

Thank you Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Reed, and distinguished members of the committee ... it's always an honor to be here with you ... and it's a special honor to sit before you today with three people I consider to be my friends, my mentors and my heroes.

My pride in our Air Force and the Airmen who give it life hasn't changed since my last testimony.

What has changed is that we are now the smallest Air Force we've ever been. When we deployed to OPERATION DESERT STORM in 1990, the Air Force had 188 fighter squadrons, today we have 54, headed to 49. There were 511,000 Active Duty airmen in 1990, today, there are 313,000. And as the numbers came down, the operational tempo went up. The AF is fully engaged. All the excess capacity is gone. Now, more than ever, we need a capable, fully ready force. We don't have a bench to go to. And we can't continue to cut force structure to pay the cost of readiness and modernization or we risk being too small to succeed.

But BCA-level funding will force us to do exactly that. We will have to consider divestiture of the KC-10 fleet, the U-2 fleet, the Global Hawk Block 40 fleet, and portions of our Airborne C2 fleet. We'd also have to consider reducing our MQ1/MQ9 fleet by up to 10 orbits. The real world impact of those choices on current U.S. military operations would be significant. In the ISR (Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance) mission area alone:

- 50% of the high altitude ISR missions being flown today would no longer be available.
- Commanders would lose 6000 hours per year of intelligence collection and targeting against moving vehicles on the ground ... and ...
- We would lose a medium altitude ISR force the size of the one doing such great work in Iraq and Syria today.

The Air Force would be even smaller...and less able to do the things we're routinely expected to do.

I'd like to say that smaller Air Force would be more ready than it's ever been...but that's not the case -- 24 years of combat operations have taken a toll. In FY14 and '15, we used the short-term funding relief of the Balanced Budget Act to target individual and unit readiness. The readiness of our combat squadrons has improved over the past year. Today, just under 50% of those units are fully combat ready...under 50%. Sequestration would reverse that trend instantly. Just like in FY13, squadrons would be grounded, readiness rates would plummet, Red and Green Flag exercises would have to be cancelled, Weapons School classes would be limited, and our aircrew members' frustration will rise, again, just as the major airlines begin a hiring push expected to target 20,000 pilots over the next 10 years.

We also have a broader readiness issue in that the infrastructure that produces combat capability over time – things like training ranges, test ranges, space launch facilities, simulation infrastructure, nuclear infrastructure – have all been intentionally underfunded in order to focus spending on individual and unit readiness. That bill is now due. But BCA caps will make it impossible to pay. The casualty will be Air Force readiness and capability well into the future.

I'd also like to tell you that your smaller Air Force is younger and fresher than it's ever been...but that wouldn't be true either. Our smaller aircraft fleet is also older than it's ever been. If WWII's venerable B-17 bomber had flown in the first Gulf War in 1991, it would have been younger than the B-52, the KC-135 and the U-2 are today. We currently have 12 fleets of aircraft that qualify for antique license plates in the state of Virginia!

We must modernize our Air Force. We want to work with you to do it within our topline. It won't be easy, and it will require accepting prudent operational risk in some mission areas for a period of time. But the option of not modernizing isn't really an option at all. Air Forces that fall behind technology, fail. And Joint Forces without the full breadth of the air, space and cyber capabilities that comprise modern airpower, will lose.

Speaking of winning and losing...at BCA funding levels, the AF will no longer be able to meet the operational requirements of the Defense Strategic Guidance. We will not be able to simultaneously Defeat an adversary, Deny a second adversary, and Defend the Homeland. And I don't believe that's good for America, no matter how you look at it.

We do need your help...to be ready for today's fight...and still able to win in 2025 and beyond. Our Airmen deserve it, our joint team needs it, and I believe our Nation still expects it.

I'd like to offer my personal thanks for your dedicated support of Airmen and their families.

And I look forward to your questions.