

**Chairman Thad Cochran Opening Statement
Committee on Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense**

Hearing to Review the Fiscal Year 2017 Budget Request for the U.S. Air Force

February 10, 2016

Good morning and welcome everyone to our hearing today which will involve the review of the Administration's Fiscal Year 2017 Budget Request for the United States Air Force.

We're pleased to welcome the Secretary of the Air Force, the Honorable Deborah Lee James and the Air Force Chief of Staff, General Mark Welsh III. We thank you for your service as the Air Force continues its important role in protecting our national security interests.

The President's Fiscal Year 2017 Proposal requests over \$120 billion in base funding for the Air Force, which is roughly one billion dollars more than the current funding level. The request also includes more than \$12 billion to support ongoing overseas contingencies operations. We look forward to hearing your testimony on these requests this morning.

The committee recognizes that the Air Force budget request is built on a long term strategic framework which balances the readiness while modernizing for the future. It's our role to find the correct balance among many competing priorities.

My state is very proud of the Air Force's training and other activities in our state. We hope to support our nation's air and space superiority as we have in the past and we appreciate this service of all the members of the Air Force team.

We appreciate your service to the nation and the dedication that you bring and the sacrifices you make daily on behalf of our citizens and specifically, the men and women in our Air Force.

Your statements will be made a part of the record in full and we invite any comments that you might have.

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