

Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Mark A. Welsh III
National Press Club
23 April 2014

General Welsh: Thank you so much for the introduction, and congratulations on your appointment as President, and more importantly a remarkable career in your chosen profession.

Ladies and gentlemen, thanks for letting me be here. This is actually pretty cool. I get to do lots of stuff in this job and I feel like a little kid when I get to do it, and I'm at the National Press Club. That's pretty amazing. You guys have kings and queens and heads of state and movie stars and sports icons and kingpins of the financial world. You picked the wrong morning to get up! [Laughter]. But let me thank you for being here.

JJ Jackson, the Chief of the Air Force Reserve and Sid Clarke, the Director of the Air National Guard have been tremendous partners to me in this job, along with General Frank Grass who is the Chief of the National Guard Bureau. One of the things we've worked very hard at over the last year is to bring our total force together in a way that reflects our will to fight together as the [inaudible] of our business. We'll continue that effort. It's just the way we have to do business. But it wouldn't be possible without their help and support, and that's why I asked them to join me today. We'll be glad to talk about that later if you'd like to.

This is a fascinating time to be in the U.S. military. It's a great time to be an American airman. And it is always a privilege to be the Chief of Staff of the United States Air Force, no matter what's happening around you. The airmen are very proud of who they are. They're incredibly proud of what they do, and they're incredibly good at doing it. Their biggest frustration, actually, is that most folks don't really have any idea what that is.

A good friend of mine Lieutenant General Dave Goldfein is the Director of the Joint Staff. Dave actually has an analogy that I will shamelessly steal this morning. He was at CSIS doing a presentation last month, and I think it describes exactly how the Air Force is seen. When you walk into a room and you look at a light switch on the wall unless you're an electrician, you really don't have any idea what's behind the idea. But every time you flip the switch, the light comes on. Every single time. That's our Air Force. We don't do a whole lot of things in the world that are visible to you ever day.

For example, we have 600 strategic airlifts performed every day around the world. That's one every two and a half minutes, every hour of every day of the year. We have almost 130,000 airmen at that alone, people and equipment around the world. I have never

Welsh - National Press Club - 4/23/14

heard the question asked in Washington, DC to look at options of getting a Patriot battery to some country or moving a brigade combat team to another country or moving Marines to the Black Sea, whatever we're talking about, the question can we get it there? No. I've never even heard it whispered. Which is an incredible compliment to the people who do this business.

When people start to think about using precision guided weapons somewhere on the planet, if they're a military member they aren't worried about whether or not the satellite constellation that makes that possible is operating that day. You don't worry about it when you start your car. You don't worry about it when you look at your cell phone to see what the time is exactly from the signal you're getting in space. We operate eight satellite constellations and 77 satellites. We have about 25,000 airmen who do that around the clock, every day, all day. We support military operations all over the world.

We have two-thirds of the nation's nuclear triad sitting alert right now. It is the wallpaper of national security strategy. IT has been for a long, long time, along with our nuclear submarine fleet. They don't ask for a lot of recognition but they do the job very very well. They're getting attention right now. We can talk about that as well if you'd like.

When we decide to send a B-1 from the American Midwest to Libya to kick off Operation Odyssey Dawn and drop 16 Joint Direct Attack Munitions onto [inaudible] Airfield in one pass, and then land somewhere on the other side of the world, refuel, rearm, and hit another base coming back home. A second target set. Nobody really asks how do you do that. The question doesn't come up.

When you decide to send a B-2 launching from the American Midwest for a show of force with South Korea, nobody really asks how that comes together, but if you think about it for a second, it's pretty spectacular. Think about the air refueling requirement, the command and control requirement. Who's doing that? They're just kind of in the background making things happen. Every single day.

There's a great TV commercial, a golf commercial where the tag line is, "These guys are good." You've probably seen that. So are my guys. They're incredible.

Luckily our combatant commanders know that too, so the demand for what the Air Force provides is on the rise. Unfortunately, the supply is going the other direction. That's what we're facing

Professional Word Processing & Transcribing
(801) 556-7255

Welsh - National Press Club - 4/23/14

with the sequester levels we're looking at in the future and the decisions we're having to meet.

As Myron mentioned, every recommendation we're making these days does hurt. It's taking capability or capacity away from combatant commanders. Things they believe they need and things that we would like to provide which we won't be able to in the future because we have to be part of the solution with the budget cuts. We got that. We're figuring out how to wisely move forward, keeping our Air Force balanced as we downsize over time. But we're losing capability in every one of our core missions. That's the reality. Every single one of them.

We're cutting our modernization program by 50 percent. We're protecting a couple of key programs that we have to recapitalize -- the KC-46 and the F-35 and the Long Range Strike Bomber -- for operational reasons. So we have a viable Air Force ten years from now, which is also part of our job. Not just today.

We're doing everything we can to maintain that balance between being ready to do the nation's business today and being capable of doing it ten years from now.

[Inaudible] getting more capable in some areas and getting more complicated in others. Each [inaudible] it's important to remember that the reason this seems so dramatic to people is that three years ago, in FY12 -- just pick a year out, the projected budget for FY15 for the Air Force was \$20 billion higher than we actually have. That's about 20 percent of our overall budget. So changing from a plan even three years ago that projected funding and creating force structure at that level to one that is going to be \$20 billion a year lower from here forward is a significant adjustment. That's why the changes seem so dramatic. But if they're not done, it will get worse in the future.

It's hard to make a \$20 billion reduction per year without making some significant [changes]. So trimming around the edges as we put together our budget proposal just wasn't going to work. We had to do some pretty dramatic things.

Myron mentioned the A-10 fleet. One of those dramatic changes was cutting fleets of aircraft. Let me tell you why we decided to recommend that, since it's come up already. The decision has come under fire in [some sectors] but there's a logical reason we got to that point. Let me briefly explain it to you.

We have five mission areas in our Air Force. Just five. We've been doing the same five core missions since 1947 when we became

an independent service. We added space superiority in as part of the first. That's the only new one. The way we do them has changed. The way we do these missions has changed. The domain we do them in has changed. We have air, space and cyber domains now, but it's the same five missions. We do air and space superiority, we do global strike, ISR, airlift, and command and control. That's it. We're not that complicated.

So in air and space superiority we are taking cuts in the budget. About two years back we capped our F-22 buy, the F-22 was kind of the lynch pin of air superiority for the United States of America, not just the United States Air Force. Air superiority is foundational to the way we fight wars [inaudible]. Without it, you can't maneuver on the ground, you can't maneuver at sea, you have to have it. Only one service can provide [inaudible]. Only one has the capacity, the command and control capability to be able to do this.

When we capped the buy of F-22s that meant that we had to support them with some other kind of airplane to provide air superiority. For the near term until the F-35 is on board and able to assist, it's the F-15C. But we are cutting F-15s out of our fleet this year, that's our part of the budget cuts. But we can't [inaudible] entire fleet of aircraft but we can't do the air superiority mission and our combatant commanders won't accept that. So we can't cut the fleet there. [Inaudible] logistical infrastructure and all the back supply channels, all those things that cost a lot of money. So you can't lose air superiority.

You can't lose ISR. We need to eliminate fleets of airplanes. We've got fleets there too. But if you're a combatant commander, their number one shortfall year after year after year is ISR capability. We are already taking ISR capability into the budget [inaudible], but they will not support us cutting anymore.

So [inaudible] taking it out of global mobility, cut our Air Force [inaudible]. Well, we'll talk about that. We went to the Chief of Staff of the Army and said okay, we're getting smaller, you're going to get smaller as well, can we cut our airlift fleet more than we planned in line with that force size? He said no, we're going to be smaller, but we need to be more flexible, we need to be more agile. No, I wouldn't support that. Okay. So we can't cut the airlift.

What about the tanker fleet? We looked at that. We looked at cutting the KC-10 fleet. We looked at the impact that would have on the operational [inaudible]. We looked at cutting an equivalent amount of money from the KC-135 fleet. It would take

Welsh - National Press Club - 4/23/14

about three times as many KC-135s as the number of KC-10s to get the same savings, because you can't get rid of logistical structure [inaudible]. [Inaudible] KC-10 fleet it would be less impactful than the KC-135s because if we take three times the KC-135s we flat can't do the job. If you take the KC-10s you could, but you would then not have any flexibility whatsoever. We finally decided the impact of that was just too big on all the services [inaudible] compared to other options we had.

Airlift wasn't a good place to go.

Command and control [inaudible]. We're the only service that can do command and control on a big scale, too. [Inaudible] operations, ISR, [inaudible].

So we're down to the strike platforms. We don't control the policy on the nuclear business so [inaudible] not part of our [inaudible]. We need about 80 to 100 bombers to do nuclear deterrence and to do any predictable suspected campaign [inaudible] with the bomber fleet in a large conflict. [Inaudible]. But if we have one, we better have the 80 to 100 bombers or you can't do both. That's [inaudible]. They're aging, but we've got [a certain number] but we can't go smaller. Our number of squadrons [inaudible].

So [inaudible] strike platforms. The B-1, the A-10, the F-15E, the F-16. We looked at the A-10s and we could save \$4.2 billion by divesting the A-10 fleet. Not [inaudible]. We could save \$4.2 billion, we also could save \$4.2 billion by cutting the F-16s out. It would take a lot greater than 63 F-16s. That's 14 squadrons of F-16s. We could cut the F-15s, we could cut the entire B-1 fleet. Which [inaudible] which [inaudible] costs and [inaudible]. We could just ground a whole bunch of squadrons [inaudible].

We looked at all those options. We looked at each one independently and we ran them through an operational analysis, a very detailed operational analysis, with [inaudible] against the standard DoD scenarios and it became very clear that of all the affordable options the least operational impactful was the A-10 fleet. That's how we got there. It's not emotional, it's logical [inaudible] from a military perspective if you have to make a choice. [Inaudible]. But we've also worked very hard as part of that to put together a transition plan for the units that are in those airplanes now. One of the things that JJ and I spent a lot of time on in our planning routinely and these guys in particular have spent a ton of time on [inaudible] was looking into the Guard and Reserve units impacted by losing the

Welsh - National Press Club - 4/23/14

A-10s, is there a plan where we can move other hardware into the Reserve component to transition those units [inaudible] long term. That's what we owe our reserve component.

So we do have a plan to do that. If we don't divest the A-10s from those units, we will not have force structure of the right kind in those units and [inaudible].

So everything in this desired chain of events is hard. The balance is pretty delicate. The cuts are real. The issues are serious and they deserve serious consideration.

Let me stop there. I'll be glad to talk to you about any of those things. I'll be glad to talk to you about the budget [inaudible], about the total force integration, we can talk about sexual assault, we can talk about anything you'd like to talk about and if I need help I'll call on Sid and JJ who are smarter [inaudible].

Thank you again, it's our pleasure to be here.

Moderator: The Air Force is looking for a [inaudible] concept to build and modernize around and you've mentioned recently I believe the U.S. Air Force should focus on strategic agility. In practical terms, what does this term mean and how difficult is it to implement in this budget environment?

General Welsh: It's actually pretty simple. By strategic agility I'm referring to agility of everything from thought to training to education to decision processes to acquisition and to operational activity. We have to change the way a little bit that we do everything in order to get this right. It's a long term [inaudible]. All of you know that we have a lot of processes inside the department, inside the government, that none of us would consider agile. But as we look forward, we try and solve this in the budget cycle, we can't do it. That's the difference. We really have to start [inaudible] effort [inaudible] long term for the solution.

We're trying to change the way we do strategic planning in the Air Force. We're standing up strategic planning organizations that focus on strategic planning, on long range resource planning. The idea is that we will have a living, breathing strategy document that has three pieces to it. The first one is [inaudible] the future. The priorities for science and technology, for research and development, for developing new concepts, for human capital development, for new approaches to

Welsh - National Press Club - 4/23/14

training and educating our people so our people are capable of being strategically agile.

There's also a 20 year piece to the strategy which is a master plan. A single Air Force master plan. Right now we have 12 aligned with the core functions [inaudible]. The problem with that is you end up with 12 different plans for the Air Force. They compete in lots of ways, both overt and covert, and we need to bring that together in a single master plan where we can make the prioritization decisions as an institution and be realistic about funding going forward. That master plan will have a 20 year forward look. It will be bounded by projections of resources. So if we expect the resources are going to be at this line you're not going to build into the plan anything that puts us above that funding line. If we add something in that takes us above the line we take something out that keeps the balance.

The third piece will be a ten year balanced budget, balanced every year. The first five years will become the Future Year Defense Plan. But we've got to stop pushing costs into the future and assuming money will follow. That's not going to happen for the foreseeable future. We've got to start balancing our books kind of like you do at home.

Moderator: It is well known you are an A-10 pilot with several hundred hours of time in that airframe. Has this impacted your response to calls for the A-10s to be replaced by the F-22 or the F-16? And is there any willingness on your part to try to keep at least a few of these aircraft around for specific closer air support missions overseas?

General Welsh: We looked at every option. Here's the problem. I mentioned that if you don't [inaudible]. If we took, for example, the A-10s that have all been re-winged in the last few years, put new wings on the airplanes as part of the continuation of the aircraft, if we kept those aircraft, just those, and divested the rest of the fleet, we'd save [a billion] dollars because it's the infrastructure that drives the big costs. So the difference between \$1 billion and \$4.2 billion is [inaudible]. [Inaudible] program [inaudible] for example. So we just decided not to do that because we can't find billions of dollars of savings in the budget.

This is not about the A-10 not being a great airplane and not doing great work. It's about where can we take operational risk going forward? Where can we create savings? And how can we start transitioning the Air Force, thinking about the threats and the environment we will have to operate in ten years from now?

Welsh - National Press Club - 4/23/14

The A-10 will not be part of that solution in a high threat environment.

What the budget is doing to us, we're cutting capability in every mission area. It's eliminating our ability to have airplane systems and people who only operate in a single environment.

Moderator: If the Air Force is prevented from cutting the A-10, what are its second and third options to achieve the same savings?

General Welsh: As I mentioned before, it could happen. People are suggesting, for example, we cut 353 F-16s. If we did that, the other missions of the Air Force [inaudible], but the major missions that we do in the theater of operations in a, God forbid, big conflict, it would be almost impossible to achieve. Because the A-10 can't do it. The F-16, the F-15E, the B-1 can do close air support. They've been doing it extensively alongside the A-10 in Afghanistan and Iraq over the last eight to ten years. Thousands and thousands and thousands of sorties. Very successful.

The problem is the A-10s can't do the jobs those airplanes can do on the rest of the battlefield. We save lives on the battlefield as an Air Force by eliminating the enemy's will to continue to fight by destroying their command and control networks, eliminating their ability to logistically [inaudible], by keeping their reserve forces from moving forward, by eliminating the [inaudible] operational reserves so they never engage U.S. or coalition troops on the ground. That's how the Air Force is saving lives on the battlefield. We also do it by providing the air superiority mission which gives our [inaudible] from attack. That's what air forces do in a significant way to shape a battlefield. Then we also do close air support. We have a number of airplanes that can and do perform close air support.

Moderator: This year's fiscal 2015 budget, much like last year's, continues an interesting trend as far as aircraft [inaudible] the Department of Defense. The Navy is [flying] more aircraft than the U.S. Air Force, and the Army isn't far behind. The Air Force is retiring its force structure and not buying aircraft. [Inaudible] combat sequester-related cuts. What do you say to the airmen who join the Air Force to fly aircraft? Is help on the way?

General Welsh: You make it sound like the Navy and Army are expanding and I don't think that's the case either.

Airmen who join the Air Force join for lots of reasons initially. They finally come in [inaudible]. They are proud of who they are. They get very proud of what they do and how well they do it. They get very proud of the people they stand beside. Just like the folks in our other services. I have a son who's a Marine [inaudible]. He's the same way. He just could not be prouder going to work every day and working with people he gets to work with. That's what our airmen are looking for. They are looking for the opportunity to be good at what they do. That's the one thing that will cause them to walk away.

One of the things that we are trying to do in the Air Force is we are trying to balance our force at a size where we can afford to train and operate it. We didn't choose [inaudible], but it's a law. And in '16 we'll return to sequester level funding, according to the law. If that happens we cannot operate and train our Air Force at the size we are now. We have got to downsize. Our people understand that although it's hard. It's a horrible environment to be operating in, worrying about who's going to be here next year, who's not going to be there next year. We're trying to do the force management this year so we can reduce the size as quickly as we can and get past this trauma in the next 12 to 15 months and whoever's in the Air Force at that point in time, you start feeling some relief. So that's the appropriate [path] to take.

Moderator: In the longer term the Air Force is buying a new tanker and procuring a new bomber in the coming years. It also wants to step up F-35 recapitalization in the coming years by many times today's rate and also move to procure a new JSTARS replacement by the end of the decade. That is an unprecedented modernization curve in the history of the service, not taking into account the large and growing expenditures related to space. How will the service manage all of this?

General Welsh: First we have to manage it realistically. One of the keys to strategic agility in my mind is to take an honest look in the mirror routinely. [Inaudible] to do. We think the budget we submitted this year is a step toward managing this in a way that's fiscally responsible over time, not just over the next year or next five years. All the things you've mentioned are in the current plan. We're not asking for new money for them, we're not trying to raise the budget line, it's in the plan even at these reduced levels. What [inaudible] is in our military judgment those are the things we need to be successful not just today but ten years from now against the threats as we see them. What we can't do is maintain everything else that we would like to keep going and still be able to make that transition. That's

the dilemma we face. Do you want a ready force today or do you want a ready, modern force tomorrow? That's the tightrope we're walking.

Moderator: General Welsh, you mentioned a few times the U.S. Air Force should begin looking at what it wants in a sixth generation fighter, as in a successor to the F-22. What are the attributes of an aircraft like this and is it really fair to call such an aircraft a fighter when it will likely be just as vital as an ISR and network asset beyond just a straightforward air superiority fighter?

General Welsh: I don't even know that it's an airplane. What we have to start looking at is what does air superiority look like? Let's go back to that strategic planning document [inaudible]. I don't know what it's like, but we better start thinking about it because it takes us a long time to deliver because we don't have the strategic agility in acquisition so far. Not just in the Air Force, but [inaudible]. So we've got to start figuring out what does air superiority mean? Is it still going to be required 30 years from now? And the Air Force is still going to be responsible for performing the mission and providing it for our combatant commanders. So if we don't start thinking about this at this point in time, I think we're being irresponsible. But I wouldn't try and characterize it or describe it. I have no idea yet what it's going to look like. What it even is. Whether it flies or whether it's a combination of things. I just don't know.

Moderator: Drones are an increasing part of the Air Force's mission yet they are very controversial. What would you say to critics who argue that drones depersonalize killing?

General Welsh: First of all, [inaudible] aircraft that we fly, and I'll give the party line, and Jerry told me I had this opportunity to mention that no, we don't [inaudible]. We've got an awful lot of people behind these things and the people who operate them are very proud of what they do too. We don't have anything flying around deciding to fire weapons or drop bombs on something. [Inaudible]. That's just not what happens. We have people in the loop at every level of the process of our remotely piloted aircraft. About 97 to 98 percent of what we do with remote piloted aircraft, and even higher sometimes, is purely [inaudible]. Our RPA fleet is not being used [inaudible] United States Air Force is less than 10 percent of our aircraft today and it's not going to dramatically change in the near future. There are not a lot of things that you can't replace about the sensor Myron carries on his shoulders. We don't have the

platform yet that can fly into a battle space and determine in about two seconds what his brain tells him is going on [inaudible], and until we have that sensor we will always have men and women in the battle space.

So we should look at how do we best use unmanned capability in ways where unmanned capability has the most impact. If you plan to collect intelligence over a particular [area] for long periods of time, then don't limit yourself by continuing to [operate] in a cockpit. That's where remotely piloted aircraft have been used extensively up to this point. If you want to track things 24 hours a day then remotely piloted aircraft work well for you. If you want to make quick decisions based on a picture of the battlefield, it's the wrong type of technology to use for that. If you want to carry nuclear weapons, if you want to move your families around, then I'm not sure I'm ready for a remotely piloted aircraft to do that yet.

So the idea is, what does the technology allow you to do and then what should you do? That's the debate we have internally on remotely piloted aircraft. Should they get bigger? Should they get smaller? What will technology and resources allow? What will inform that?

We will probably move more freight in the United States of America not in the military side of the house but the commercial side of the house. When we do that the ability to move things with remotely piloted aircraft will start to explode. That will change the game in the RPA business. Right now we still can't fly multiple RPAs in the same airspace under FAA control. Not just in the U.S. but also national airspace controls of other nations. They don't know how to track them, manage them, organize them because they're all being operated independently by people in different locations. So we've got to figure that out. The FAA is working with the military and with states to do that today in locations around the United States. So this industry is going to grow. As the industry grows, it's important for the Air Force to be at the leading edge of technology. That's what we do. We were founded on technology. We have people who are drawn to it, they understand it, they employ it incredibly well, and they're unbelievably innovative with it. So that's what interests us most about remotely piloted aircraft.

Moderator: In light of a recent GAO report on the mental health of drone operators who are overworked and have little access to psychologists, according to the report, how does the U.S. Air Force view the recommendations and how will they be implemented?

General Welsh: The GAO report actually is a great read because it gives you a good picture of the community. I think they cover 2006 to 2012, so the information in there is a little bit dated. There have been some changes made during that timeframe that are having an impact now.

If you look at the results of some of the focus groups that are in there, you'll see some of the focus groups tell you they don't believe there is a problem with promotion rates today in the community. They do have access to medical care and counselors. All that has changed as a result of the effort we've been making over the last four or five years. We're just progressing. This career field is new. Remember we're at the Wright flyer stage, we're just getting started. And the rapid, rapid expansion between 2006 and today in remotely piloted aircraft as a result of the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan has been dramatic. We didn't have a community of people who were up and operating fully mature in some other system that we could transition to RPAs. We built this community on the fly.

In 2008 we had, I believe there were 21 orbits of these RPAs and people associated with them. Now we're approaching, the new target is 65. We hope to make that 55 and reinvest in other areas of the [ISR] fleet, but that's the way we've been growing and that is a huge investment of people and of cash to meet the needs in Afghanistan. [Inaudible] counter-terrorism conflict around the world. So all of that happened with a group of people who were stressed to begin with, they were under pressure with the expansion, they were conducting combat operations, there was a lot of pressure on this community and we have to make sure we're treating them the right way from here forward. So I think it has a lot to do with lessons learned [inaudible] GAO report.

Moderator: Why did the United States wait for so long to develop technology for a next generation rocket engine for launch?

General Welsh: I think first, the engines we currently use for heavy launches are the real issue today. The Russian designed and built engines, the RD-180. I think it was a great product, but it was cost savings. It was an efficiency that we could gain by purchasing in mass and they've been very very successful. We can't afford to forget that. Do we just [inaudible] national security space launches which is a spectacular success story. So one of the things we have to be very careful about in any decisions in the space launch area, and that is first do no harm, and make sure that as we transition, we transition in a smart, meaningful, dedicated [inaudible] way. And I think clearly it's a good time to look at what is the future of heavy space launch

and propulsion? We support fully the [inaudible] undergoing right now to try and determine the best way forward for that. I think the Air Force and the nation will be well served by this.

Moderator: With the loss of the shuttle program how does America's smaller role in space affect the U.S. Air Force and its mission?

General Welsh: Our mission hasn't been dramatically affected by the shuttle mission. The things we do in and through space have not changed dramatically over the last ten years. We've just gotten better at it. We've gotten more [inaudible], more efficient, we're expanding our knowledge of the actual environment and looking at the missions required for the future.

There is a change in technology and space that's going on. There's a change in capability by nations around the world. It's going to be very important for the United States and the United States Air Force as part of that to keep up with that technology growth and if possible [inaudible], as opposed to reacting to something that other nations do in space routinely with technology development and other capabilities that are there. We should be trying to [inaudible] this. We should be trying to drive the activity instead of just being in responsive mode. That's what we've been trying to do. The cost of platforms operating in space are growing, just like costs of platforms that operate on the sea and in the air. We've got to factor that into looking at new ways to do business. The way we've been doing it is not going to continue to be the right way. So this idea of miniaturized sensors, smaller packages moving into space, different types of orbits, different approaches, whether it's disaggregation or riding as passengers on a commercial platform. Whatever it might be, we've got to be strategically agile enough to think of new ways to getting at an old problem. There are some things where we demand full security, full confidentiality, the ability to operate 100 percent of the time no matter what happens. But that doesn't have to be everything every day. Costs will drive us out of that as nothing else does, so we need to get moving in that direction. I think our folks [inaudible] that now.

Moderator: Lieutenant General Johnson of the Air Force Academy has had to make elimination of about ten majors in response to the cuts that were mandated under the new FY15 budget cuts. How do you feel about this heavy duty impact to the Academy's mission? Is it possible for the [inaudible] considerable [inaudible] fund to help offset some of this academic [inaudible] mandated by the defense budget?

General Welsh: What General Johnson has done since she arrived at the Academy is she's taken a hard look at the Air Force Academy and what product it is designed to produce. We helped her by outlining that requirement for her. What do we expect a graduate of the Academy to be and to be able to do? She has then started an effort that she's calling the essence of the Air Force Academy. The idea is to determine exactly what is it that we have to do incredibly well at the Academy to produce that graduate.

One of the major cuts you're talking about are an effort, within the Academy, to refocus our priorities and focus resources on things that mean the most in terms of that essence. The specific cuts were not directed by the Air Force or anyone else, and in fact Michelle knows there are resources available to help her if she needs them. But she's trying to manage her own funds and be part of the solution as well, which she believes is part of her responsibility as one of our commanders, and I completely agree with her. At every level of our Air Force people are making these decisions. This is sequestration. We need to get used to it.

Moderator: General Welsh, you are one of only a couple of Chiefs who graduated from the Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs. How has that affected your thoughts for the problems of sexual harassment the Academy has been experiencing, and how do you feel they are progressing towards dealing with this problem once and for all?

General Welsh: I am a graduate of the Academy, a proud graduate of the Academy, but my thoughts on sexual harassment were really formed by growing up as a son of the world's greatest mother, and a brother of five incredible sisters. They pretty much shaped my moral fabric on issues for respect between the sexes [inaudible]. My family is a family, because of my parents, that shows respect for each other all the time. We always have. We love each other, we respect each other, and the idea that you would not act that way to people of another gender is just beyond my comprehension, quite frankly. So that has formed my views on this much more than being at the Air Force Academy.

My experience at the Air Force Academy was without women in the actual cadet wing. We didn't have women when I attended. So I have worked there since, but I was not a cadet in that environment. But whether it's at the Air Force Academy or an Air Force wing anywhere on the planet or is in the town outside the front gate, this is unacceptable behavior, period.

The difference in the last couple of years in the Air Force in the discussion on this topic is palpable. If you haven't visited an Air Force wing, talked to the people on the base about the discussions they're having at the lowest levels, airmen up, then you don't really understand how this environment is changing.

Trust me, I'm not claiming victory. We'll claim victory when we have victory, we'll celebrate when the number is at zero and I don't think that will happen in the human domain.

What we have to make sure is that we are doing everything possible to prevent environments that lead to things worse than [inaudible], but it starts with lack of respect for individuals. It starts with lack of understanding that inclusion is a strength of ours. It starts with lack of understanding that diversity must be a strength within the United States Air Force. Those are the things we're focused on. We've had a lot of visibility and activity in the higher end crimes that occur, but really, it starts with human behavior towards other humans. We're spending a lot of time and energy on that to include new training programs beginning in basic training, lots of education, and not all major Air Force programs, some of it's just directed stuff where we're going to sit down with five or six people 30 minutes a month within your work space, just to talk about what matters to you. What [inaudible] to you as an aircraft crew chief, as a trainer, as a classroom instructor, or as a finance officer? Get people to know each other.

Every airman in our Air Force has a story. Every one of them. The ones wearing a uniform, the ones wearing a coat and tie to work, and the stories are spectacular. Some of them are inspirational, some of them are a little sad, but they're unique. Until we know the stories, we just can't take care of the airmen the way we should. So that's the drive. I tell everybody I meet in our Air Force, learn the story.

Moderator: One more question in this area. Senator [inaudible] the officers do not have the training to always properly handle complaints of sexual assault in the military. What makes you confident that all the commanders in the Air Force are prepared to deal with such cases when they are not trained prosecutors?

General Welsh: Commanding officers in the Air Force, leaders of industry, nobody is fully prepared to deal with every issue related to this area. There are just too many of them to comprehend.

Every commander in the Air Force is, however, advised by a team of prosecutors. And here's a fact. We pulled every court martial case in the Air Force for the last three years, this was about eight or nine months ago. Over those three years we had, I believe the number, and I could get this wrong, but I'm close, 2411 court martials. Of those 2411 court martials there were 25 instances where the commander did not agree with his Judge Advocate General's recommendation on the proper disposition of the case. In 13 of those cases the Judge Advocate General asked a higher level commander to review his recommendations and the higher level commander accepted the JAG's recommendations. In 12, they did not, they supported the lower level commander. So in 12 of those 2411 cases, which is a pretty small percentage, about .5 percent actually, we did not have agreement between the commander and the JAG on the best way forward. In 12 cases. One of those was a sex-related case. So the idea that the commanders aren't trained and therefore they don't take the right action is an interesting discussion, but it's not true. It doesn't happen. It just doesn't happen. So that logic doesn't track well.

I'll tell you what I do like. I love Senator Gillibrand's passion on this issue. While I don't agree on this particular point, I love her passion on the interest and the passion of a lot of members of the United States Congress because we are making changes. We can make changes in the future with their support. And by the way, some of them have a lot of experience in this arena including the legal arena and they've got great ideas. Special Victim's Council, which the Air Force is getting credit for implementing a year ago, was an idea that came from the United States government. It's a great idea. And it's been a huge program for us.

So this is a partnership. It has to be a partnership going forward. People tend to focus on the differences, but the support we can give each other in this arena is what will make it successful.

Moderator: How have the Afghanistan and Iraq wars affected the Air Force's role?

General Welsh: Actually they haven't changed our role at all. We've gotten better at supporting low intensity conflict, the counter-insurgency fight, just as all the services have because that's what we've been focused on. We've made huge developments in tactical airlift and tactical air drop. Most people don't know the [inaudible] air drop capabilities of the Air Force have come leaps and bounds forward in the last ten years. We used to need about a 600 yard square drop zone to drop things into in a

Welsh - National Press Club - 4/23/14

battlefield environment. Now we can land something on this head table. It's pretty incredible.

We have the ability now to move patients from a battlefield in Afghanistan to full trauma care centers in the United States. The Director of Trauma at the UCLA Medical Center told me one day he wouldn't move [someone] from Room 110 to 111 in his hospital if he didn't stabilize them [inaudible]. The medical advances over the last 14 years in battlefield care all the way to critical care transport to revolutionary surgical techniques and new technology have been absolutely stunning and I think over time will just be a signal achievement of people in the Air Force. And the entire joint medical community over the last 10 or 12 years.

The core missions of the Air Force haven't changed at all. We're still doing them all, we're just not reading about them in the paper. They're happening all the time. It's the light switch. We're still doing all those other things all over the world.

Moderator: Put into scale the Herculean effort put before the Air Force in drawing down from Afghanistan? What if there is a full withdrawal by the end of 2014? Does the current infrastructure allow for this? Or would you need to build it up?

General Welsh: We have the ability to do the drawdown. The planning's been in place. General Joe [Dunford's] done a fantastic job I believe in putting together a transition plan that covers lots of different options. We have airmen in the middle of the retrograde plan figuring how to move the equipment out of the country, how to sort it in the country, where do you store it, where do you move it, how do you sell it if that's the game plan. We have an ability to surge airlift, both tactical and strategic airlift under U.S. Transportation Command's leadership, to move equipment and people rapidly. The [inaudible] will we be allowed to continue training Afghan forces.

The aviation industry in Afghanistan is not [inaudible] to that country. It's an industry that could be incredibly successful and meaningful to them in that region, but it hasn't been robust in the past. Their Air Force will lead that effort, their airmen will lead that effort. If we have the chance to train them to a level where they can be a fully operating and sustainable Air Force over time, with the ability not just to fly airplanes, which they do very well, but to manage infrastructure and systems and logistical trains and those things, I think it helps the country's ability to develop an aviation industry over time.

Welsh - National Press Club - 4/23/14

That's why we'd like to stay engaged. But if we come out by the end of this year, clearly that effort will not continue.

Moderator: Your biography does not mention any reference to your time serving under then CIA Director Leon Panetta. You served during the raid on the bin Laden compound in Abbottabad, Pakistan. Do you recall any of the details as to how this raid was decided on and what the decision process was to keep the [inaudible] of bin Laden under the shroud of secrecy?

[Laughter].

General Welsh: In fact I wasn't there during that period. I left a while before that.

Moderator: Do you think this raid and aftermath permanently hurt our military, political and diplomatic relationship with the government of Pakistan? And what do we have to do to repair this relationship?

General Welsh: I'm just not in a position, Myron, to understand the damage to the relationship with the government of Pakistan. I'm really not in that information network right now.

I'll tell you this. One of the things we do do in the military, we try and make connections with our service counterparts. I do know the Pakistani attaché here in the U.S.. I have met with the new Pakistani Ambassador coming in the next couple of weeks. We're trying to arrange a visit, for me to visit Pakistan and meet with the Air Chief, also invite him here to the U.S. so I can meet with him.

One of the great things about the military is that there really is a kind of a common understanding between nations of people who do the same thing. Whether it's banking, finance, military, whatever. With airmen it's really not a unique thing. I don't know why, but we just kind of connect. Sid and JJ will tell you the same thing, because they've met with airmen all over the world. There's just a connection that happens very easily.

So while we may not be, the military may not be the pillar of an international relationship or a bilateral relationship between the United States and some other country, we certainly can be part of the connective tissue and we like to be that in fact.

Moderator: Several weeks ago Secretary James and yourself announced the dismissal or retirement of ten command level captains and majors from Malmstrom Air Force Base [inaudible] for

cheating on a routine, periodic efficiency test. What has [happened] to this testing regime and what changes are being considered and implemented to make sure this climate of cheating does not continue?

General Welsh: The people who were relieved and who resigned were all lieutenant colonels or colonels. It was the wing commander, the group commander, the deputy group commander and then the squadron commanders of the missile squadrons at Malmstrom. None of those people were actually involved in the cheating. The concern was that they didn't realize the cheating was occurring. Each of those squadrons had about 40 percent of their people involved in this, to include a large number of instructors on base. So basically the commander of 20th Air Force, General Jack Weinstein, lost confidence in his commanders to manage the environment and to create an environment that was required to be successful and to maintain all of our core values as they move forward.

So the changes that have been implemented have actually been implemented at that level. The Secretary and I are not telling them what to do. The commanders involved, General Weinstein of 20th Air Force and General [Stephen] Wilson, Air Force Global Strike Command put together a command directed investigation. They put together some formal focus groups. They formed a major [inaudible] total force improvement program where they brought people from every part of the nuclear community together with experts and advisors from outside including people from other services and from outside the military to look at every part of the enterprise and see if there is a way to start making changes that will have a meaningful effect.

Over the last six or seven years we've done 20 different studies on the nuclear community. The Air Force didn't just start focusing on this two months ago. Over those studies we have taken about 1,056, I believe, a thousand and some recommendations that were completely implemented. One of the things that was not highlighted is this idea of cheating in any of those studies. Some of the other issues that we found in all these focus groups and the look that that General Wilson has taken before [inaudible], and we had done partial movements to fix these things but obviously not extensive enough.

We now have 300 additional recommendations from this internally developed focus group effort and we are going to march down the solution sets one at a time, figure out where we can put resources, where we should put resources, where do we have the most impact. A lot of the smaller things that are aggravating

people, frustrating the community, are already being changed. We're trying hard to eliminate the idea of you can never make a decision. Your senior boss always has to be the one making the call. There are a lot of things we ought to be doing in that business at the lowest level of authority and we're trying to push it there.

We've looked at the environment for training, for testing, as a small example. The monthly test that the crew members take, pass/fail as opposed to scoring, which was kind of the underlying concern of crew members. If you don't score 100 percent you're seen as not being competent enough to move on to other jobs. The only assessment your [inaudible] is your test score every month, which is a pretty tough environment to be operating in. That's already been changed and there will be a lot more changes as we move through this. But the goal is to, number one, take an honest look in the mirror, admit where we are, and then let's change the game. Let's just change the game. Our people deserve better than that. The people who cheated, the people who were breaking the law, breaking our policies and rules intentionally don't have a future with us. That's not how we operate.

Moderator: Peering into the crystal glass, are you seeing signs from Congress that sequestration levels will not return in 2016?

General Welsh: I am not [inaudible].

Moderator: What is the Air Force's backup plan if it loses access to the GPS constellation?

General Welsh: One of the great things about the GPS constellation is it does have a lot of redundant capability. It is disbursed enough that it's very difficult to remove the GPS constellation. We are, however, we have been looking at partnerships with other nations who also have navigation type systems. We're also looking at technology in the future that uses different ways of precision navigation, things that we think will be useful, whether the GPS system signal is [denied] or the system is compromised or whether we can develop [inaudible] allies and partnerships to allow us to use their systems everywhere in the world we don't have immediate access. So lots of efforts going on in this regard. I'm pretty confident of our precision navigation in the future. We have to have a varied menu of things to choose from. We want to guarantee the ability to use it, and we have become reliant on it. We have to be able to navigate precisely, to set timing precisely, to operate the way we are operating as a U.S. military around the world.

Welsh - National Press Club - 4/23/14

Moderator: Thank you all for coming today. We are adjourned.

#