

# Department of the Air Force Posture Statement

Fiscal Year 2024

**Department of the Air Force  
Presentation to the Committees  
and Subcommittees of the  
United States Senate  
and the House of Representatives  
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**Statement of:**

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## OVERVIEW

The Department of the Air Force (DAF) remains focused on implementing the National Defense Strategy (NDS) and the priorities of the Secretary of Defense: mission, people, and teams. Our ability to perform our missions comes first, and everything we are doing to support and develop our people and build strong teams supports that goal. One year ago, we submitted a posture statement in which the need to modernize the Air and Space Forces, especially to meet our pacing challenge – the People’s Republic of China (PRC) – was highlighted. Over the past year, we have provided threat briefings to Congress on the severity of that challenge. A year ago, we also outlined seven operational imperatives the DAF must meet to be successful, but we were only beginning our work to analyze and define the solutions to those imperatives. We are pleased to report we have made significant progress in identifying the capabilities the DAF will need to prevail against the PRC and in defining new programs and resources to develop and field these capabilities. That progress is reflected in over a dozen new efforts, including a mix of completely new or significantly re-scoped program elements, in our Fiscal Year 2024 (FY24) budget submission. With our budget submission, the DAF’s ability to execute these plans and to keep pace with the threat is now in your hands, and we urge you to act promptly on our FY24 request.

Within the NDS, there are four priorities: defending the homeland, deterring strategic attacks, deterring aggression, and building a resilient joint force. The Nation’s Air and Space Forces have key roles to play in each of these, and this is reflected in our FY24 budget request.

The need to defend the homeland is paced with the growing threat from the PRC. We have just seen a manifestation of this threat in the high-altitude surveillance balloon destroyed by an Air Force F-22 fighter aircraft. While the recent high-altitude balloon incursion into our airspace may have garnered significant attention, there are other, more concerning threats to the homeland. PRC and Russian satellites observe the United States continuously. Cyber-attacks focused on intellectual property theft, penetration of critical infrastructure, espionage against national security networks, and disinformation, from both the PRC and Russia, are a constant reality. As the PRC increases the range of its conventional strike capabilities, the potential for missile strikes of various types against the homeland is increasing. In our FY24 budget, we are once again requesting F-15EX and F-35 fighter production. We are also accelerating our acquisition of a new space-based missile warning architecture to improve our warning and enable defenses against missile threats.

To deter strategic attacks against the United States, our allies, and partners, the DAF continues programs to recapitalize the intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) and bomber legs of the nuclear triad. The Sentinel program, our ICBM replacement, is continuing in development. The Minuteman III, first deployed in 1970, is the oldest land-based strategic missile system in the world. FY24 budgets more than \$4.4 billion for its replacement, Sentinel, which is critical for our nuclear modernization. For the bomber leg, we recently rolled out the B-21 Raider, which is scheduled to achieve its first flight this calendar year. Complementing our new bomber is the modernization of the B-52 and development of the Long-Range Standoff Weapon. Stable and consistent Congressional support remains vital to ensuring a safe, secure, and effective nuclear deterrent. These programs and others that contribute to this priority are all fully funded in the FY24 budget request.

Our biggest challenge is maintaining and strengthening our capacity to deter aggression, and to prevail, if necessary, with priority to the PRC and the Indo-Pacific followed by the Russian challenge in Europe. While there is overlap with other priorities, the focus of our seven operational imperatives described in last

year's posture statement has been on this challenge. The Nation's ability to project power, in the western Pacific in particular, is being challenged aggressively. The FY24 budget request includes approximately \$5 billion in funding focused directly on achieving the seven operational imperatives and includes several new initiatives. The DAF's Future Years Defense Program (FYDP) request includes nearly \$35 billion in funding to continue our investments designed to address the operational imperatives. The criticality of these efforts highlights the importance of an on-time appropriation.

Space has been recognized as a military domain of crucial importance to the joint force, allies, and partners, and to our ability to project power. The first operational imperative is to define the Space Force that we will need and to put the programs in place to field that force. The Space Force has two fundamental missions: to provide essential services to the joint force and to protect the joint force from adversary hostile uses of space systems. The ability to perform these missions is at risk today and that risk is increasing over time. Our space systems are threatened by a variety of growing anti-satellite capabilities, and the joint force is threatened by increasingly sophisticated adversary space-based systems intended to target the joint force. Our FY24 budget request continues the work on a resilient missile warning constellation initiated last year. Our budget also builds out a more resilient space communications capability for the joint force, based on diversity and dispersion of communication satellites. This development work includes programs being managed by the Space Development Agency (SDA), now a part of the DAF and the Space Force, continuing to field distributed communications architectures. The total Space Force budget in the FY24 request is \$30 billion, 15% above the enacted Fiscal Year 2023 (FY23) Space Force appropriation. It includes over \$2 billion and seven new efforts for this imperative. Other initiatives in this portfolio can be discussed at a higher level of classification.

The Air and Space Forces play crucial roles in Joint All Domain Command and Control (JADC2). The second operational imperative is intended to ensure the totality of DAF Command, Control, Communications, and Battle Management (C3BM) programs provide an integrated capability with the resilience and performance needed to provide the Air Force and Space Force, the joint force, allies, and partners, with timely information and the systems to communicate, manage, and employ that information. Providing this capability resiliently is critical to enable our warfighters to make effective decisions in a high-speed, complex fight against our pacing challenge. The Advanced Battle Management System (ABMS) is one part of this overall effort, which has now been brought under the technical management of a recently created Program Executive Officer (PEO) for Integrated C3BM. Additionally, our Nuclear Command, Control, and Communications (NC3) capability investments will be synchronized with the PEO for Integrated C3BM efforts. The FY24 budget submission includes a net of roughly \$500 million for DAF C3BM, including an additional \$65 million for one new effort in this area.

If the United States is to deter aggression and prevail should conflict occur, we must have the ability to track and engage advancing enemy forces in the air, on the sea, and on land. The third operational imperative addresses this need with a combination of space- and air-based systems. For space-based systems, the Space Force is working in close collaboration with the intelligence community to ensure that the joint force has the support it needs from integrated intelligence and operational support systems located in space. This will include operational space sensing, coupled with tasking and data management, designed with joint tactical warfighting as a primary mission. For airborne systems, the DAF is continuing the acquisition of the E-7A replacement for the E-3 airborne warning and control system. Other initiatives can be discussed at a higher level of classification. Overall, the FY24 budget requests \$431 million for moving target related systems (exclusive of the Intelligence Community and classified funding) and includes six new efforts.

For over 75 years, the Air Force has dominated opponents in the air. The PRC is challenging that dominance, and we cannot afford complacency, nor can we afford Air Force capability and capacity composed largely of fighters that cost as much as or more than the F-35. The fourth operational imperative addresses the family-of-systems needed to sustain our dominance in the air. The centerpiece of this effort is the Next Generation Air Dominance (NGAD) platform, but this platform will be too expensive to be purchased in large numbers. The FY24 budget enhances funding to field uncrewed Collaborative Combat Aircraft (CCA) to complement the NGAD, F-35, and possibly other current and new crewed platforms. Concurrent with CCA development, the DAF will acquire assets for experimentation and testing to explore organizational structures, maintenance concepts, and operational tactics. CCA inventory goals have not been established, but for planning purposes, we are assuming an initial inventory of 1,000 CCAs, with nominally two CCAs paired with each NGAD aircraft, and a portion of the F-35 inventory. In addition to the CCAs, this operational imperative has addressed other aspects of the NGAD family-of-systems. In total, the FY24 budget submission requests approximately \$490 million for air dominance, with the entire CCA program and supporting elements encompassing three new efforts.

The PRC and Russian investments in long-range precision strikes have put our forward airbases at risk. The Air Force's Agile Combat Employment (ACE) concept partially addresses this threat. The fifth operational imperative team analyzed additional steps to enhance forward air base availability and resiliency. In the FY24 budget request, the DAF prioritized actions that could be taken quickly to increase the overall resiliency of our forward-deployed air assets, including building hardened shelters and pre-positioning equipment and supplies needed to implement ACE. The FY24 budget includes \$1.2 billion to strengthen the resiliency and expand the availability of our forward airbases in the Indo-Pacific region. While not a new start, it represents a significant increase over FY23 funding levels.

The Air Force's global strike capabilities provide a powerful conventional and strategic deterrent. The sixth operational imperative examined ways to improve the cost-effectiveness of the family-of-systems surrounding the B-21 bomber. As noted above, the B-21 Raider is fully funded in the FY24 request, and it continues to make progress toward production and fielding. The Raider is more than a new platform, and this imperative identified new weapons, sensors, and communications that can make the B-21 more effective in the joint tactical fight. The FY24 request includes \$80 million to modernize our global strike capabilities and includes two new efforts.

Both the Space Force and the Air Force have a number of systems and facilities on which they depend to mobilize and transition to wartime operations. The final operational imperative addressed the need to ensure these systems and facilities would function as needed in wartime. Much of the work to date under this imperative focused on the cyber-security of our critical information systems and infrastructure, especially modernizing and hardening our network infrastructure and giving our cyber operators new tools for cyber defense. Air and Space forces must also be capable of operating in a contested cyberspace environment. Our current budget reflects initial investments to achieve these objectives by cyber hardening networks, weapon systems, and priority defense critical infrastructure, and we recognize that there is much work to do in this area. The FY24 budget request includes \$613 million in this area to strengthen the DAF's cybersecurity posture. This represents a significant increase in enterprise information technology and cyber defense funding over FY23 levels.

The work on the operational imperatives over the past year has informed the FY24 request, but it has also indicated some areas in which more effort is required. In just the last year, the threat has become more severe. As a result, the DAF is continuing and expanding our efforts to define solutions to the challenges we face. We are continuing the work of the seven operational imperatives to refine resource needs and

plans across the lifecycle of these capabilities. In addition, we have started work on three cross-cutting operational enablers. These are mobility, electronic warfare, and munitions. These combined efforts will inform our Fiscal Year 2025 (FY25) request, but they have already influenced our FY24 plans.

In the DAF mobility portfolio, the tanker recapitalization effort has been our highest priority. The KC-46 is still working to meet all its requirements, but we believe they will be achieved. As the threat continues to increase the range at which it can engage our aircraft, we are being forced to reexamine how we will operate these platforms. The mobility study we have initiated will identify new ways to achieve more mission resilience and effectiveness with existing platforms and will define the requirements for the next generation of tanker and transport aircraft. While it is too early to provide any results, one outcome seems probable: the next tanker must be much more survivable than current designs and is unlikely to be a derivative of a commercial aircraft design. The DAF will conduct an Analysis of Alternatives to determine the requirements and concept for the Next Generation Air-Refueling System and we will evaluate our future mobility platform needs.

Russia's war against Ukraine, Korea Readiness Review, and the experience combating the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) have taught us that munitions planning, production capitalization, and stockpiling must account for the possibility of a longer and more intense conflict than previously assumed. The munitions cross-cutting operational enabler analysis will inform our FY25 budget, but we are not waiting to address our highest-priority munitions requirements. The target set for which we must be prepared is evolving. We must build a munitions inventory that is more diverse with greater capacity while accelerating design and production capability, which includes advanced weapons. In the FY24 budget, we are increasing our procurement of munitions and partnering aggressively with the other services, allies, partners, and industry.

The combat support area of electronic warfare (EW) must be reevaluated in light of emerging threats. Historically, EW development has been stove-piped for the sole purpose of providing enhanced survivability of individual platforms. As our adversaries have advanced their long-range sensing and targeting capabilities, we need to examine new ways to use EW as an offensive capability designed to defeat adversary kill webs. While most of this analytical work is classified, we expect new programs as well as some program restructuring in our FY25 budget.

Last year we indicated that hard choices would have to be made. Often those choices are between current and future capabilities. The DAF FY24 budget provides an acceptable level of operational risk for the current force in order to fund the future force. Affording the investments necessary to implement the operational imperative-derived recommendations requires both divestitures from the current force and an acceptance of risk in the level of readiness of the current force. Make no mistake: your Air Force and Space Force are ready and able to confront and defeat any adversary, but they are not being maintained at as high a level of readiness as might be possible. The fact is that the threat is racing to make those existing forces obsolete. The DAF must move as rapidly as possible to the future set of capabilities we need to sustain our deterrent and our ability to project power. There is not a moment to lose.

We deeply appreciate the support of Congress in FY23. Congress largely supported our divestiture requests in FY23 with one exception – the divestiture of 32 of our oldest and least capable F-22s. A year later, the threat is more severe, and the need to modernize is more pressing. This year we hope to continue the divestitures that were requested last year as we transition the force to one that is relevant to the threat. In particular, we are requesting the retirement of an additional 42 A-10s. This 40-plus-year-old fighter has served the Air Force and the Nation well, but it does not deter or survive against our pacing

challenge, and we need to move forward.

The Air and Space Forces are working to fulfill the NDS priority of building a resilient joint force and defense ecosystem. All our mission capabilities rest on one single foundation – our people. The hard work and dedication of over 700,000 military and civilian Airmen and Guardians across the Active, Guard, and Reserve components power our department. In FY24, we vow to continue supporting them by ensuring they can serve to their fullest potential. We demand a culture of respect, will promote accountability, and aim to end harmful behaviors, such as sexual harassment, sexual assault, racial, ethnic, and gender disparities, domestic violence, domestic abuse, and suicide as well as hazing, bullying, and other forms of discriminatory harassment. We will also promote initiatives that improve diversity and inclusion, ensure quality healthcare access, advance recruitment and retention, and improve our talent management processes to strengthen readiness. Every current and potential Airman and Guardian should understand their value and the importance of service to our Nation.

As we move forward to meet our challenges, we do so as members of a much larger team. First, the Air and Space Forces are critical members of the joint team. We are also members of an international team with our allies and partners who collectively ensure our success at achieving integrated deterrence against any threat, but first and foremost against our pacing challenge.

Our people and our missions are successful because of teamwork. The FY24 budget continues numerous investments, such as \$194 million for Pacific Deterrence initiatives, to strengthen our relationships and interoperability with our joint force, allies, partners, and interagencies. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is stronger than ever, and the ever-increasing F-35 community provides strong interoperability. In the Pacific, we are expanding our relationship with traditional partners like Japan, South Korea, and Australia, while strengthening our cooperation with nations like the Philippines and other Pacific Island nations. Our united resolve against Russian aggression and our combined focus on the pacing challenge in the Indo-Pacific highlight the incredible partnerships we have with democracies around the globe that share our values. As we research, test, acquire, and build the military capabilities of tomorrow, we strengthen and expand the Defense Industrial Base, and we do so in concert with our allied and partner nations.

## UNITED STATES SPACE FORCE

The United States Space Force was created in recognition of the space domain’s critical importance to national prosperity and the need to contest the domain for national security purposes. Recently, the US has seen dramatic changes in the domain with an exponential increase of launches, on-orbit active payloads, space debris, and proliferation of counter-space threats. This reality presents new risks and opportunities to national objectives across diplomatic, information, military, and economic instruments of power. Consequently, ensuring our Nation’s ability to operate in, from, and through a stable space domain is a vital national interest for the Space Force to address.

Spacepower is not simply “important” in modern competition and conflict – it is foundational. Russia’s war against Ukraine continues to validate this assertion in several ways. First, Russian counterspace attacks since the outset of the war reinforce the reality that space is a warfighting domain. Second, proliferating constellations and disaggregating space missions are proving to be far more resilient and effective, especially with commercial augmentation. Third, equipment alone cannot win in the modern fight. Winning takes space-enabled, multi-domain operations and a joint force trained on the most

current operational concepts. In this environment, we must shift to a resilient and effective Space Order of Battle and ensure we have the tools, talent, and experience to be ready to face the challenges to our missions of providing space superiority so that we can enable and protect the joint force, our allies, and partners.

## SPACE FORCE'S ROLE IN DEFENDING THE NATION

A primary responsibility of the Space Force is to field ready, resilient, and combat-credible forces. To be ready, Guardians must be trained, exercised, and postured. To be resilient, our architectures must be designed to render threats operationally impractical or self-defeating. And to be combat-credible, space forces need systems for full spectrum operations utilized by competent warfighters practiced in their tradecraft.

Through the operational imperatives, we are defining the space systems and capabilities we need to prevail against the pacing challenges – the PRC and, secondarily, Russia. Through the work in the first operational imperative, we are focused on increasing resilience for space architecture by addressing the risks facing people, platforms, and processes through systems proliferated across multiple orbits. Resilient systems will allow us to prevent, respond, and campaign through competition and aggression. When operated by a ready, combat-credible force, resilient systems will disincentivize would-be aggressors.

The FY24 budget includes critical investments for meeting all four priorities demanded in the NDS and the DAF's first operational imperative by evolving toward more resilient space architectures. Building resilience must first consider the continuous operation of over 50 legacy platforms, which necessitates investing \$172 million in FY24 for additional cyber protection, evaluating select legacy systems for upgrades, and integrating space capabilities from several allies and partners. These upgrades will broaden the resilience of several mission areas, including military Positioning, Navigation and Timing (PNT), Command, Control, Communications, and Battle Management (C3BM) systems, and NC3 by migrating the Evolved Strategic SATCOM (ESS) system to a proliferated architecture that will be more resilient during a strategic attack.

Still, the surest way to lessen long-term risk is through the generational replacement of legacy platforms. This year's budget requests \$102 million to continue our analysis of the force design for how space-based systems support several critical warfighter needs, including delivering communications to the tactical edge, providing secure PNT information, and enabling data links that connect sensors, warfighters, and weapons. The insights gained from comprehensive force design analyses ensure we make effective and cost-effective transitions from legacy to next-generation space systems.

The first mission area to undergo this transformation will be Missile Warning/Missile Tracking (MW/MT), with the last legacy Space-Based Infrared System launch having occurred in 2022. In the FY24 budget, we turn the page into a new era of MW/MT with over \$2.3 billion to ramp up research, development, test, and evaluation of the first tranche of proliferated satellites, ground segment development, and interoperability testing which sets the way for a complete constellation in the years to follow. Additionally, we are on track to deliver the first Next-Gen Overhead Persistent Infrared geosynchronous space vehicle by 2025 to reduce risk and improve the transitional resiliency and effectiveness of MW/MT, missile defense, battlespace awareness, and technical intelligence.

Recognizing that joint warfighters need to sustain and expand SATCOM capabilities, this budget pursues new solutions. MeshONE, for example, is a \$151 million effort that will deliver a novel approach to a modern, scalable, resilient, cyber-secure Wide Area Network available to the joint force at the tactical edge. We are also leading the transformation of communications via the emerging space data transport layer. Beginning in FY24, our investment of \$1.8 billion will deliver an initial warfighter capability that will provide low-latency data transport and beyond-line-of-sight targeting, with persistent regional access to the joint force. Once fully operational, this capability will serve as the backbone of data transport in support of C3BM and JADC2.

We must also provide protection to the joint force and our allies from adversary space systems that threaten our forward-deployed forces and those of our partners. The FY24 budget includes funding for critical counter-space capabilities intended to fulfill this mission need. Specific budgetary information is available at a higher level of classification.

Our ability to use space effectively requires assured access, being first to field the necessary capabilities, and the ability to reconstitute them, if necessary. This budget ensures the National Security Space Launch (NSSL) program is equipped to place essential capabilities in orbit when needed. The NSSL program is preparing for a new phase in which we are pursuing a dual-lane, hybrid approach that maximizes the use of the Nation's robust commercial launch market. Recognizing the exponential growth of the commercial space industry, we are investing \$99 million in FY24 and over \$1 billion over the FYDP into the Range of the Future vision, which aligns us with the accelerating domestic space launch market, and maintains safe and assured launch for commercial, civil, and Department of Defense users.

## SPACE FORCE'S ROLE IN TAKING CARE OF PEOPLE

The Space Force is implementing a more modern talent management approach based on a competency framework that optimizes individual contribution. Over the past year, we have made progress toward achieving our end state described in the Guardian Ideal. The result has been tangible impacts on retention and the development of Guardians of all ranks. Our future hinges on recruiting and retaining a diverse and innovative force of highly talented Guardians, and we are proud to have met our recruiting targets. Guardians will soon be leading an innovative approach to holistic health by emphasizing a continuously healthy lifestyle rather than episodic fitness testing. We are retooling how we measure healthy living and providing Guardians and leaders with the resources they need to uphold the highest standards expected of military professionals.

We are also advancing opportunities and education for all ranks and phases of a Guardian's career. Starting with Basic Military Training, FY24 will see graduation standards fully established, with Guardians being held to service-specific requirements, while Air Force Officer Training School and Reserve Officers' Training Corps Space Force cadets will see increased space-related academic content. This budget will mature the University Partnership Program to inspire and recruit the right talent and provide additional opportunities for Guardians to obtain advanced academic degrees in essential Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math subjects. Reflecting our continued commitment to professional military education, this budget funds the program with our first graduates in 2024. With Congressional support, we intend to innovate by pursuing a personnel system with full- to part-time fluidity that will improve career flexibility and enhance retention tools.



Recruiting initiatives are only the beginning for Guardians as space professionals. To develop professional warfighters, this budget commits to enhancing readiness by increasing the quality and quantity of realistic testing of new systems and training of Guardians on them. By incrementally instituting Operational Test and Training Infrastructure and the National Space Test and Training Complex, FY24's investment of \$21 million will continue progress in delivering more realistic testing and training against a thinking adversary, much like the high-end fight our Nation may face in a future contingency. To do this, the Space Force will build agile operational capabilities and execute orbital experimentation to rapidly expand our technological prowess.

## SPACE FORCE'S ROLE IN SUCCEEDING THROUGH TEAMWORK

Teamwork for the Space Force starts internally within the DAF, where the Space Force relies upon support from the Air Force. For example, the Air Force supports the six Space Force Bases with over 8,000 Total Force Airmen providing numerous activities to the Space Force. This includes, but is not limited to, finance, contracting, education and training, child and youth services, dining, fitness, lodging, manpower, logistics, communications, medical, emergency services, and base security. Externally, the Space Force is building teams in four key areas: joint force, commercial industry, the intelligence community, and internationally.

With Congressional support, the Chief of Space Operations is formally designated as the Force Design Architect for Space Systems of the Armed Forces. This is important because our closest partnering efforts are inside the joint team. We are exercising our role as the integrator of all space requirements from and for the joint force as we merge and integrate requirements through more-responsive processes from sister services and Combatant Commands. Moreover, this budget requests to restructure the Space Force's organizations responsible for this important analytic work, namely by redesignating the Space Warfighting Analysis Center as a direct-reporting unit, which will increase responsiveness to warfighter needs.

In coordination with the Intelligence Community (IC), Guardians are also taking the initiative and exploring joint service intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance, and targeting needs and opportunities. Inherent coordination in integration with the IC ensures that operational and intelligence requirements are being met efficiently, especially when they overlap and use shared assets. For example, the IC and DAF are similarly seeking new means for moving target engagement, the fourth operational imperative.

To best partner with our industrial base and commercial space, we must improve space acquisition to be more dynamic, cost-sensible, and effective. In the past three years, several significant improvements have been made to the structure and relationships comprising space system acquisitions. For example, all major stakeholders in space acquisitions are collaborating to define resilient architectures, assess risks to identify needs, and drive rapid change that aims to deliver results faster than the threats can react. The nine acquisition principles developed by the Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Space Acquisition and Integration will revamp acquisition strategy to epitomize responsive acquisitions that apply state-of-the-art commercial best practices.

Expanding the use and future of the commercial space industry and academia across all mission areas organic to the Space Force and the joint force remains critical. These include satellite communications (SATCOM), space domain awareness (SDA), launch, PNT, and more. A strategic advantage for the United States is our robust, innovative, and responsive industrial base, which includes the highly specialized

traditional defense industrial base and the highly innovative new commercial space industry segment. We are embracing a hybrid architecture of commercial solutions across many mission areas. Our approach to hybrid architectures affords several benefits including resiliency, cost competition, responsive surge capacity, rapid technology refreshment, increased innovation, improved diversification to industry, and more expedient integration with international partners.

We continue to expand the team of allies we cooperate with across all mission areas. Space Systems Command recently delivered two SDA sensors on Japanese satellites to build SDA capacity and relations with a key ally in the Indo-Pacific region. In the European theater, our partnership with the Norwegian Ministry of Defense led to Enhanced Polar SATCOM payloads on two Norwegian satellites that will provide communications from highly elliptical orbits. The Space Force continues to address partnering challenges by implementing new classification guidance and sharing agreements, investing in more accessible hardware and software such as the Unified Data Library, and supporting DAF- and Department of Defense-wide solutions, particularly the Mission Partner Environment. The Space Force recognizes that the best solutions are preventative, such as the implementation of the Combined Space Operations Vision 2031 and the successful maturation of the NATO Space Centre. These structural improvements will help us to develop and operate resilient, interoperable architectures by and for coalitions.

## UNITED STATES AIR FORCE

The United States Air Force is critical to our national defense, is committed to Airmen and families, and succeeds by teaming with our joint teammates, allies, and partners as we execute our mission to “Fly, Fight, and Win . . . Airpower Anytime, Anywhere.” Our speed, agility, and lethality are exponential force multipliers to any global military operation. Our capabilities underwrite the entirety of the joint force, and we are uniquely suited to provide this cornerstone of the Nation’s defense.

To meet the threats facing the force of today and in the future, we must implement the programs that have been defined by the analysis of the seven DAF operational imperatives and continue the momentum of *Accelerate Change or Lose*. We are orienting our decision-making processes and shaping investments around resilience and lethality against the pacing challenge, long-range kill chains, and the elements supporting them. We remain dedicated to ensuring our investments and resources are properly aligned with the NDS to deter our adversaries and prevail in conflict. As the combat environment and the character of war continue to evolve, our determination to be the leader in speed, agility, and lethality remains an irreplaceable role for the joint team and our allies and partners.

## AIR FORCE’S ROLE IN DEFENDING THE NATION

As stated above, we must continue to make hard choices in Airpower modernization to keep pace with our strategic competitors while balancing risk. The difficult decisions are far from over, and the measured near-term risk decisions which prioritize essential modernization and acceptable current readiness continue. Airpower modernization is critical to address the four NDS priorities: defending the homeland, deterring strategic attacks, deterring aggression, and building a resilient joint force.

The NDS priorities depend upon platforms and capabilities that support effective command and control and are survivable in the threat environment of both today and tomorrow. In FY24, we continue our modernization efforts while divesting platforms and capabilities that have decreasing relevance against

our pacing challenge. Current airborne platforms, such as the E-3 and E-8, are not adequately survivable against emerging threats, are not optimal for joint or coalition operations, and need to continue divestiture as we look to the future. These airborne capabilities play a critical role in meeting the operational imperative to track and engage enemy forces at scale. A combination of space- and air-based systems will be needed to maximize lethality and close kill chains. We remain committed to balancing current, mid-term, and longer-term capability and capacity by divesting the E-3 while rapidly acquiring and fielding the E-7A to modernize efficiently.

A focused redesign of the C3BM network, being pursued under the second operational imperative, is overdue and a top-priority modernization effort that will define and field ABMS capabilities. The establishment of the C3BM Integrating PEO will align command and control modernization efforts across the DAF and with the joint force. ABMS will fulfill the Air Force's integral contribution to JADC2 and the FY24 budget focuses on building and maturing ongoing programs.

Air superiority for the joint force demands affordable Airpower modernization, which includes NGAD. The FY24 budget continues NGAD development. The NGAD family-of-systems operational imperative will provide an innovative suite of capabilities that allow us to establish and maintain air superiority, a precondition for the joint force's freedom of maneuver. The uncrewed CCA program included in this budget is a significantly enhanced activity for air superiority and is targeted to support both NGAD and the F-35. The CCA program will have three simultaneous lines of development – the platform, autonomy, and unit construct.

In addition to the longer-term operational imperative programs described above, the modernization decisions we are making consider the entirety of the Air Force's capability and capacity mix. As we work to develop a new generation of capabilities, we are also working to improve current and mid-term capability and capacity. This process includes replacing some legacy platforms, namely the MH-139A replacing the UH-1N, and the Survivable Airborne Operations Center replacing the E-4B. It also includes modernizing existing platforms that will remain in operation for many years, including the B-1, B-2, B-52, C-17, C-5, F-16, F-15E, F-22, and F-35 fleets. Within the FY24 budget, we have committed over \$12 billion to modernize these existing platforms. These modernization efforts are designed to improve mid-term capability and reduce risk while providing needed capacity to complement the improved capabilities provided by the programs defined by the operational imperatives and the new families-of-systems such as the B-21 and NGAD.

As noted earlier, capable, improved, and complementary munitions are needed for both our new and existing platforms. We are prioritizing investments in munitions and technology to counter pacing threats in highly-contested environments. This includes investments in both air-to-air and air-to-surface capabilities to engage mobile targets from standoff ranges in adverse weather. Investments into hypersonic munitions will enable us to hold high-value, time-sensitive targets at risk in contested environments from standoff distances. The FY24 budget invests over \$5 billion to support Small Diameter Bomb II, Joint Air to Surface Standoff Missile, Hypersonic Attack Cruise Missile, Air-Launched Rapid Response Weapon, and more munitions' facilitation across the defense industrial base. These investments will shorten the kill chain while supporting the moving target operational imperative.

For the current force, we are pursuing improved readiness through multiple channels, including the Air Force Force Generation model (AFFORGEN). AFFORGEN enables the presentation of sustainable, predictable capacity and capabilities while ensuring operational preparedness and required readiness. AFFORGEN balances risk between Combatant Command requirements, Air Force readiness, and

modernization by deploying pre-identified units and/or teams who have trained together to improve performance. AFFORGEN will meet initial operational capability in FY24.

Agile Combat Employment (ACE) increases readiness by dispersing operations from large bases to networks of smaller locations and provides the basis for the operational imperative of resilient forward basing. We are standardizing the concepts and terms of ACE in Air Force Doctrine as well as incorporating them into ongoing exercises and worldwide training. There is \$1.2 billion to fund the resilient forward basing operational imperative this fiscal year in addition to funding for ACE. Additional work is being done to identify and create capabilities and formalized training programs to field an agile force that sets the theater and establishes distributed command and control.

The Flying Hour Program (FHP) and Weapon System Sustainment (WSS) budget requests ensure our Airmen have the training and equipment necessary to “Fly, Fight, and Win.” The \$9 billion in FY24 funds our FHP to levels that can be reasonably executed and meet our readiness requirements. Our WSS FY24 funding of over \$19 billion is aligned with our FHP but is challenged by requirements growth due to an aging fleet, the fielding of more complex weapons systems, increasing operational requirements, and increasing organic and contract costs.

Execution of our mission requires appropriate infrastructure support and resilient basing. The Facilities, Sustainment, Restoration, and Modernization (FSRM) efforts focus on prioritizing existing quality-of-life requirements and maintaining our operational and training infrastructure. In addition to new mission builds for Military Construction (MILCON) projects, we are pursuing improvements for our Airmen, supported Guardians, and their families to our Child Development Centers (CDC) and dorms with targeted investments totaling \$107 million in FY24 MILCON and \$294 million in FSRM. Since 1990, we have 60% fewer fighter squadrons, 40% fewer Airmen, but only 15% fewer installations in the continental United States. Our FY24 budget reflects our commitment to right-sizing our facilities and infrastructure footprint through consolidations, demolitions, and optimizing our space utilization.

## AIR FORCE’S ROLE IN TAKING CARE OF PEOPLE

Taking care of our people begins with recruiting the best military and civilian Airmen of tomorrow. In FY23, the active-duty component of the Air Force is projected to miss military enlistment requirements by about 10%, over three thousand individuals. The Air Guard and Reserve components are projected to miss their goals by even higher margins. To maximize our pool of eligible individuals and to recruit the best our Nation has to offer, we are working to reduce barriers and connect with young people and communities. While maintaining our established standards, we are reviewing and removing barriers to service and offering enhanced financial opportunities to those who wish to serve. Additionally, we are taking a targeted approach to open our bases to local communities to strengthen connections and help influencers and potential recruits see the many possible opportunities we have to offer for a rewarding career and personal development. We are also highlighting, particularly online, the positive experiences of Air Force veterans who have moved on to successful careers outside the military.

Once Airmen join our team, the focus shifts from recruitment to retention. Congress provided critical retention tools to the Services last year with increases in basic pay, housing, and subsistence rates – providing a viable compensation package. Our focus on improving the quality of life for our Airmen includes improving the childcare availability for our members. The FY24 budget includes new CDC construction, existing CDC facility improvements, staffing initiatives, and additional childcare providers.

Military housing is another important way we have focused on retention. Our FY24 budget includes funding for continued investment in DAF's government-owned and government-leased housing based on the need to support mission requirements, address health and safety concerns, and modernize housing for unaccompanied personnel. Our FY24 budget also includes Family Housing Construction funds for prioritized investments in DAF's Military Housing Privatization Initiative (MHPI) portfolio to improve the safety, quality, and habitability of select privatized housing projects and ensure their long-term financial viability. We remain committed to providing continued oversight of the private sector MHPI companies that own and operate privatized housing projects on DAF installations to hold MHPI companies accountable for project performance, problems with property management, and inappropriate business practices. In addition, we will continue to engage with local civic leaders to increase the availability of affordable, quality off-base housing options for our servicemembers and their families.

Retention efforts must also ensure military members and families have access to the care and support they need – including mental health. As the Nation struggles with a shortage of mental health providers, we are employing various innovative means to provide this care to Airmen and Guardians. The Targeted Care program improves access to care by connecting people to the most appropriate resource given their needs. Additionally, we are implementing the recommendations of the Independent Review Commission on Sexual Assault in the Military, as approved by the Secretary of Defense, and leaning forward on exploring the co-location of victim support services. Furthermore, we are implementing groundbreaking military justice reforms to establish the Office of Special Trial Counsel, which will provide expert, independent, and specialized support for the investigation and prosecution of serious crimes such as sexual assault. We are also ready to begin implementation of the Department of Defense's Suicide Prevention and Response Independent Review Committee recommendations and have leaned forward on restructuring prevention training, increasing emphasis on lethal means safety and behavioral health workforce development.

Retention also requires that our talent management decisions are optimized for both the member and the Air Force. The Airmen Leadership Qualities we value must be reflected in our systems and transparent to our members. We are in the process of categorizing 161 specialties and approximately 19,000 functional skills to map flexible designs which align with the talent of our Airmen and are adaptive to emerging technologies and threats.

To develop the Airmen of tomorrow, our evaluation systems and supporting data systems must be modernized. FY23 saw the beginning of new officer and enlisted evaluation systems which will generate over 17 million data points to drive enhanced talent management decisions and reduce administrative burdens in the future. The new processes, enabled in part by the FY24 investments into digital infrastructure and tech refresh, will increase agility and flexibility to build the talent management structure we need. Concurrently, we are also implementing a dual-track "Civilians We Need" career model identifying functional expert and enterprise leader tracks on a model designed to allow flexible career paths based on the members' evolving needs.

## AIR FORCE'S ROLE IN SUCCEEDING THROUGH TEAMWORK

Teamwork for the Air Force begins within the DAF, where the Air Force relies upon and supports the Space Force. The Air Force and Space Force are inextricably linked through shared history, current activities, and future operations. The Air Force relies heavily on Space Force for the technical development and execution of each of the operational imperatives and other necessary capabilities. Neither the Air Force

nor the Space Force alone has the situational awareness and decision support tools to close hundreds of kill chains on relevant timelines in all domains in a highly contested environment. We can only be successful through teamwork to provide survivable, long-range, persistent families-of-systems across multiple modalities and as a part of a full joint and combined force. The Air Force depends upon a ready, resilient, and effective Space Force.

Our teamwork extends to the entirety of the joint force and Combatant Commands. Each of the operational imperatives and our broader capability investments supports the joint force by providing the capabilities necessary to deter and, if necessary, defeat any challenger. We play a vital role in homeland defense through air domain awareness and the provision of Airpower. We are also leveraging the capabilities of the mission and system level cyber risk assessment components of the Strategic Cybersecurity Program, led by the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisitions and Sustainment, to help inform investments in cyber risk mitigation. The joint force's ability to effectively mobilize, deploy, and sustain forces cannot be accomplished without the mobility assets we provide. This FY24 budget includes \$252 million of investment in support of the integrated priority lists of the Combatant Commands. All our platforms and airborne capabilities contribute to joint force combat power, and we remain committed to providing capabilities to the Combatant Commands in the execution of their missions.

Beyond the joint force, we are seeking to expand how we team with our international allies and partners. Investments in readiness, human capital, infrastructure, and relationships with allies and partners remain foundational to balance present-day demands and set conditions for the future. This budget request, coupled with support from our allies and partners, enables responses to imminent threats while also seeking to improve the teamwork and interoperability of the allied and partner forces to win the fight of the future.

To ensure maximum teamwork with our allies and partners, we are seeking to expand interoperability through an Integrated by Design process. Integrated by Design is not a replacement for our current security efforts, but it ensures that we collaborate and make decisions together on interoperability, resource investment, information sharing, force development, and strategy from the very beginning of our programs with the end state constantly in mind. Conversations with allies and partners about developing capabilities that are complementary instead of competitive will also better align us to face future challenges in unity. That unity will be a comparative advantage against threats that seek military, technological, or economic means to challenge our collective national security.

## CONCLUSION

The Department of the Air Force FY24 budget prioritizes defending the Nation, taking care of our people, and succeeding through teamwork by balancing the risk between maintaining current readiness, mid-term improvements, and longer-term modernization. Current readiness is being maintained at acceptable levels to support combatant commanders while investments are made in mid- and longer-term modernization that is critical to developing, building, and fielding the force needed for the future. The modernization efforts defined by the operational imperatives are not optional; they are called imperatives for a reason. No one can predict when a war with any potential threat may happen, and war is not inevitable. Nevertheless, the PRC, our pacing challenge, is actively and effectively developing the capabilities it believes are needed to defeat the American ability to project power. The PRC is also expanding and improving its strategic forces and experimenting with destabilizing novel concepts. The DAF must move forward as quickly as possible, or we will fall behind. No one should doubt our current

capabilities, which remain the strongest the world has ever seen. Nevertheless, we are in a race for technological and operational superiority more challenging than anything we have ever experienced. In this environment, timely and soundly balanced investments in current, mid-term, and longer-term Air and Space Forces are essential to our continued security. Our most sacred duty to our Airmen and Guardians is to provide them with the tools they need to be successful. We believe the budget we have submitted for FY24 meets that need, but time is our most precious asset, and we urge Congress to move quickly to fund and authorize our proposed budget to enable the new starts, significantly rescoped program investments, and required capabilities that will allow us to keep pace with the threat.