

STATEMENT OF SENATOR DANIEL K. INOUE
AIR FORCE BUDGET OVERVIEW HEARING
MARCH 30, 2010

Today, we welcome back Secretary of the Air Force, Mr. Michael Donley, and Air Force Chief of Staff, General Norton Schwartz. Gentlemen, thank you for being here with us today as the committee reviews the Air Force's budget request for fiscal year 2012. Thank you also for submitting your prepared testimony. Without objection, your full statements will be made part of the record.

For fiscal year 2011, the Air Force is requesting \$150 billion in the base budget. This funding level is roughly equal to your fiscal year 2011 request. The Air Force is also requesting \$16.4 billion for overseas contingency operations for fiscal year 2012, which is a decrease of \$3 billion from last year's request and reflects the on-going drawdown of forces from Iraq.

The lack of growth in the Air Force budget is partly a result of the Secretary of Defense's efficiencies initiatives. I look forward to hearing today how the Air Force plans to reduce overhead, streamline logistics, improve satellite procurement, and reduce energy consumption as part of your identified efficiencies. The Committee commends the Department of Defense for examining ways to make operations more efficient and affordable. However, we must ensure that we are achieving true savings and not just deferring tough spending decisions to a later date.

In addition to achieving the efficiency savings that have been identified, in the near term, the Air Force must meet growing demands for cyber security, nuclear surety, and intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) support.

In theater, the situational awareness requirements of our forces continue to grow. Good progress has been made towards achieving the goal of operating 65 continuous, combat air patrols in theater with remotely piloted vehicles. However, the Air Force must still address how to fulfill the long-term manpower requirements of these operations and how to incorporate the ever increasing number of ISR assets into the Air Force's enduring force structure.

Over the next decade, the Air Force will face growing budgetary pressures as several expensive recapitalization programs get underway. First, let me commend both of you on the successful award of the aerial refueling tanker contract. This is a critical step in replacing our aging tanker fleet. But, as you know, the commencement of work on a new tanker comes at the same time as the development of a new penetrating bomber begins and Joint Strike Fighter production ramps up. These efforts will place significant pressure on the Air Force budget at a time of tightening budgets.

To add to the Air Force's already full plate, you are now heavily engaged in operations in Libya. I look forward to hearing from you today about the extent of Air Force support to the coalition forces operation in Libya, as well as the cost of these operations and what you see as the end game of our involvement there.

Gentlemen, these are challenging times, and we have many difficult choices in front of us. I look forward to working with you to ensure that the Fiscal Year 2012 Appropriations bill reflects the current and future needs of the United States Air Force. I now turn to our Vice Chairman, Senator Cochran, for his opening statement.