

PRESS RELEASE

House Armed Services Committee Duncan Hunter, Chairman

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 27, 2003

CONTACT

Harald Stavenas

Meghan Wedd

(202) 225-2539

OPENING REMARKS OF CHAIRMAN DUNCAN HUNTER

Full Committee Posture Hearing on the Air Force FY 04 Budget

This morning the Committee concludes its review of the military services' fiscal year 2004 budget requests with the Air Force.

I am pleased to welcome back Secretary of the Air Force James Roche and Chief of Staff General John Jumper to testify on the Air Force's budget request.

The Air Force, like its sister services, has had to quickly adapt to a new strategic environment where America's adversaries have demonstrated a willingness to increasingly challenge the United States at home and abroad. To meet this threat, the Air Force has expanded its Air Expeditionary presence overseas and strengthened its defense at home.

Before September 11, 89,000 Air Force personnel were either assigned or deployed overseas. Today, deployments have increased by 250 percent with Air Expeditionary forces deployed to 44 worldwide locations, including ten new bases.

Before the Global War on Terrorism began, only 14 fighter aircraft were on alert at seven locations in the United States. Today, 45 aircraft are on alert at 18 locations in defense of the American homeland.

In some cases, new requirements have outstripped the Air Force's ability to meet and sustain them and new solutions are being pressed into place. So, for example, some 9,000 Army National Guardsmen are now being mobilized to provide force protection at Air Force installations due to a significant shortfall of Air Force security police in the active, National Guard and Reserve force structure.

Three weeks ago, Secretary Rumsfeld outlined the challenge before us—to win the global war on terror, to prepare for threats we will face later this decade, and to continue to transform for threats we will face in 2010 and beyond. Faced with aging air and space systems that cost more and more to operate and maintain, the Air Force has a daunting challenge to sustain its current operations tempo, to modernize in this decade, and to transform itself to meet future threats.

– continued –

The Air Force fiscal year 2004 budget request is \$93.5 billion, an increase of \$3.6 billion from last year. While this budget makes improvements to important quality of life areas, the proposed level of funding to operate and maintain today's forces and to modernize is simply not enough to sustain the current force structure or to improve the Air Force's aging infrastructure.

The fiscal year 2004 budget request includes \$6.1 billion for the Air Force's flying hour program, an increase of about five percent compared to last year. However this increase buys us about three percent fewer actual hours in the air because the cost per flying hour continues to increase due to the Air Force's aging aircraft fleet.

The infrastructure budget request which sustains current facilities, begins new military construction, and supports base communications facilities, is \$4.6 billion, a ten percent decrease from the \$5.1 billion level in fiscal year 2003. Like its aging aircraft fleet, the Air Force's aging infrastructure results in higher operations and repair costs.

The modernization budget represents a mixed picture. While the request for research and development increases about 26 percent, the procurement budget decreases about three percent from \$17.0 billion last year to \$16.5 billion for fiscal year 2004. I am particularly concerned about this procurement decrease since I believe that only through the accelerated replacement of the Air Force's aging equipment can we begin to control the escalating operating and maintenance costs that are consuming an increasing share of the budget that buys no additional combat power.

To fund the increased costs of aging infrastructure and aircraft, the Air Force budget request includes the proposed reduction of 68 KC-135E air refueling tankers, which is projected to save about \$782 million across the future years defense program. While further force reduction details for fiscal year 2004 are yet to be revealed, the reduction in air refueling tankers follows the planned deactivation of 32 of the Air Force's 92 B-1's in fiscal year 2003.

###