

Statement of Senator Daniel K. Inouye
Air Force Budget Overview Hearing
March 21, 2007

Today we welcome the Honorable Michael Wynne, Secretary of the Air Force, and General Michael Moseley, the Air Force Chief of Staff. Gentlemen, thank you for being here today as the committee reviews the Air Force's budget request for fiscal year 2008.

The Air Force's fiscal year 2008 base budget request is \$137 billion, a modest increase of \$8 billion over last year's budget.

The Committee recognizes the priorities of the Air Force of fighting and winning the long war on terror, taking good care of the Airmen and their families and beginning a significant effort to recapitalize and modernize the United States Air Force. We also recognize the challenges associated with recapitalizing while trying to modernize the existing fleet and maintain readiness at the same time. With the average age of the fleet being 24 years old, it is imperative to find the correct balance between recapitalization with new inventory, modernization of existing assets, and readiness in order for the Air Force to posture itself for the future.

I want to take this opportunity to remind everyone of the great support the Air Force is providing for Operation Noble Eagle here at home and Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom overseas. It is easy for the media and my colleagues to focus on the role played by the Soldiers and Marines on the ground, but they rely heavily on the support provided by Airmen. As a matter of fact, there are 7,700 Airmen who are performing what is called "in lieu of" taskings, where they support the Army in areas where the Army is stressed in their abilities to engage in current operations.

Since the Air Force is becoming more involved in non-traditional taskings, and with the Army and Marine Corps now both increasing end strength, it brings into question the decision to begin a drawdown of Air Force personnel. It may be time to revisit that issue since the environment in which the decision was made has significantly changed.

We look forward to working with you to ensure that our Air Force is appropriately resourced to meet each of its tasks.

Gentlemen, we sincerely appreciate your service to our nation, and the dedication and sacrifices made daily by the men and women in the United States Air Force. We could not be more grateful for what you do.

Your full statements will be included in the record. I now turn to my co-chairman, Senator Stevens, for his opening statement.