



## SECRETARY OF THE AIR FORCE

### WASHINGTON

SEP 09 2024

Airmen, Guardians, Civilian Employees, Families and Loved Ones,

It has now been three years since I was confirmed to be the Secretary of the Air Force. Every day of this journey has been an honor and a privilege. The opportunity to continue to serve our nation and work with such a fantastic team has been enormously fulfilling. I want to thank every member of our extended team, the Air Force and Space Force family, for your service and support.

We have come a long way together. In my introductory letter three years ago, I introduced the "One Team, One Fight" mantra I have been using throughout my tenure. I also spoke of my focus on China as our most significant challenge. If I've been nothing else, I've been consistent. A year later, I wrote about the need to modernize to keep pace with our most stressing strategic competitor and the seven Operational Imperatives that were the focus of our modernization efforts. Last year, we were still waiting for the first major tranche of funding for those imperatives when I wrote about the need to identify and accelerate significant changes if we were to prevail against our pacing challenge. Enduring competition demands a strong organizational alignment and focus on competitiveness. To achieve this, we launched the effort to reoptimize for great power competition. That work is well underway, but there is no clear end point to strategic competition; it is a continuing effort. We still have a lot of work to do, and there is no time to lose.

The threat is increasing, and despite conflicts in Europe and the Middle East, we have not lost focus. I have instructed our briefers to stop referring to the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and the People's Liberation Army (PLA) as a "future," "emerging," or "potential" threat. I have been closely watching the growth and evolution of the PLA for fifteen years. It is a threat today. The CCP continues to invest heavily in capabilities, organizations, and operational concepts designed to defeat the ability of the United States and its allies to project power in the Western Pacific. China's extensive and growing space order of battle, its massive inventory of weapons targeting our land and sea assets, and its increasingly sophisticated counter-air capability all pose serious threats today. In addition, China continues to expand its nuclear forces and its ability to operate in cyberspace. We can expect all these trends to continue.

The Department of the Air Force is responding to this threat, and we have made significant progress over the last three years. The first tranche of Operational Imperative funding, several billion dollars, was included in the Fiscal Year 2024 budget that finally was enacted last spring. Despite the constraints of the Fiscal Responsibility Act, we have an additional several billion dollars to continue the Operational Imperative efforts in the 2025 budget request now before Congress. Last spring, we announced twenty-four decisions designed to reoptimize the Department of the Air Force for great power competition. Those decisions are being executed at the speed of leadership, not the speed of bureaucracy. Your senior leadership team meets monthly to track progress and beat down any bureaucratic obstacles. All of us—myself, the Under Secretary, CSAF, and CSO—are committed to following through to ensure these changes are implemented successfully and as quickly as possible.

At this point, I don't feel that our progress is limited by the need to make decisions on direction. We have identified or are on track to identify our modernization investment priorities. We also know what we need to do to reoptimize for competitiveness and that effort is well underway. My biggest concern is whether we will have the resources needed to make progress at the rate required to be competitive. My promise to you is that I will do everything I can to secure those resources. My highest priority as your leader is to get you the tools you need to deter conflict, and, if called upon, to achieve victory.

I don't intend for this to be my last annual letter to the Department of the Air Force team and family, but all political appointees such as myself serve at the pleasure of the President. Just in case, let me say "thank you" for everything you do to serve our nation. Every member of the total force and all our family members and civilians make major contributions to our nation and its security. Your service is deeply appreciated, and I am proud of every one of you.

*One Team, One Fight!*

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Frank Kendall", with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Frank Kendall  
Secretary of the Air Force