

Note from AFA President -- A/C Procurement and North Korea

Wednesday, October 8, 2008

AFA Members, Congressional Staffers, Civic Leaders, and DOCA members, I took some time last week to review the US Air Force procurement budget for this year and the next 5 years. (You can find it at: [http://www.afa.org/EdOp/Aircraft\\_Procurement.pdf](http://www.afa.org/EdOp/Aircraft_Procurement.pdf) ). A few observations:

First, the AF is procuring 750 aircraft over the six year period of the FYDP. That equates to 125 aircraft per year. At that rate it will take about **46 years** to replace every aircraft in the inventory. This means that – unless something changes – the average age of our aircraft will rise to 46 years.

Secondly, about 270 of the aircraft are UAVs ... and arguably are not replacing other aircraft in the inventory. That leaves about 80 aircraft per year – which equates to a replacement rate of **72 years**.

Thirdly, you say not all aircraft need to be replaced. OK – let's assume the Air Force is only going to replace about two-thirds of its aircraft. That means it will take **50 years** to replace them all.

Finally, the reason the number is so high for 2008 is the war time supplemental bill. DOD has indicated that it no longer wants to submit a supplemental funding bill ... which would, if put in place this year, have resulted in only 93 aircraft being procured – 52 of which were UAVs. This results in a replacement rate of **141 years**.

So how many aircraft should be bought per year? The AIR FORCE Magazine, in an article this month (<http://www.airforce-magazine.com/MagazineArchive/Pages/2008/October%202008/1008aircraft.aspx>), quotes the Air Force Chief of Staff as saying it must buy 200 aircraft per year to make a modest reduction in fleet age.

We, as a nation, need to wake up to the extent of this recapitalization problem. This is not rocket science. If we want to have a world-class Air Force in the future, we have to fund it.

Second subject – North Korea. We have seen the news on how negotiations with NK seem to work, then fall apart. Some have labeled NK leadership as crazy. Others believe that if only we would try harder, we could get to a deal. I believe we should not hold our breath. North Korea has never kept an agreement that it has signed. Never in history. As a guy who has spend hundreds of hours across the negotiating table from them, who has traveled to Pyongyang, and who has been on Fox News as a commentator on NK, I believe we look at North Korea wrong. Several years ago, I wrote a short (2 pages) paper entitled "10 Misperceptions about North Korea." It was published in the Military Review, and I believe it is as applicable today as it was then. You can find it at this link: <http://merln.ndu.edu/archive/MilitaryReview/dunn.pdf>

As always, I look forward to your comments.

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