

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee, I am honored to be with you today to discuss the FY 2010 Defense Budget. I represent over 120,000 members of the Air Force Association. I need to point out to this committee that we are independent of the Air Force and that the Air Force has not made inputs nor seen my remarks.

I have to tell this committee that, at this point in history, I am really concerned about the future. The average age of the Air Force fleet is the oldest in its very short history -- 25 years old -- a quarter of a century. Some types average over 50 years old ... and when they are eventually replaced, some will be over 90 years old. To begin to replace this fleet, the AF has to buy about 165 aircraft of all types every year. The 2010 budget request purchases only 81 aircraft to include 29 UAVs and 13 aircraft for the Air Force Academy. This puts them on a replacement rate of about 100 years.

This is not a sustainable path. Costs to keep the fleet ready are rising. Many aircraft have been grounded over the past few years. Planes are breaking in unpredictable ways. Readiness rates are falling. Our men and women who serve deserve the very best we as a nation can provide. We have to turn this around.

DOD has stated they need to rebalance the force -- to focus on Irregular Warfare. The sad fact is they have to do both -- modernize and recapitalize the force as well as focusing on IW. I hope DOD is right about the future -- that we won't face a strong opponent in the future. But ... the one certain thing about the future is that we have been wrong about the type of opponent we will face. We did not anticipate the Japanese attack on the Hawaii Islands, the Korean War, VN, fall of the Soviet Union, Iraq attack on Kuwait, 9/11, or Operation Iraqi Freedom. To maintain that all wars in the future will be Irregular Wars is ... well ... not supported by the lessons of the past.

The decisions made by DOD and this Congress are ones we will live with for a long time. They are 30 year decisions. When the nation terminates or delays 7 aircraft production lines, the impact on our aerospace industry is devastating. And this is an industry that adds almost \$40B per year in positive trade balance. Engineers, design teams, and innovation will be lost ... or hard/expensive to replace. Tens of thousands of jobs will be lost. These are high-paying manufacturing jobs that benefit not just local communities, but the nation as a whole.

Mr. Chairman, I think you can see why I am worried. This is not just about one system or another, this is about airpower -- our asymmetric advantage and the reason our past conflicts have been so spectacular with some of the lowest friendly casualty rates in the history of warfare. We have to nurture this capability for the future.

I stand ready to answer your questions.