

# United States Air Force

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Presentation

Before the Senate Armed Services  
Committee

## ***Fiscal Year 2016 Air Force Posture***

Witness Statement of  
The Honorable Ms. Deborah Lee James,  
Secretary of the Air Force

General Mark A. Welsh III, USAF  
Chief of Staff

March 5, 2015

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**UNITED STATES AIR FORCE**

### **DEBORAH LEE JAMES**

Deborah Lee James is the Secretary of the Air Force, Washington, D.C. She is the 23rd Secretary of the Air Force and is responsible for the affairs of the Department of the Air Force, including the organizing, training, equipping and providing for the welfare of its more than 690,000 active duty, Guard, Reserve and civilian Airmen and their families. She also oversees the Air Force's annual budget of more than \$110 billion.

Ms. James has 30 years of senior homeland and national security experience in the federal government and the private sector. Prior to her current position, Ms. James served as President of Science Applications International Corporation's Technical and Engineering Sector, where she was responsible for 8,700 employees and more than \$2 billion in revenue.



For nearly a decade, Ms. James held a variety of positions with SAIC to include Senior Vice President and Director of Homeland Security. From 2000 to 2001, she was Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer at Business Executives for National Security, and from 1998 to 2000 she was Vice President of International Operations and Marketing at United Technologies.

During the Clinton Administration, from 1993 to 1998, Ms. James served in the Pentagon as the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs. In that position, she was the Secretary of

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Defense's senior advisor on all matters pertaining to the 1.8 million National Guard and Reserve personnel worldwide. In addition to working extensively with Congress, state governors, the business community, military associations, and international officials on National Guard and Reserve component issues, she oversaw a \$10 billion budget and supervised a 100-plus-person staff. Prior to her Senate confirmation in 1993, she served as an assistant to the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Legislative Affairs.

From 1983 to 1993, she worked as a professional staff member on the House Armed Services Committee, where she served as a senior advisor to the Military Personnel and Compensation Subcommittee, the NATO Burden Sharing Panel, and the Chairman's Member Services team.

Ms. James earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in comparative area studies from Duke University and a master's degree in international affairs from Columbia University School of International and Public Affairs.

#### **EDUCATION**

1979 Bachelor of Arts degree in comparative area studies, Duke University, Durham, N.C.

1981 Master's degree in international affairs, Columbia University, N.Y.

#### **CAREER CHRONOLOGY**

1. 1983 - 1993, Professional Staff Member, Armed Services Committee, U.S. House of Representatives, Washington, D.C.
2. 1993 - 1998, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs, Office of the Secretary of Defense, Washington, D.C.
3. 1999 - 2000, Vice President of International Operations and Marketing, United Technologies, Washington, D.C.
4. 2000 - 2001, Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer, Business Executives for National Security, Washington, D.C.
5. 2002 - 2013, Senior Vice President and Director for Homeland Security; Senior Vice President, C4IT Business Unit General Manager; Executive Vice President, Communications and Government Affairs; President, Technical and Engineering Sector, Science Applications International Corporation, McLean, Va.
6. 2013 - present, Secretary of the Air Force, Washington, D.C.

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## GENERAL MARK A. WELSH III

Gen. Mark A. Welsh III is Chief of Staff of the U.S. Air Force, Washington, D.C. As Chief, he serves as the senior uniformed Air Force officer responsible for the organization, training and equipping of 690,000 active-duty, Guard, Reserve and civilian forces serving in the United States and overseas. As a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the general and other service chiefs function as military advisers to the Secretary of Defense, National Security Council and the President.

General Welsh was born in San Antonio, Texas. He entered the Air Force in June 1976 as a graduate of the U.S. Air Force Academy. He has been assigned to numerous operational, command and staff positions. Prior to his current position, he was Commander, U.S. Air Forces in Europe.



### EDUCATION

- 1976 Bachelor of Science degree, U.S. Air Force Academy, Colorado Springs, Colo.
- 1984 Squadron Officer School, by correspondence
- 1986 Air Command and Staff College, by correspondence
- 1987 Master of Science degree in computer resource management, Webster University
- 1988 Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, Kan.
- 1990 Air War College, by correspondence
- 1993 National War College, Fort Lesley J. McNair, Washington, D.C.

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1995 Fellow, Seminar XXI, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge  
1998 Fellow, National Security Studies Program, Syracuse University and John Hopkins University, Syracuse, N.Y.  
1999 Fellow, Ukrainian Security Studies, John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.  
2002 The General Manager Program, Harvard Business School, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.  
2009 Fellow, Pinnacle Course, National Defense University, Fort Lesley J. McNair, Washington, D.C.  
2009 Leadership at the Peak, Center for Creative Leadership, Colorado Springs, Colo.

### **ASSIGNMENTS**

1. August 1976 - July 1977, Student, undergraduate pilot training, Williams Air Force Base, Ariz.
2. July 1977- January 1981, T-37 Instructor Pilot and class commander, Williams AFB, Ariz.
3. January 1981 - May 1981, Student, fighter lead-in training, Holloman AFB, N.M.
4. May 1981 - August 1981, Student, A-10 training, Davis-Monthan AFB, Ariz.
5. August 1981 - May 1984, Instructor pilot, Flight Commander and wing standardization and evaluation Flight Examiner, 78th Tactical Fighter Squadron and 81st Tactical Fighter Wing, Royal Air Force Woodbridge, England
6. May 1984 - June 1987, Commander, Cadet Squadron 5, later, executive officer to the Commandant of Cadets, U.S. Air Force Academy, Colorado Springs, Colo.
7. June 1987 - June 1988, Student, Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, Kan.
8. June 1988 - October 1988, Student, F-16 conversion training, Luke AFB, Ariz.
9. October 1988 - July 1992, Operations Officer, 34th Tactical Fighter Squadron, later, Commander, 4th Tactical Fighter Squadron, Hill AFB, Utah
10. July 1992 - June 1993, Student, National War College, Fort Lesley J. McNair, Washington, D.C.
11. June 1993 - June 1995, Chief, Defense and Space Operations Division, Operations Directorate (J3), Joint Staff, the Pentagon, Washington, D.C.
12. June 1995 - April 1997, Commander, 347th Operations Group, Moody AFB, Ga.
13. April 1997 - June 1998, Commander, 8th Fighter Wing, Kunsan Air Base, South Korea
14. June 1998 - June 1999, Commander, College of Aerospace Doctrine, Research and Education, Maxwell AFB, Ala.
15. June 1999 - September 2001, Commandant of Cadets and Commander, 34th Training Wing, U.S. Air Force Academy, Colorado Springs, Colo.
16. September 2001 - April 2003, Director of Plans and Programs, Headquarters U.S. Air Forces in Europe, Ramstein Air Base, Germany
17. April 2003 - June 2005, Director of Global Power Programs, Office of the Assistant

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Secretary of the Air Force for Acquisition, Headquarters U.S. Air Force, Washington, D.C.

18. June 2005 - June 2007, Deputy Commander, Joint Functional Component Command for Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance, U.S. Strategic Command, Bolling AFB, Washington, D.C.

19. July 2007 - August 2008, Vice Commander, Air Education and Training Command, Randolph AFB, Texas

20. August 2008 - December 2010, Associate Director of the Central Intelligence Agency for Military Support/Associate Director for Military Affairs, Central Intelligence Agency, Washington, D.C.

21. December 2010 - July 2012, Commander, U.S. Air Forces in Europe; Commander, Air Component Command, Ramstein Air Base, Germany; and Director, Joint Air Power Competency Center, Ramstein Air Base, Germany

22. August 2012 - present, Chief of Staff, Headquarters U.S. Air Force, Washington, D.C.

### **SUMMARY OF JOINT ASSIGNMENTS**

1. June 1993 - June 1995, Chief, Defense and Space Operations Division, Operations Directorate (J3), Joint Staff, the Pentagon, Washington, D.C., as a lieutenant colonel and a colonel

2. June 2005 - June 2007, Deputy Commander, Joint Functional Component Command for Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance, U.S. Strategic Command, Bolling AFB, Washington, D.C., as a major general

3. August 2008 - December 2010, Associate Director for Military Affairs, Central Intelligence Agency, Washington, D.C., as a major general and a lieutenant general

4. December 2010 - July 2012, Commander, U.S. Air Forces in Europe; Commander, Air Component Command, Ramstein Air Base; and Director, Joint Air Power Competency Center, Ramstein Air Base, Germany, as a general

### **FLIGHT INFORMATION**

Rating: Command pilot

Flight hours: More than 3,300

Aircraft flown: F-16, A-10, T-37 and TG-7A

### **MAJOR AWARDS AND DECORATIONS**

Defense Distinguished Service Medal with oak leaf cluster

Distinguished Service Medal with oak leaf cluster

Defense Superior Service Medal with oak leaf cluster

Legion of Merit with oak leaf cluster

Distinguished Flying Cross with oak leaf cluster

Meritorious Service Medal with two oak leaf clusters

Air Medal with oak leaf cluster

Aerial Achievement Medal

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Joint Service Commendation Medal

Air Force Commendation Medal

**EFFECTIVE DATES OF PROMOTION**

Second Lieutenant June 2, 1976

First Lieutenant June 2, 1978

Captain June 2, 1980

Major May 1, 1985

Lieutenant Colonel June 1, 1989

Colonel Feb. 1, 1994

Brigadier General Aug. 1, 2000

Major General Aug. 1, 2003

Lieutenant General Dec. 9, 2008

General Dec. 13, 2010



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## I. Introduction

The United States Air Force is the most globally engaged air force on the planet. American Airmen are in constant defense of our national interests, whether dropping bombs, commanding satellites in space, delivering humanitarian relief, or protecting the homeland with an array of air, space, and cyberspace capabilities our forefathers could never have imagined. Airmen collaborate and train with allies – expanding and strengthening our collective capabilities – and guarantee the global freedom of movement and access that Americans have come to expect. Alongside its Sister Services, America’s Air Force delivers our Nation the power, influence, agility, and global reach no other country currently possesses...no matter the effort, no matter the odds. Our Airmen are warfighters and they bring airpower to bear on behalf of America every day.

But 24 years of continual combat operations, coupled with constrained and unstable budgets, has taken its toll. America needs a force ready for a spectrum of operations more global and complex than ever before. Instead, a relentless operations tempo, with fewer resources to fund, coordinate, and execute training and exercises, has left a force proficient in only those portions of the mission necessary for current operations. This is not the Air Force America expects...but today, it is the Air Force America owns.

Today’s Air Force is the smallest and oldest it has ever been, even while the demand for airpower continues to climb. There is no excess; there is no “bench” ...everything is committed. When called into action, today’s Air Force cannot respond in one corner of the Earth without diluting its presence elsewhere. The blanket of American airpower covering the globe has thinned; in places, it is nearly threadbare. As we have cut our *capacity*, we have found our *capability* equally diminished – the two qualities are inextricably linked.

The Nation deserves an Air Force that can outmatch its most dangerous enemies at their peak of power – the most demanding warfighting scenario, not just the “low-end

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fight.” The President’s Budget (PB) takes a critical step toward recovering that Air Force, but make no mistake: even at PB levels, the Air Force remains stressed to do what the Nation asks of us. To truly reverse the erosion of American airpower requires sustained commitment, stability, and the decision-space to invest each taxpayer dollar where it can best deliver the most combat power.

Without bold leadership today – difficult decisions and a commitment to air, space, and cyberspace investment – America’s airpower advantage is increasingly at risk.

## **II. A Globally Engaged Force**

At the Nation’s call, American Airmen leap to defend her interests. They respond at all hours, on any day, anywhere in the world, and they do it whether the requirement has been planned for or not. After all, enemies (and disasters) rarely strike when expected.

On the eve of 2014, the Nation – and the Air Force – planned for a relatively quiet year. We expected to draw down combat forces in Afghanistan, and have an opportunity to reset and reconstitute our forces.

Instead, the Ukraine and a resurgent Russia happened. Ebola happened. The Islamic State happened. Airmen flew 19,959 offensive sorties, releasing 8,249 weapons<sup>1</sup> in support of U.S. Central Command alone. Air Force tankers offloaded 172 million gallons of fuel to Joint and coalition air forces, and Airmen flew 79,445 airlift missions in operations on every continent.<sup>2</sup> We kept watch over our enemies, collecting and analyzing over 18 million images and 1.6 million hours of full motion video...and we evacuated 6,075 wounded Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines, and civilians from the battle space. Instead of slowing down, our force sped up.

The Air Force was equally busy at home, providing capability most Americans never have to think about. Airmen launched nine national security space missions –

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<sup>1</sup> These include Close Air Support, Escort, and Interdiction sorties. Data from AFCENT Airpower Summary

<sup>2</sup> Tanker Airlift Control Center Office of Public Affairs

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bolstering GPS, weather, and Space Situational Awareness capabilities to benefit military and civilian users alike. They engaged with allies to build America's space partnerships; and worked to qualify potential new launch providers to increase competition, reduce costs, and assure American access to space in the future. And Airmen began the long, critical work of revitalizing two of the three legs of our Nation's nuclear triad, gathering over 300 recommendations from the field on how to improve Air Force nuclear culture...and then implemented those ideas, to the tune of \$50 million in fiscal year 2014 (FY14) and a planned \$154 million in FY15.

Airmen provide access, overwatch, protection, and staying power for American and coalition forces the world over. They degrade adversary capabilities, and re-affirm every day that America can project power anywhere in the world, at the time and place of our choosing. That power – that presence, at home and abroad – is among the strongest deterrents confronting the Nation's would-be enemies...and protecting our National interests.

### **III. Capacity and Capability: A Dual Problem**

Americans have invested in airpower for well over 60 years to ensure the fight is never fair. But today – after many years of continual operations and a few fiscal upheavals – the Nation is at a crossroads, with a fundamental disconnect between its airpower expectations and its airpower capability.

There was a time when the Air Force could trade some capacity in order to retain capability. But we have reached the point where the two are inextricable; lose any more capacity, and the capability will cease to exist.

The Service's intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) force is a sobering example of this critical nexus. In today's warfighting environment there is nearly infinite

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appetite for Air Force ISR<sup>3</sup> – we simply do not have the capacity to fulfill it. To meet as much of the demand as possible, Airmen work 10- to 12-hour shifts on a “7-on, 1-off” pattern, flying over 900 hours a year – a rate that can accumulate a career’s worth of flying hours in a single assignment. These are combat shifts, physically, mentally, and emotionally taxing...and to get it done, they are sometimes diverted from training that allows them to improve, advance, and build a professional military career. When such Airmen are faced with the decision to separate or continue to serve, it is difficult to convince them that staying is in their best interests. We are losing them at a rate faster than we can replace them.

At some point, no level of effort will cover the capacity gap created by continual worldwide operations and dwindling, uncertain budgets. The capability itself will fail.

The fleet offers another case in point. Today’s Air Force is both the smallest and oldest it has ever been. Since Operation DESERT STORM in 1991, the Air Force cut its total aircraft inventory from 8,600 to 5,452. During that same time period, we cut Active, Guard, Reserve, and civilian Airmen from 946,000 to little more than 662,000 (just 313,000 on active duty). The average age of Air Force aircraft is 27 years, with many fleets substantially older.

The *newest* B-52 bomber is 53 years old. In at least one Air Force family, three generations of Airmen have piloted the Stratofortress, in combat engagements from Vietnam to ENDURING FREEDOM (see boxed text below).

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<sup>3</sup> A return to sequestration would result in 50 percent of the high-altitude ISR missions being flown today no longer being available. Commanders would lose 30 percent of their ability to collect intelligence and targeting data against moving vehicles on the battlefield.

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### **Three Generations of B-52 Airmen**

Captain Daniel Welch graduated from the Air Force Academy in 2008, and began flying the B-52 in March of 2010. His father, Lieutenant Colonel Don Welch, was assigned to Guam in the early 1980s, a B-52 flight crew member during the Cold War. And Daniel's grandfather, Colonel Don Sprague, flew "the mighty B-52" in combat missions in Vietnam, earning the Distinguished Flying Cross for his service.

The B-52 that Daniel's grandfather flew was designed in the 1950s for its strategic strike capability, deterring direct aggression from our enemies. It was capable and it was credible. Under current recapitalization plans, the Air Force will try to keep this venerable airplane flying until at least 2040...that is enough years to let a fourth generation of the Sprague-Welch family grow, graduate, and fly the B-52 as well. But how capable, and by extension how credible, will a 90-year-old bomber be in the world 25 years from today?

The Nation broadly invested in capacity to cover the globe decades ago...but if we do not have capacity with the right capability to meet today's needs, what is perceived as credible capability is merely an illusion.

By automobile standards, 12 fleets of Air Force aircraft are authorized antique license plates in the state of Virginia. The Air Force can (and does) continue to patch these older platforms up and fly them in combat. But after extending their service life time and time again, each airframe reaches the point where it cannot be "patched up" anymore. It must be replaced or it fails.

With aging aircraft and stressed fleets, today's capacity, as small as it is, is something of an illusion. The numbers are there – barely – but the capability to command global influence is tenuous. What was, in earlier times, a blanket of airpower covering the globe, has been worn to mere threads.

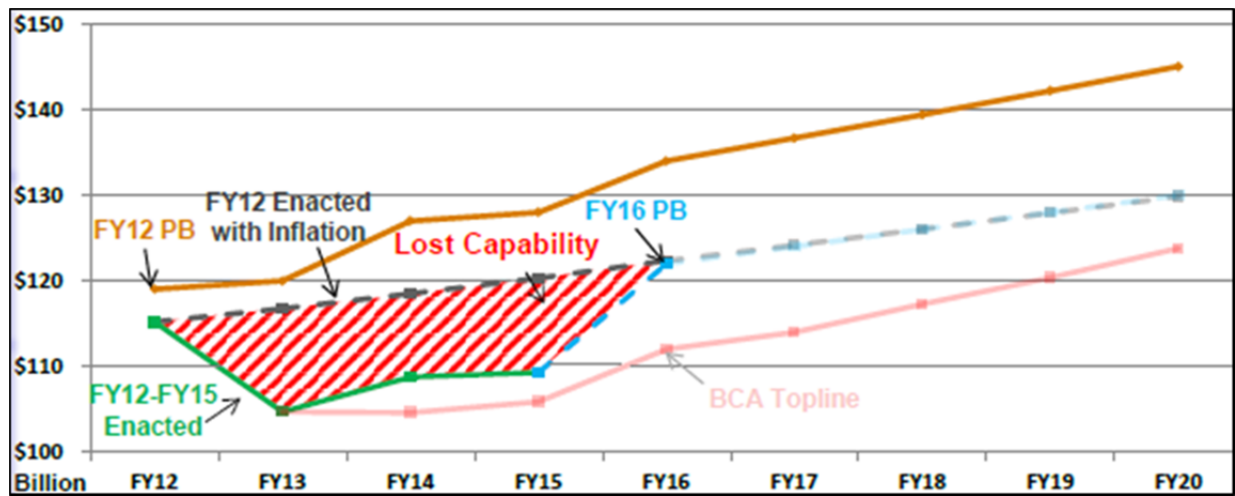
#### **IV. Policy and Purse Strings**

The world continues to change at an unprecedented pace and operational requirements continue unabated. The demands for global engagement is challenging under any circumstance...but when combined with an uncertain budget environment, it drives the Air Force – indeed, all Services – to make incredibly difficult choices, pitting vital requirement against vital requirement.

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When budgets contract and budgetary policy is continually postponed, or written in a way that limits Service solutions to budget problems, decision-space shrinks, and already difficult budget choices become nearly impossible.

In FY12, when the Air Force originally forecast its requirements to meet the Defense Strategic Guidance, the Service planned an FY16 topline of \$134 billion. Today – as enacted in FY15, and so requested in the FY16 PB – that topline has decreased to \$122 billion. In aggregate, the loss across those five years is \$64 billion (see chart I below).



**Chart I: Lost Capability**

To put this into perspective, if the Air Force shut off all utilities – turned off the lights, the heating and air conditioning, the water supply – at all our major installations for 12 years<sup>4</sup>...or if it quit flying for 20 months – did not burn any jet fuel at all for nearly 2 years...it would save only \$12 billion. Enough to buy back one year of sequestered funds. Money matters; the lost capability is real; and the impact is going to be significant.

<sup>4</sup> This number reflects the cost of *utilities only* at US Air Force installations – it does not reflect installations investments writ large (and thus does not portray in any way the savings which could be associated with base realignment and closure)

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In addition, both budget uncertainty and legislative programming restrictions have left the Air Force with very limited decision-space over the past three years. Tightly constrained on aircraft divestiture and denied Base Realignment and Closure, leaves the Service with only a few accounts to yield savings from quickly and cleanly, without violating “must pay” requirements: readiness, people, and modernization. From these, the Air Force worked hard to identify the least catastrophic choices it could.

The Air Force took risk in infrastructure. Our investment in maintenance and repair – including restoration, modernization, sustainment, and new construction to recapitalize Air Force facilities and infrastructure – is just 1.9 percent of the Service’s plant replacement value. Private industry standard is between six and eight percent investment.<sup>5</sup>

Unable to cut airframes we believe we need to divest or to reduce excess base capacity; the Service has cut personnel – taking risk in human capital. Since 2001, even as the Nation fought in Afghanistan and Iraq, Air Force uniformed end-strength dropped by 44,000 Airmen.<sup>6</sup> We simply cannot get any smaller or we risk being too small to succeed.

We have also been forced to cut into some of the programs that keep Airmen and airpower a step ahead of the enemy at all times. In 2013, for example, an entire Weapons School class – which produces the world's best tactical and operational airpower experts – was cancelled.

Risk and tough choices are part of every business. The problem, for the Air Force, is that failure is never an option. Airmen will fix it, patch it, make do, and work until they drop to cover shortfalls. But asking it of them, year in and year out, risks unbearable strain on a force heavily engaged around the globe.

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<sup>5</sup> ...and National Research Council studies indicate that an investment between two and four percent of PRV is warranted to avoid risk of accelerated deterioration and infrastructure failure.

<sup>6</sup> FY2011-FY2014 Active, Guard, and Reserve

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## V. Doing What We Can

Recognizing that budget uncertainty – and a need for fiscal restraint – may be here to stay, the Air Force has extended its institutional gaze out 30 years to synchronize budget and acquisition decisions with strategy. To guide this effort, in 2014 the Service published *America's Air Force: A Call to the Future*,<sup>7</sup> a ground-breaking new strategic framework. This framework calls for strategic agility to confront the rapidly-changing global environment, and – in conjunction with the upcoming Air Force Strategic Master Plan – will provide guideposts and long-range resourcing vectors with which to make the difficult tradeoffs required in years to come.

In the more immediate-term, the Air Force has realized value through its “Every Dollar Counts” (EDC) campaign. At the heart of EDC is the Secretary of the Air Force’s challenge to every Airman to take ownership of the processes they touch and to look for better ways to do business. EDC initiatives run the gamut, from soliciting grassroots savings ideas to overhauling Air Force acquisition practices. Efforts within the campaign have reduced energy costs by approximately \$1 billion, and identified another \$1.3 billion in potential savings through Better Buying Power practices and the Air Force’s partner initiative, Bending the Cost Curve. We project another \$35.4 million in savings proposed by Airmen, and have found opportunities to save \$190 million over the next five years by analyzing War Readiness Engine requirements. The savings are already planned for reinvestment in readiness, as well as to modernize equipment and infrastructure.

Budgetary constraints also spurred the Air Force to re-evaluate the way it does business with its installations’ host communities, and seek alternatives to the status quo. The Air Force Community Partnerships Initiative makes unprecedented use of public-public and public-private (P4) partnerships, leveraging the existing resources and capabilities of installations, state and local communities, and commercial entities to achieve mutual value and benefit for all. There are now 47 installations in the Air Force

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<sup>7</sup> [http://airman.dodlive.mil/files/2014/07/AF\\_30\\_Year\\_Strategy\\_2.pdf](http://airman.dodlive.mil/files/2014/07/AF_30_Year_Strategy_2.pdf)



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Partnership Program who identified more than 1,000 initiatives across the spectrum of installation services and mission support...and many of these initiatives are developing further with potential application Air Force-wide.

Additionally, the Air Force unequivocally relies on three strong components – Active, Guard, and Reserve – to sustain the force required to meet strategic uncertainty, fiscal constraint, and rapidly evolving threats head-on. The Air Force is absolutely committed to leveraging the distinct and complementary characteristics of its Total Force more effectively...and to do that, Airmen must be postured to operate cohesively and seamlessly as one team. Over the last year, dialogue with stakeholders provided valuable perspective – and mutual understanding – about the necessary size and shape of the future Air Force. The Service spent 2014 thoroughly analyzing 80 percent of its mission areas and platforms, taking a close look at component balance. Over the course of the next year, the Air Force will continue evaluating the remaining 20 percent of the mission areas...and continue ongoing work to break down organizational, policy, and cultural barriers to seamless operations.

The Air Force is a committed steward of America's resources, saving – or avoiding costs – to the tune of billions of dollars through the ingenuity of Airmen. Yet even those billions fall far short of making up the losses of the past three years. We need a stable funding profile, and support for the tough fiscal decisions required, if we are to meet the complex global challenges of the coming years.

## **VI. An Investment in Global Influence**

America is an airpower nation; we have enjoyed unrivaled success in the air for the past 70 years. But future success is not a birthright, and air and space superiority is not an entitlement. It must be earned. Without it, American influence diminishes and the U.S. military will be forced to radically change how it goes to war. Americans will be put in danger, and our leaders' options will be markedly limited. Our adversaries know this and are taking steps to tip the balance in their favor.

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We cannot let this happen. We must invest in the force required today *and* invest in the force we will need tomorrow.

The FY16 PB request is the result of difficult, purposeful, strategy-based resourcing decisions made to meet obligations set in the Defense Strategic Guidance. It aligns with Department of Defense and Air Force 30-year strategies; continues to regain ground in our ability to wage full-spectrum operations; maximizes the contributions of the Total Force; reinforces investments in nuclear deterrence and space control operations; emphasizes global, long-range and non-permissive capabilities; and focuses on unique capabilities the Air Force provides to the Joint fight. It funds our greatest asset – Airmen – by halting the active duty manpower drawdown and reinvesting pay and compensation savings in Airmen’s quality-of-life programs. And it preserves the Air Force’s top three acquisition priorities: F-35; KC-46; and the long-range strike bomber.

The FY16 PB request also reflects changes in the global landscape, buying back combat capabilities in areas where the Air Force accepted risk in the FY15 PB – the E-8, JSTARS, and F-15C. U-2 and E-3 AWACS divestment is re-phased to FY19, so we can continue to operate those platforms and meet combatant commanders’ most urgent needs. And we’ve increased funding for the nuclear enterprise, space, cyber, ISR, and command and control improvements, investing in the Nation’s strategic deterrence and high demand airpower assets.

This budget cannot stand alone – it must serve as a point of departure for future years’ stable, committed investment in global airpower for America. A return to sequestration-level funding will devastate readiness and modernization; it will force the Air Force to depart from a long-term, strategic planning framework in favor of one that triages only those things absolutely required in the short-term. It will reverse incremental progress made over the past two years in the recovery from FY13’s sequestration-level funding and will make it impossible to meet current operational requirements or execute the Defense Strategic Guidance. Under a sequestration-level budget, we will be forced to

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recommend divesting critical airpower capabilities – like the KC-10 and U-2 fleets. Overdue investments in the nuclear enterprise will be reduced and technologies vital to future capability and the American industrial base – like the promising Adaptive Engine Program – will be halted.

## **VII. Conclusion**

The United States Air Force is the world's best. American Airmen are warfighters. The air, space, and cyberspace capabilities they bring to bear strike fear in the hearts of our enemies. If you are a threat, the Air Force can see you; it can reach you; and it can strike you. We must keep it that way.

As Airmen continue to support and defend America's interests around the globe – engaging in active combat and operational missions worldwide – the Nation must acknowledge the serious disconnect between the Air Force it expects, the Air Force it has today, and the Air Force it is funding for the future. Today's Air Force is the smallest and oldest it has ever been...and a high operational tempo, paired with a constrained and uncertain budget environment, only accelerates this trend. The Nation must invest in new technologies, in training, infrastructure, and personnel, if it intends to continue operating as a global superpower.

The FY16 PB request preserves the *minimum* requirement to meet current strategy. But even at the PB level, the Air Force remains stressed and shortfalls exist. Reversion to sequestration-level funding will carry great risk for American Airmen, and for America itself.

The Fiscal Year 2016 President's Budget request is an investment in a force we hope the Nation will never have to use. But if the turbulent – and largely unexpected – global developments of 2014 prove anything, they prove this: America's Air Force must be ready to engage anytime, anywhere, and across the full spectrum of warfare. America expects it, combatant commanders require it, and our Airmen deserve it.