

**Chairman Richard Shelby Opening Statement  
Committee on Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense**

**Hearing to Review the FY2019 Budget Request for the U.S. Air Force**

**May 17, 2018**

*(As prepared for delivery)*

The Subcommittee will come to order.

This morning, I am pleased to welcome Secretary Wilson and General Goldfein to review the Air Force fiscal year 2019 budget request.

The Air Force is requesting \$156.3 billion, an increase of about \$4.6 billion over amounts appropriated for fiscal year 2018, and an amount consistent with the two-year budget deal passed earlier this year.

The Air Force budget request recognizes the challenges posed by long-term competition with China and Russia, and builds on the progress of the 2018 budget to restore readiness, increase lethality, and cost-effectively modernize.

Restoring readiness to support a total force of 500,000 Airmen and over 5,000 aircraft must remain the top priority, however, investments that maintain our edge on the battlefield are also critically important. We must continue to address areas such as hypersonic weapons and artificial intelligence that will maintain our technological advantage into the future.

At the same time we must continue to manage programs currently in production, such as the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter and the tanker replacement program.

Secretary Wilson and General Goldfein, we appreciate your service and look forward to hearing how your budget balances all of these important priorities.

Now I turn to the Vice Chairman, Senator Durbin, for his opening remarks. Thank you.

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