

Note from AFA President -- LRS, Mitchell study, "hollow AF"

AFA Members, Congressional staff members, civic leaders, DOCA members, in our last symposium in Los Angeles, Bob Elder and Mark Gunzinger participated on a panel which discussed the need for a new long range strike system. I found the discussion interesting for two reasons. First Gen Elder made the cogent point that the "purpose of the military is not just to fight and win our nation's wars ... but to prevent them in the first place." He maintained a long range bomber shows our strength and capability to put at risk targets all over the world ... and the evidence shows that the wars we have not fought and the lives we have not lost are missed in the decision process on whether to replace our aging bomber fleet. Mark Gunzinger presented a comprehensive study done at the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments. I cannot do the study justice here - so you should review it at: [http://www.csbaonline.org/4Publications/PubLibrary/R.20100914.Sustaining\\_America/R.20100914.Sustaining\\_America.pdf](http://www.csbaonline.org/4Publications/PubLibrary/R.20100914.Sustaining_America/R.20100914.Sustaining_America.pdf). Perhaps an even better review can be found with Mark's slides at: <http://www.csbaonline.org/4Publications/PubLibrary/S.20100914.Sustaining/S.20100914.Sustaining.pdf>. One thing you might note on the slides is exactly how many studies we have had on this issue ... and Mr. Gunzinger leaves our lots of them. In Sep, the co-chair of the Air Force Caucus in the House of Representatives, Cong. Jim Marshall (D-GA) said:

"It's time to quit the studies and proceed. We've spent millions on studies. At some point, there's nothing left to research. We have to make a decision. ... My support is to proceed with the Next Generation Bomber program. The Air Force needs it. ... We've enjoyed this strategic advantage since the end of World War II. We can't wake up some day and have let it go."

Last month, the Mitchell Institute for Airpower Studies met to discuss its most recent report. The report was entitled: "Arsenal of Airpower, USAF Aircraft Inventory, 1959-2009" and was written by Col. James C. Ruehrmund Jr., USAF (Ret.) and Dr. Christopher J. Bowie. I believe it will become a great reference for historians of the future.

A few tidbits:

(p. 5) USAF experienced a highly significant growth starting in 1950 with the outbreak of the Korean War, rising to a peak level of more than 26,000 aircraft by 1956. The Air Force's growth was the result of a unique set of factors:

- The threatening posture of the Soviet Union combined with tensions from the war in Korea;
- The push from the Eisenhower administration to reduce overall military expenditures by relying on nuclear air and missile power provided by the Air Force;
- The shifting of roughly 50 percent of the military budget to USAF accounts; and
- A masterful USAF public policy advocacy campaign in Congress on the value of airpower in the new security environment.

(p. 7) The Air Force strove to eke out every last measure of efficiency to keep force levels at the "agreed upon" level. Historical budget analysis indicates that the spending on "overhead," such as bases, service schools, training, etc, has been reduced 16 percent since the early 1960s. While a significant achievement, the ability to extract more from overhead is probably limited. Most of the "low hanging fruit" has already been plucked.

(p. 12) As we move to the future, the force structure procured primarily during the Reagan buildup is reaching the end of its life; the average age of most elements of the force structure is reaching unprecedented levels. When front-line combat aircraft break apart during training missions, as occurred with an F-15C in November 2007, the nation is facing greater strategic risk.

You can find the report on the Mitchell Institute Website at: [http://www.afa.org/Mitchell/Reports/MS\\_TAI\\_1110.pdf](http://www.afa.org/Mitchell/Reports/MS_TAI_1110.pdf)

Finally, I ran across an excellent and thoughtful piece by Dr. Michael Auslin, American Enterprise Institute. In it he warns against a "hollow Air Force" and says, among other things, this is a result of Air Force successes over the past 50+ years. If you read only one article per month, this one is a must-read. You can find it at: <http://www.nationalreview.com/articles/253487/beware-hollow-air-force-michael-auslin>

For your consideration,

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