. Due to these actions and those during the previous 12 years, none of the 19 Iraqi missile launches were successful in disrupting coalition operations, and not a single Iraqi combat sortie flew during this conflict. Twenty-one days after major combat operations began, the first U.S. land forces reached Baghdad. Five days later, the last major city in Iraq capitulated.

The Air Force provided over 7,000 CAS sorties to aid land forces in the quickest ground force movement in history. Lieutenant General William S. Wallace, Commander of the U.S. Army V Corps said, “none of my commanders complained about the availability, responsiveness, or effectiveness of CAS -- it was unprecedented!” As Iraqi forces attempted to stand against the integrated air and ground offensive, they found a joint and coalition team that was better equipped, better trained, and better led than ever brought to the field of battle.

Training, leadership, and innovation coupled with the Air Force’s recent investment in air mobility allowed U.S. forces to open a second major front in the Iraqi campaign. Constrained from access by land, Air Force C-17s airdropped over 1,000 paratroopers from the 173<sup>rd</sup> Airborne Brigade into northern Iraq. This successful mission opened Bashur airfield and ensured U.S. forces could be resupplied.

Before 2003, the Air Force invested heavily in the lessons learned from OEF. Shortening the “kill chain,” or the time it took to find, fix, track, target, engage, and assess was one of our top priorities. This investment was worthwhile, as 156 time-sensitive targets were engaged within minutes, most with precision weapons. The flexibility of centralized control and decentralized execution of air and space power enabled direct support to JFC objectives throughout Iraq. Coalition and joint airpower shaped the battlefield ahead of ground forces, provided intelligence and security to the flanks and rear of the rapidly advancing coalition, and served as a force multiplier for Special Operations forces. This synergy between Special Operations and the Air Force allowed small specialized teams to have a major effect throughout the northern and western portions of Iraq by magnifying their inherent lethality, guaranteeing rapid tactical mobility, reducing their footprint through aerial resupply, and providing them the advantage of “knowing what was over the next hill” through air and space-borne ISR.

The Air Force’s C2ISR assets enabled the joint force in Afghanistan as well. This invaluable fleet includes the RC-135 Rivet Joint, E-8 JSTARS, and the E-3 AWACS. This “Iron Triad” of intelligence sensors and C2 capabilities illustrates the Air Force vision of horizontal integration in terms of persistent battlefield awareness. Combined with the Global Hawk unmanned aerial vehicle and Predator remotely piloted aircraft, spaced-based systems, U-2, and Compass Call, these invaluable system provided all-weather, multi-source intelligence to commanders from all services throughout the area of responsibility.

OIF was the Predator's first "networked" operation. Four simultaneous Predator orbits were flown over Iraq and an additional orbit operated over Afghanistan, with three of those orbits controlled via remote operations in the U.S. This combined reachback enabled dynamic support to numerous OIF missions. Predator also contributed to our operational flexibility, accomplishing hunter-killer missions, tactical ballistic missile search, force protection, focused intelligence collection, air strike control, and special operations support. A Hellfire equipped Predator also conducted numerous precision strikes against Iraqi targets, and flew armed escort missions with U.S. Army helicopters.

Space power provided precise, all-weather navigation, global communications, missile warning, and surveillance. The ability to adapt to adverse weather conditions, including sandstorms, allowed air, land, and maritime forces to confound the Iraqi military and denied safe haven anywhere in their own country. As the Iraqis attempted to use ground-based GPS jammers, Air Force strike assets destroyed them, in some cases, using the very munitions the jammers attempted to defeat. As Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld noted, this new era was illustrated by the coalition's "unprecedented combination of power, precision, speed, and flexibility."

During the height of OIF, the Air Force deployed 54,955 airmen. Ambassador Paul Bremer, Chief of the Coalition Provisional Authority, pronounced, "In roughly three weeks [we] liberated a country larger than Germany and Italy combined, and [we] did so with forces smaller than the Army of the Potomac." Led by the finest officers and non-commissioned officers, our airmen flew more than 79,000 sorties since March of 2003. Ten thousand strike sorties dropped 37,065 munitions. The coalition flew over 55,000 airlift sorties moved 469,093 passengers and more than 165,060 tons of cargo. In addition, over 10,000 aerial refueling missions supported aircraft from all services, and 1,600 ISR missions provided battlespace awareness regardless of uniform, service, or coalition nationality. This was a blistering campaign that demanded a joint and combined effort to maximize effects in the battlespace.

Today, Air Force airmen continue to contribute to the joint and coalition team engaged in Iraq. At the end of the year, 6,723 airmen from the active duty, Reserve, and Air National Guard conducted a wide range of missions from locations overseas, flying approximately 150 sorties per day including CAS for ground forces tracking down regime loyalists, foreign fighters, and terrorists. On a daily basis, U-2 and RC-135 aircraft flew ISR sorties monitoring the porous

borders of Iraq and providing situational awareness and route planning for Army patrols in stability and support operations. Providing everything from base security for 27 new bases opened by the coalition to the lifeline of supplies that air mobility and air refueling assets bring to all joint forces, Air Force airmen are committed to the successful accomplishment of the U.S. mission in Iraq.

### **Other Contingency Operations**

In 2003, the Air Force remained engaged in America's war on drugs and provided support to NATO ground forces in the Balkans. Since December 1989, Air Force airmen have been an irreplaceable part of the interagency fight against illegal drug and narcotics trafficking. Deployed along the southern U.S., in the Caribbean, and Central and South America, airmen perform this round-the-clock mission, manning nine ground-based radar sites, operating ten aerostats, and flying counter drug surveillance missions. The Air Force detected, monitored, and provided intercepts on over 275 targets attempting to infiltrate our airspace without clearance. Along with our interagency partners, these operations resulted in 221 arrests and stopped hundreds of tons of contraband from being smuggled into our country.

In the Balkans, airmen are fully committed to completing the mission that they started in the 1990s. Today, Air Force airmen have flown over 26,000 sorties supporting Operations JOINT GUARDIAN and JOINT FORGE. These NATO-led operations combine joint and allied forces to implement the Dayton Peace Accords in Bosnia-Herzegovina and enforce the Military Technical Agreement in Kosovo. At the end of 2003, approximately 800 airmen were supporting NATO's goal of achieving a secure environment and promoting stability in the region.

Additionally, the Air Force engaged in deterrence and humanitarian relief in other regions. While the world's attention was focused on the Middle East in the spring of 2003, our nation remained vigilant against potential adversaries in Asia. The Air Force deployed a bomber wing -- 24 B-52s and B-1s -- to the American territory of Guam to deter North Korea. At the height of OIF, our Air Force demonstrated our country's resolve and ability to defend the Republic of Korea and Japan by surging bomber operations to over 100 sorties in less than three days. This deterrent operation complemented our permanent engagement in Northeast Asia. The 8,300 airmen who are stationed alongside the soldiers, sailors, Marines, and our Korean allies maintained the United Nations armistice, marking 50 years of peace on the peninsula.

Our strength in deterring aggression was matched by our strength in humanitarian action. In response to President Bush's directive to help stop the worsening crisis in Liberia, we deployed a non-combat medical and logistics force to create a lifeline to the American Embassy and provide hope to the Liberian people. An Expeditionary Group of airmen provided airlift support, aeromedical evacuation, force protection, and theater of communications support. Flying more than 200 sorties, we transported and evacuated civilians and members of the Joint Task Force (JTF) from bases in Sierra Leone and Senegal. The 300 airmen deployed in support of JTF-Liberia reopened the main airport in Monrovia, and ensured the security for U.S. military and civilian aircraft providing relief aid.

### **Strategic Deterrence**

The ability of U.S. conventional forces to operate and project decisive force is built on the foundation of our strategic deterrent force; one that consists of our nuclear-capable aircraft and Intercontinental Ballistic Missile forces, working with the U.S. Navy's Fleet Ballistic Missile Submarines. In 2003, these forces as well as, persistent overhead missile warning sensors and supporting ground-based radars, provided uninterrupted global vigilance deterring a nuclear missile strike against the U.S. or our allies. The dedicated airmen who operate these systems provide the force capability that yields our deterrent umbrella. Should that deterrence fail, they stand ready to provide a prompt, scalable response.

### **RESETTING THE FORCE**

Preparing and maintaining a force that can adapt to the realities of the new security environment requires the Air Force to reset and reconstitute the capabilities that brought us such outstanding successes in 2003. It is important to restate, the Air Force must reconstitute similar capabilities that were successful, not necessarily the same equipment. For the Air Force we view capabilities as more than just commodities. Beyond just equipment, Air Force warfighting capabilities depend on training and a sustainable battle rhythm for the entire force. Synchronizing these aspects, eliminating duplicative capabilities, and capitalizing on technological advances will all ensure efficiency and most importantly combat readiness. To frame our reset and reconstitution plans we must continue to look at three factors.

First, we are still engaged with very dangerous enemies throughout the globe. We must replenish our stocks, our people, and our ability to project power around the world. Being prepared to deliver precise effects anywhere at anytime as part of a joint and/or coalition force is

a top priority. Second, we must rapidly incorporate our lessons learned and implement those changes to maintain our combat edge. As we remain engaged, our current opponents, as well as would-be adversaries, are watching and learning from the new America way of war. The Air Force must ensure that we capitalize on our successes and our lessons from these recent conflicts. Third, stabilization operations and our ability to capitalize on our successes in OEF and OIF require significant assets and a robust American presence. After opening thirty-eight new or expanded bases in support of OEF and OIF and shifting our focus and forces, we must ensure that our enduring presence is equipped to meet the challenges of their new environments

### **Air and Space Expeditionary Force**

Last year, I testified on behalf of the Air Force that we planned to return to pre-OIF rotational cycles by March 2004. Unfortunately, we now project the AEF – including its integral Low-density/High demand assets will not be fully reset until March 2005. Continued surge operations of several enabling capability-sets is creating new challenges for reconstitution efforts and extending the time to fully restore the readiness of AEF operations by more than twelve months. The previous plan to recover the AEF to sustainable operations ( $\leq 2.0$  AEFs on 90-day rotations) have been complicated by growing global combatant commander requirements across the board. The AEF continues to be operating in higher than normal sustained pace, approaching four AEF's worth of capability in some stressed career fields which are committed at any given moment. The AEF has sustained an operational pace higher than planned to meet increased operational expeditionary air bases requirements in theater and especially the need for additional expeditionary support to meet other Service needs.

### **Training**

I also testified that even with our aggressive efforts to reset certain low density/high demand capabilities, our Expeditionary Combat Support, Intelligence Surveillance, and Reconnaissance assets, and Security Forces, will not meet the March 2004 goal. Due to sustained combat operations and training backlogs, this remains the case. Manpower and equipment shortages due to combat requirements have affected the training pipelines at most of our Formal Training Units. Particularly harsh, training delays in our low density/high demand (LD/HD) assets have increased by several months. In some cases, training backlogs for major weapons systems have grown to over 200 days, with "get well" dates not until the fall of 2005. In addition to manpower and equipment shortages, aging aircraft and scheduled fleet upgrades have also reduced available

training assets, further aggravating training delays. Lastly, flying hours for training have been limited due to high deployment schedules for most weapons systems. One illustration of this problem can be found in the C-130 fleet. While they flew only 43% of the programmed training hours in FY 2003; their high ops tempo in support of ONE, OEF, and OIF resulted in the C-130 fleet flying 218% of their programmed "customer-support" hours.

### **War Reserve Stocks**

Air Force war reserve stocks are comprised of consumables, vehicles, ammunition, and BEAR. We estimate our total cost to replenish all WRM requirements at \$1.96B [wartime consumables (\$131M); vehicles (\$711M for ~4700 vehicles; support equipment (\$82M); and BEAR (\$1.035B including \$331M in the FY03 supplemental)]. FY05 funding allows reconstitution of our fuels equipment and vehicles in approximately 24 months. We plan for full reconstitution of our BEAR kits by FY07 and our four Afloat Preposition Ships with ammunition aboard are all on station.

With combat operations still ongoing, we fill requirements for significant Expeditionary Combat Support and Base Operating Support for all our joint forces and in some cases coalition partners. These systems are critical to our continued force projection capability. We are aggressively reconstituting our Basic Expeditionary Airfield Resources (BEAR) sets, which are used to provide basic infrastructure needed to beddown personnel and aircraft at austere locations anywhere in the world. Currently 41% of BEAR capability is ready for deployment (63/152 BEAR Sets). Over the next 24 months, readiness will continue to improve as BEAR sets deployed to OIF are reconstituted and new assets are delivered into the inventory due to the supplemental funding received.

### **MAINTAINING READINESS DURING WARTIME**

Our \$27.1B Readiness Request ensures that the Air Force remains ready to perform our wide-ranging global missions, from space support to global strike to global mobility and homeland defense. Our fully funded Flying Hour Program funds consumables, spare parts, and fuels needed to sustain aircrew combat readiness. It requests funding for 1.7 million flying hours to maintain combat readiness and support joint operations around the world. It funds worldwide mobility to ensure joint and coalition forces have the forces and equipment they need. Our budget funds facility sustainment at 95% and meets the Defense Department's goal.

A success story for Air Force readiness during wartime has been our aircraft availability. In FY 2003, we enjoyed our highest active overall mission capable rates in six years--the largest improvements since the mid-1980s. Mission Capable (MC) rates are perhaps the best-known yardstick for measuring the readiness of Air Force aircraft. MC rates reflect the percentage of aircraft by fleet that are capable of performing at least one of their assigned missions. Fourteen of twenty major weapon systems saw improved mission capable rates in FY 2003, at a time when all of our systems were flying more hours.

The FY 2003 aggregate MC rate of 75.9% was the highest rate achieved since FY 1997. Categorized by fleet, the current MC rate for our fighter fleet is 75.7%; well into the third year of increased MC rates and surmounting the FY 2001 low of 73.9%. The current FY 2004 Bomber Fleet rate stands at 71.4%, and the Tanker Fleet rate at 77.8%, a drop from the FY 2003 rate of 79.3%. Between January 1999 and June 2003, we saw a dramatic 60% reduction in aircraft grounding parts-backorders. These gains were due to robust spares funding initiatives, fleet consolidation, and transformation initiatives across the entire fleet. Another measure, cannibalization (CANN) rates reflect the number of cannibalization actions that occur per 100 sorties for a particular weapon system. The aggregate CANN rate for FY 2003 dropped 15% from the FY 2002 rate of 9.4 actions per 100 sorties. The FY 2003 rate of 8 CANNs per 100 sorties represents the lowest CANN rate since FY 1995.

Our engine availability rates reflected impressive gains as recent investments continued to pay dividends throughout FY02. Our U-2s sustained their mission capable rate while flying their most hours since the Gulf War, 35 percent higher than FY01. Our Predator fleet posted its best mission capable rates ever while averaging almost 200 hours per month. Our C-5s posted their best mission capable rates since FY96 while flying the most hours since the Gulf War. The B-1 consolidation is paying dividends, as our B-1s posted dramatic gains in mission capable rates, with current rates at historical highs. All of our fighters are experiencing a steady decline in cannibalization. We have made great strides in reducing the number of aircraft in depot for maintenance, putting over 25 percent more aircraft on the ramps for the warfighter since 2000. Fourteen of twenty aircraft major design systems improved their mission capable rates over the previous year, with Predator remotely operated aircraft improving by 11% and B-1 bombers achieving the best mission capable and supply rates in the history of the aircraft. Thanks to proper funding, fleet consolidation, and transformation initiatives, spare parts shortages were

reduced to the lowest levels recorded across the entire fleet. We are providing the right tools and resources to our airmen.

The Air Force continues to place emphasis on a solid depot maintenance program for DoD's weapon systems. For fiscal year 2005, we've increased Depot Purchased Equipment Maintenance (DPEM) funding over the previous budget position to ensure the proper level of support to the warfighter. Aging aircraft issues continue to make depot maintenance both expensive and challenging, and thus we are looking for innovative ways to guarantee the right mix of aircraft is available to the combatant commander at any given time.

Within our depots, we continue to look for ways to transform, reduce depot costs, and meet the needs of the warfighter by ensuring that the depots have the capacity to accomplish the required workload. An extremely important facet of the depots is that during wartime or contingencies, the Air Force can surge repair operations and realign capacity to support the warfighter's immediate needs. We will maintain the appropriate level of depot maintenance to ensure our aging fleet stands ready to deploy, fly, and fight anywhere, anytime

Our depots have put some of these initiatives into place with exceptional results. In FY03 our depot maintenance teams were more productive than planned, exceeding aircraft, engine, and commodity production goals and reducing flow days in nearly all areas. Implementation of "lean" production processes, optimized use of the existing workforce, and appropriate funding all contributed to this good news story. In addition, our spares support to the warfighter is at record high numbers. In 2003, supply rates and cannibalization rates achieved their best performance since FY94 and FY95 respectively.

Again, the FY05 budget requests an increase in the operations/maintenance readiness funds from \$25.4B to \$27.1B. This readiness funding includes increases for Space Operations, Mission Support and Flying Hours, and includes a fully funded Flying Hour Program and Depot Maintenance funded to preferred readiness levels. Where funding does affect readiness, we have budgeted for and are committed to provide the necessary resources to our airmen.

In spite of continued funding increases in recent years, readiness indicators for the overall Air Force and the Major Operational units have continued to slowly decline, primarily due to higher OPSTEMPO of an aging fleet since the GWOT began – as we continue to reset and focus more on managing OPSTEMPO, we expect readiness indicators to improve. As of 15 February 2004, overall readiness rates for major operational units (309) were at 63%. This figure

represents a 7% decrease compared to readiness rates at the same time last year (prior to the start of Operation IARQI FREEDOM). Overall readiness rates for major operational units dropped to their lowest point on 15 December 2003 (61%) but are now showing improvement during the last two months due to ongoing reconstitution efforts. Below is a snapshot of current readiness rates as of 15 February 2004 for each major operational community and the associated changes since February 2003. The arrow (**trend**) by each community represents recent readiness trends since Dec 2003.

ISR – 0% (down 9%)	↓	LD/HD
Special ops – 24% (down 24%)	↓	LD/HD
C2 – 30% (down 8%)	↑	
Bomber – 33% (down 29%)	↓	in transition
Rescue – 45% (down 1%)	↑	
Airlift – 66% (down 11%)	↑	
Fighter – 69% (down 7%)	↑	
Tanker – 86% (down 2%)	↓	in transition
Space and missile – 100% (up 7%)	➡	

### RECAPITALIZING THE CAPABILITY

With spreading technology and increasing parity of foreign nations, the mere maintenance of our aging aircraft and space systems will not suffice. Simply stated, our current fleet of legacy systems cannot ensure air and space dominance in future engagements. It is these risks and concerns that underpin our persistent advocacy of program stability in our modernization and investment accounts. Our capability-based planning and budgeting process is the foundation to accelerate modernization while maintaining gains in readiness and people. We are investing short-term and long-term across all of our task force capabilities, balancing modifications of existing systems with the development of new systems. Air Force modernization efforts are supporting our transformation goals while continuing to develop and field needed systems, with nearly half of our investment in RDT&E.

The aging fleet presents the Air Force with the challenge of providing the joint force commanders assets from an ever-shrinking pool of available platforms that cost more and more to maintain. To counter this trend, we are pursuing a wide range of strategies accelerates our modernization and recapitalization efforts. We are using an integrated and systematic risk assessment system, shorter acquisition cycle times, and improved program oversight. Our goal is to integrate our combat, information, electronic warfare and support systems to create a portfolio of air and space advantages.

As the Air Force has testified, our average fleet age has approximately 23 years in service. With some manufactured as early as 1955, our KC-135 fleet averages 44 years in service. We have never dealt with a force this old. Our aging aircraft are vulnerable to myriad problems, including technical surprises, vanishing vendors, and increased operational costs. Thanks to this Committee, we have recently enjoyed a down payment on our recapitalization but require sustained funding to maintain the force capable of supporting the National Security Strategy and JV2020. Eventually, new acquisitions will have to replace these legacy systems. In the interim, we are finding innovative means to keep current systems operational in the near term and are taking advantage of new opportunities to employ old systems in new ways.

### **Dealing With Aging Aircraft Issues**

This new OPSTEMPO has demanded more of our entire fleet. Specifically, corrosion, high-cycle fatigue, and aging composites affect the Air Force's mission effectiveness and availability due to flight restrictions. Examples that epitomize the exact problem are found in a variety of fleets including the F-15Cs, A-10s, and KC-135s.

Averaging 20 years old, our premier legacy air dominance platform, the F-15C, suffered approximately 30 incidents of partial wing, horizontal and vertical stabilizer loss and wiring bundle fires that have resulted in many operational restrictions. Additionally, their maintenance man-hours are up 150% in the past 12 years. With an average fleet age of 22 years, our A-10s, which provided invaluable close air support to the joint force commander, has recently undergone inspections for wing cracks that affected 247 aircraft. Both of these cases illustrate that these problems are across the fleets versus aircraft tail number specific.

None of our aging aircraft fleets needs recapitalizing more than our tanker fleet. Previous Air Force testimony has continually stressed the importance of this fleet to the Air Force and to the Nation in terms of the Global War on Terror. The crux of our challenge is how the Air Force

will continue to provide these irreplaceable assets to the joint warfighter considering their limited availability at ever increasing costs. At the beginning of January 2004, 36% of the KC-135 fleet was unavailable including those in depot and those unit possessed but not mission capable. Of those that are available, mission capable rates continue trending downward. In addition to the unknown technical “surprises” which the fleet may encounter, known severe corrosion of this Eisenhower-era asset continues to concern us. Organic PDM and contract PDM prices to maintain the KC-135 continue to rise.

As many of you know, the Air Force has been very active on this front in an attempt to continue to fill the joint force commander’s requirements for power projection. The Air Force fully supports the latest decision by Secretary Rumsfeld to suspend the 767 Tanker Lease Program until all reviews are complete. We continue to work cooperatively with the DOD Inspector General to reach a speedy and definitive conclusion to their assessment.

In testimony last week, I reemphasized the Air Force’s requirement to recapitalize the tanker fleet and discussed the operational capabilities needed for a new tanker. The Air Force believes that whether this is accomplished through the normal procurement process for which over \$4 billion of funding is already programmed across the FYDP for a KC-X replacement aircraft, or through the lease program, which, as authorized in the 2004 National Defense Authorization Act, will accelerate the recapitalization process, will provide this Nation a vital capability. In accordance with the 2004 NDAA, the Air Force will conduct the Analysis of Alternatives using a federally funded research and development center or other entity independent of the Department of Defense. This AOA is important in shaping decisions for future recapitalization, and we expect it to be complete in FY 05.

Another important tool in shaping our decisions was implemented last May. The new Air Force Fleet Viability Board establishes a continuous, repeatable process for fleet assessment much like current Navy boards. Currently, the board is reviewing the C-5A. This ongoing assessment will likely report on or around 31 March 2004. Candidates for future boards will be reviewed annually to consider new concerns and should produce a comprehensive standardized approach to examining entire fleets of aircraft.

## **Aging Infrastructure**

In addition to air and space platforms, we must address our growing deficiencies in infrastructure. Improvements we secure for our air and space systems will be limited without addressing our foundational support systems. Deteriorated airfields, hangars, waterlines, electrical networks are just some of the infrastructure elements warranting immediate attention. Our investment strategy, to enable and modernize our installation capabilities and provide quality working and living environments, focuses on three simultaneous steps. First, we must dispose of excess facilities. Second, we must fully sustain our facilities and systems so they remain effective through their expected life. Third, we must establish a steady investment program to restore and modernize our critical facilities and infrastructure systems, while continually advancing our ability to protect our people and resources from the growing threat of terrorism.

We have accelerated our housing investment and expanded our privatization program. We have programmed projects to eliminate inadequate housing at all CONUS bases by 2007, except at four northern-tier locations where it will be completed by 2008. We will improve more than 3,600 units at 26 bases and support privatization of 7,000 units at seven bases. Committed to sustained improvements, the Air Force has increased this year's MILCON request by 10 percent. The Air Force has embarked on a strategy for 3 world-class depots and has increased funding for essential depot facilities upgrades and equipment modernization as part of our "Depot Maintenance Strategy and Master Plan." When you consider our level of effort across the entire infrastructure spectrum, we plan to invest more than \$4.8 billion in FY05.

### **A READY FORCE OF AIRMEN**

A ready force is founded on its people. The 700,000 men and women that comprise our Total Air Force--Active Duty, Guard and Reserve, and our civilians--are the best America has to offer. They are officers, enlisted, civilians, and contractors from every corner of the country and every walk of life. These world-class airmen are the key ingredients to sustaining our record of success. Without exception we have been and will always be dedicated to recruiting, training, and retaining professional Airmen and wholeheartedly believe that the Air Force can make no greater investment and have no greater resource than in our people. They are our #1 weapon system.

The bottomline on personnel readiness is that our people are ready. We are sustaining our personnel readiness rates in the face of higher OPSTEMPO, manning shortages, and reduced

training opportunities. ONE alerts and OEF/OIF deployments have left our operational units with less capability and opportunity to train. The Air Force fully funded the flying program in FY04 and will continue to fly 100 percent of the flying program. For the past three years, the Air Force has executed its budgeted O&M flying hours without requesting additional funding for contingency flying hours. Our airmen are gaining real-world experience you cannot create in a training environment. Today, over 70 percent of our rated aircrew is combat experienced!

However, many of our aircrew instructors have been pulled to fulfill priority operational requirements, making it difficult to train new aircrew to relieve the combat stress. This is especially true of our LD/HD assets which having been working at “surge” capacity. We recognize that some of the most significant detractors to unit readiness are lengthy, frequent deployments. Once airmen return from deployments they require up to a 90-day reconstitution period, primarily for personnel training. Maintaining our AEF rotation schedule helps stability and predictability, but most of our stressed career fields are exceeding the 90-day goal. While the Air Force has taken steps to mitigate the impact of lost training, sustained operations will remain a challenge. As long as the current OPSTEMPO persists, we expect Air Force training to improve, as training currencies and continuation training are achieved.

### **Recruiting**

We remain committed to an all-volunteer force. Our volunteer airmen are dedicated, experienced, smart, disciplined, and representative of our country as a whole. We recruit and promote the unique and diverse experiences and capabilities people from all backgrounds, all races, and all religions contribute to our combat capability.

Last year the Air Force completed one of its best recruiting years ever. This year, we expect to meet our annual accession goal of 37,000 by September 2004. With an increased advertising budget, enhanced hiring incentives and enlistment bonuses, and improved recruiter manning, the Air Force is making enlisted recruiting a priority, and it is paying off. The Air Force also continues to attract the country’s best and brightest college graduates to join our officer corps. We have introduced additional incentives to recruit more students into ROTC, especially those with science and engineering proficiencies. We continually adjust our goals to meet new force requirements and the demands of a competitive marketplace.

### **Training**

The Air Force requires sophisticated airmen who are trained to leverage technology and ready to perform in a fluid environment--Air and Space Leaders for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. This will require targeted investments in the next generation of airmen, from the ground up and throughout their careers. To that end, the Air Force has introduced a coordinated effort to address all aspects of an airman's career development, professional education, and assignments in sum rather than individually. This deliberate force development effort generates policies tailored to the needs of the individual airman throughout his career. Comprehensive in scope, our training is doctrinally based and focused on three levels: tactical, operational, and strategic.

### **Force Shaping**

Our number one personnel challenge is adapting to the new steady state--a higher tempo of operations and a shifting skill mix requirement. With a 30 percent reduction in manpower since 1990 and a significant increase in worldwide taskings over that same period, the Air Force is experiencing a dramatic jump in operations and personnel tempo. We have discovered that while the number of airmen is adequate, the mix of skill sets and the military/civilian/contractor ratio must be adjusted to reflect new realities.

Recognizing the new demands placed on us by the war on terrorism, we initiated a comprehensive manpower review to determine relative stress amongst career fields and to explore options to alleviate that stress. Our analysis shows we need to shift manpower to stressed career fields to meet the demands of this new steady state, and we are in the process of doing this. We have realigned personnel into our most stressed specialties and hired additional civilians and contractors to free military members to focus on military duties. We have also made multi-million dollar investments in technology to reduce certain manpower requirements. We have redirected our training and accession systems and have cross-trained personnel from specialties where we are over strength to alleviate stressed career fields. Supporting the Secretary of Defense's vision of moving forces "from the bureaucracy to the battlefield."

### **Retention**

We have found that our high operations tempo and uneven workload are major determinants in an airman's decision to leave the Air Force. Because the skill-sets of our airmen are not easily replaced, we expend considerable effort to retain our people, especially those in high-technology fields and those in whom we have invested significant education and training. In 2003, we reaped the benefits of an aggressive retention program, aided by a renewed focus and investment

on education and individual development, enlistment and retention bonuses, targeted military pay raises, and quality of life improvements. Our FY03 enlisted retention statistics tell the story. Retention for the first term airmen stood at 61%, and exceeded our goal by 6%. Retention for our second term and career airmen was also impressive, achieving 73% and 95% respectively. Continued investment in people rewards their service, provides a suitable standard of living, and enables us to attract and retain the professional we need.

Retention of pilots, navigators, and Air Battle Managers remains a major concern. Our flexible Aviator Continuation Pay (ACP) program is one important part of our broad-based solution. Encouragingly, the ACP long-term initial take rate rose sharply to 65 percent in FY03 from 47 percent in FY02. Retention for high tech specialties is also a concern as the pull from industry is strong. This draw is exacerbated by long, frequent deployments in many of our high tech career fields.

While high retention is in itself great news, we are faced with the fact that the Air Force is over its authorized end strength and our skill mix is out of balance. Being overstrength, however, serves as a mixed blessing that allows us to rebalance the skills without exacerbating manning problems in the stressed career fields as we draw down to authorized strength. Force Shaping permits us to tackle these challenges smartly.

The Air Force has reduced its civilian workforce by nearly 100 thousand since 1990, leaving only 10 percent of today's Air Force civilians with less than 10 years in service and over 40 percent eligible to retire in 5 years. We must revitalize our professional occupations with new hires while minimizing the impact on the existing civilian employees. Force shaping initiatives to restructure the civilian work force and enactment of the National Security Personnel System (NSPS) to provide the department with some streamlined authorities.

### **Future Total Force**

Like never before in the history of the Air Force, we are a Total Force. Mission success demands the interdependence of Active Duty, Air Reserve Component (ARC), civilian workforce and contractors. The ARC continues to be an integral part of the AEF as a total force, and accounts for more than three-fourths of our tactical airlift capability, two-thirds of our strategic airlift capability, two-thirds of our air refueling capability, and one-third of our strike fighters. The reserve component also makes significant contributions to our rescue and support missions, and has an increasing presence in space, intelligence and information operations. In

all, the reserve component provides a ready force requiring minimum preparation for deploying in support of worldwide operations. As such, they need compensation, benefits, and entitlements commensurate with these increased responsibilities. We are committed to using ARC volunteers versus mobilization whenever possible to allow the units and members the flexibility needed to meet combatant commander requirements

We are also reviewing our ARC manpower to minimize involuntary mobilization of ARC forces for day-to-day, steady state operations while ensuring they are prepared to respond in times of crisis. Since September 11<sup>th</sup>, the Guard and Reserve have played a greater role in the country's defense than ever before. But there is a limit to how many demands we can place on our ARC forces in the current environment. Historically the ANG and AFRC gain nearly 25 percent of separating Active Duty members. Continued high OPSTEMPO may threaten this source of recruiting and force the ARC to explore alternative options to make up the loss. We are also closely monitor this situation and are taking steps to relieve the pressure on the Guard and Reserve.

We are in the second year of our agreement to employ Army National Guard soldiers for Force Protection (FP) duties at Air Force installations, temporarily mitigating our FP shortfalls in Security Forces. We are executing an aggressive plan to rapidly burn down the need for Army augmentation by reducing our manpower requirements through the insertion of technology (to enable manpower avoidance), realigning current manpower within end strength limits, and maximizing use of ARC volunteers to replace departing Army National Guard soldiers. Coupled with civilian conversions and contracting options, we are expanding total force (civilian, contract, active duty and ARC) involvement while at the same time reducing the stress on our forces and the associated risks to our resources.

## **CONCLUSION**

The greatest testament to Air Force readiness is our continued success in projecting power around the globe and protecting America and her allies from potential enemies. The Air Force, along with each of the members of this joint team, is proud of our operational successes over the past two years, but we cannot rest on our accomplishments. When our President and this nation called last year— we were ready. Within twenty-one days, this joint team had effectively broken coherent resistance in Baghdad and collapsed the regime's control. Five days

later, the joint and Coalition team captured the last major Iraqi city, unseated a despotic government and liberated approximately twenty-five million Iraqis. The readiness that made the Air Force's air and space power contribution possible was the result of the hard work of the thousands of Airmen and civilians of our Total Force. Our success was also a tribute to this Committee's leadership and its staunch support at such a critical time in our nation's history.

We stand ready. Ready to project power to any point on the face of the earth. Lethal and responsive, America's Airmen stand ready to act -- whenever and wherever they are called.

Mr Chairman, Senator Akaka, thank you for your support.