



AIR FORCE ASSOCIATION'S LEGISLATIVE ISSUES — 2017

“We [the Air Force] are too small, too old, less ready, and out of balance for what the nation needs of us.” - General David L. Goldfein, U.S. Air Force Chief of Staff, Aug. 24, 2016

The Preamble to the U.S. Constitution reminds us that it is vital for our nation to “provide for the common defense,” however, defense budgets continue to be budget-driven versus strategy-driven. The U.S. Air Force (USAF) in particular has a growing strategy-resource mismatch--it is too small for what our nation demands and too big for its budget. Without immediate action to remove the detrimental effects of sequestration arising from the Budget Control Act of 2011 (BCA), that defense budget mismatch will only get worse.

The Air Force (AF) is the first responder around the globe, yet it now has the oldest, smallest, and least ready force in its history. It operates an aging and increasingly costly force of refueling tankers over 50 years old; bombers, trainers and helicopters over 40; and fighters over 30 years old. America's potential adversaries are rapidly closing the technological superiority gap. Air and Space superiority are not American birthrights and need to be fought for and won. To keep the U.S. Air Force as the world's predominant Air Force, the Air Force Association (AFA) supports the following actions:

1. FORCE STRUCTURE

- a. Increase active duty end strength to at least 350,000--the AF is the smallest in its history.
- b. Increase pilot retention bonuses to \$48,000--AF pilot retention is dwindling due to factors such as airline hiring and the strategy-resource mismatch. It is ‘cheaper to retain than retrain.’

2. RECAPITALIZATION / MODERNIZATION

- a. Recapitalize the AF's aging force structure to ensure continued core mission capabilities.
- b. AFA supports the USAF's Top 3 acquisition programs--they must stay on schedule and on budget.
 - 1) F-35A Joint Strike Fighter – A Fifth generation fighter is survivable against today's defenses.
 - 2) KC-46A Pegasus Tanker – Replaces costly 50 year-old aircraft at the end of their service lives.
 - 3) B-21 Raider Bomber – The current long-range strike force averages 40 years in age and 87% of today's bomber fleet predates stealth technology--we need Stealth against today's threats.
- c. Support necessary Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR) assets to meet the threat.
- d. Maintain AF close air support (CAS) and Combat Search & Rescue (CSAR) capabilities.
- e. Recapitalize the Joint Surveillance Target Attack Radar System (JSTARS) fleet; aging T-38 trainer fleet; CSAR fleet; and the Long Range Standoff Weapon (LRSO) with nuclear capability.
- f. Support full funding for the Ground Based Strategic Deterrent (GBSD) to replace the increasingly expensive Minuteman III Intercontinental Ballistic Missile System (ICBM) approaching 40 years old.

3. REBUILD COMBAT READINESS FOR AIR, SPACE, AND CYBER FORCES

- a. End Sequestration--Readiness eroded under the Budget Control Act's (BCA's) restrictions.
- b. Right Size Force Structure--Increase end strength to meet global requirements. The AF is too small and less capable than necessary to meet the needs of the national security strategy.
- c. Grow to 60 Fighter Squadrons--Tomorrow's threats mean we have to grow to respond.
- d. Divest Aging Platforms and Excess infrastructure--Free up needed fiscal resources.

4. INVEST IN TECHNOLOGY — Preserve our technological edge by investing in new technologies.

5. SUPPORT AIRMEN AND THEIR FAMILIES; CARE FOR VETERANS & RETIREES

- a. **HEALTHCARE** — Healthcare is a benefit and a readiness issue.
 - 1) Protect TRICARE for Life (TFL): It is a national obligation to retirees, long ago earned. TFL is costing less, not more. Negative changes are perceived as a breach of faith.
 - 2) Tie Tricare fees to the Cost of Living Allowance (COLA) vice the DoD proposed Health Index.
- b. **MILITARY PAY** — Military pay raises have fallen below private sector rates for the past three years.