

**OPENING STATEMENT
OF**

**MICHAEL M. DUNN
Lt General (Ret)**

**PRESIDENT/CEO, AIR FORCE ASSOCIATION
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Ladies and gentleman of the Committee, I am honored to come before you today, representing the Air Force Association, to discuss your United States Air Force. I would like to begin my remarks by saluting our Airmen who strive every day to ensure that America's Air Force is second to none. These men and women are true heroes and we salute their dedication and determination, while also recognizing the sacrifices they make for our nation.

To borrow a phrase from General Schwartz, the United States Air Force is truly "all in." Whether deterring potential adversaries, striking strategic targets, gathering critical intelligence, delivering humanitarian relief supplies, evacuating wounded, airlifting cargo around the globe, enabling command and control, rescuing personnel behind enemy lines, or providing close air support, the Air Force is an invaluable national asset. Just looking at operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, the Air Force has flown nearly 60,000 sorties this year alone. In the real world, this translates into Airmen doing their very best 24/7 to fight and win on the front lines along with their joint team partners.

While we are certainly proud of the Air Force's current record, this success cannot be taken for granted. The Air Force has spent the past two decades engaged in continuous combat operations and is utilizing an aircraft fleet that averages nearly a quarter of a century in age—with some planes in the inventory dating back to the Eisenhower Administration.

The most obvious problem associated with this aging fleet is that old airplanes break more often and eventually are no longer airworthy. In the time since Desert Storm the average age of the Air Force fleet has increased by nearly a decade and the availability rate has dropped in a corresponding fashion. This means that since 1991 the percentage of time an aircraft is not broken and can fly a mission has fallen from 77 percent to 65 percent. Aside from these costly maintenance challenges, a number of dramatic airworthiness issues have also afflicted the Air Force fleet. In 2000 the service grounded one third of its KC-135 air refueling aircraft because of a faulty flight control component. In 2004 the Air Force discovered that many of its C-130s had major cracks in their wings.

In 2007 an F-15 broke in two while on a training flight due to structural fatigue, grounding the entire fleet for months. In 2008 the entire T-38 fleet was grounded for an extended period because of an aging control surface fixture. Most recently, half of the A-10 fleet was grounded due to wing cracks and the C-130 fleet was also grounded due to a faulty bolt found in the wings of many of the aircraft. More problems are certain to arise as the age of the fleet continues to increase.

It is also important to consider that most next generation aircraft yield tremendous operational efficiencies that dramatically offset their higher per-unit acquisition cost and yield long-term savings. This performance increase was clearly demonstrated on the first night of Desert Storm when 20 new F-117 stealth fighters took the unprecedented step of attacking 28 separate targets. On the same night it took a combined force of 41 legacy non-stealth aircraft to strike one target—4 F/A-18s to defend against enemy aircraft, 3 drones to serve as decoys, 5 EA-6B aircraft to jam enemy radar, along with 4 F-4s and 17 F/A-18s to suppress enemy surface-to-air missiles so that 4 A-6s and 4 Tornados could strike one target. The full spectrum cost imposed by these legacy aircraft was tremendous—aircraft development and acquisition funding, operations and maintenance expenses, personnel bills, base access issues, etc. Viewed from this perspective, the encompassing price of new aircraft like the F-22 and F-35 is not so high.

The global threat environment is rapidly evolving and proliferation of modern weaponry is negating the survivability of the Air Force's legacy fleet. Over thirty nations operate fighter aircraft that equal or exceed the capabilities of the F-15 and F-16, whose designs respectively date back to the 1960s and 1970s. Nations such as Russia and China are also developing 5th generation fighters that will have F-22-like capabilities and will be bought in F-35-like quantities ... and sold to other countries. Additionally, dozens of nations operate surface-to-air missiles that can easily shoot down aircraft such as the B-1, B-52, F-15, F-16, F-18, Predator, Global Hawk, and more. It is important to remember that in the final days of Vietnam the Air Force lost 15 B-52s in 12 days during Operation Linebacker II. Air defenses have advanced markedly since then but 47% of the long range strike fleet is comprised of these same B-52s. Had the US Air Force been called

upon to engage in the recent Georgian conflict, the B-2 and F-22 were the only aircraft in the US inventory that would have survived in the threat environment. US national security demands a broader array of effective capabilities than just 20 B-2s and 186 F-22s.

The FY 2010 budget proposal currently under consideration by Congress fails to make necessary recapitalization investments and actually exacerbates the challenges facing several key mission sets. For example, the FY 2010 budget proposal ends production of the F-22 at 187 aircraft even though the stated military requirement is for 243 airframes. A fleet comprised of 187 airframes yields a force of about 100 combat-ready aircraft, no attrition/ reserve inventory, and too few aircraft to engage/ deter in more than one operation at a time. All known analysis undertaken to this point has concluded such a limited fleet size entails high risk. Air dominance is the precondition for all successful US military combat operations— this isn't just about the US Air Force--it is essential for the entire joint team.

This year's budget also discontinues C-17 acquisition at 205 aircraft even though demand for airlift is so high that the Air Force is currently flying its C-17 airframes over 1000 hours past what was originally programmed per year. Additional developments have seen the ground component grow by 92,000 Soldiers and Marines, increased reliance on airlift, to include leased Russian aircraft, to get equipment to Afghanistan and Iraq, and a decision to relocate many units back to CONUS. Each one of these developments suggests that the need for military airlift will increase. Closing the C-17 production line at 205 aircraft risks creating a high-demand low-density mission set.

Even though existing Combat Search and Rescue (CSAR) helicopters are rapidly nearing the end of their service lives, the budget cancels their replacement program. CSAR is a moral imperative. Our current enemies do not take prisoners of war. They welcome the opportunity to torture and kill their captives, making CSAR even more critical than before. In fact, the Air Force CSAR capabilities are in such high demand in Iraq and

Afghanistan that the Weapons School has been closed so that a maximum number of assets can be surged forward.

The Next Generation Bomber program was also cancelled even though the current long range strike fleet averages over forty years in age. While elements of the force are still capable in certain threat environments, the proliferation of advanced anti-access weaponry is curtailing when and where many of the legacy assets can successfully operate. Twenty B-2s are the only long range strike assets in the Air Force inventory that can penetrate high threat environments and survive. These aircraft are approaching 20 years in age, have not been in production since 1997, and have no viable replacements to backfill losses. During the Cold War, bombers were primarily viewed as nuclear deterrence assets. However, actual combat operations have demonstrated that long range conventional strike is an incredibly important tool. Modern long range bombers can penetrate air defense systems, respond rapidly to strike fleeting targets, and operate over long distances without excessive logistical support. The tactical strike fleet, while capable, simply does not have the range and payload capabilities to fulfill many of these missions.

The Airborne Laser (ABL) program was also curtailed even though nuclear weapons proliferation, combined with advances in delivery system technology, is yielding an increasingly dangerous world. Sufficient investment in robust missile defense capabilities is essential for the security of United States and its allies.

Cumulatively, these decisions will also have a tremendous impact on the defense industrial base. This sector is an invaluable strategic partner for the United States. Whether addressing problems through innovation, delivering high-quality products that enable our forces to attain victory, or developing solutions for future challenges, the industrial base is a critical national security asset. The United States is rapidly approaching the point where it will be limited to one major heavy aircraft production line (Boeing in Seattle, WA) and one advanced fighter production facility (Lockheed Martin in Fort Worth, TX). The proposed FY 2010 budget cuts rapidly accelerate the decline of

this sector. The barriers to entry are extraordinarily high within the military aerospace industrial base and once the nation loses certain core competencies, they will be exceedingly difficult and costly to regenerate. For example, low observable (stealth) design teams are incredibly skilled in a highly nuanced field that does not lend itself to dual-use applications within the civilian aerospace sector. If projects are not forthcoming to maintain this skill set, then the country will face major challenges trying to regenerate such capabilities in the future. Additionally, the military aerospace sector will have an increasingly difficult time recruiting and retaining talent amidst these challenging times. Failing to build a viable and competent workforce for the next generation will have a dramatic impact on the national security options available to the nation for the foreseeable future.

Clearly the United States Air Force is at a strategic crossroads. The nation cannot realistically expect Airmen to successfully engage and survive in future campaigns if it does not equip them with modern and effective equipment. One of the key lessons from history is the importance of preparing for the full spectrum of operations. This country has failed to anticipate numerous critical events—Pearl Harbor, Berlin Blockade, Cuban Missile Crisis, Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan, fall of the Shah in Iran, end of the Cold War, Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait, 9-11, etc. Events in the modern world develop rapidly and the country has to respond quickly with the forces on hand. The days of WWII-like rapid wartime industrialization are gone. Aside from rudimentary supplies, effective weapons systems can no longer be developed in a matter of months and events are often decided by the time new items are fielded. This demands that the nation prepare for a wide variety of contingencies. Otherwise, the lives of the men and women in uniform will be placed at undue risk as they struggle to achieve their respective objectives with inadequate tools. While airpower can operate with relative impunity in current operations, such access must not be taken for granted in the future. Current legacy systems will last a few more years, but eventually they will be retired. Most of the cuts involved in this budget kill the platforms that were intended to replace these legacy systems. The Chief of Staff of the Air Force has stated he needs to buy 165 aircraft per year in order to keep the average age of the fleet the same as it is now – a quarter of a

century old. This budget only buys 81 aircraft – 13 of which are for the Air Force Academy and 29 of which are UAVs. That puts the Air Force on a replacement rate of over 100 years. It is important that Congress and the American people fully appreciate the full ramifications of these decisions. We risk imposing drastic limitations on the strategic options available to the country for decades into the future.