



SECRETARY OF THE AIR FORCE
WASHINGTON

NOV 30 2023

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chair
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chair Murray:

As Congress works to advance Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 appropriations legislation, I write to highlight current, significant impacts a Continuing Resolution (CR) and the *Fiscal Responsibility Act* (FRA) have on the Department of the Air Force (DAF). Our biggest challenges are strengthening our capabilities, as well as recruiting and retaining the world's best Air Force and Space Force, to prevail, if necessary, in the Indo-Pacific against the People's Republic of China (PRC) as the pacing challenge. Overall, a year-long CR in FY24 would reduce buying power of the DAF by as much as \$13 billion. Additionally, should a sequester be ordered under the FRA, including discretionary spending levels capped at FY23 levels minus one percent with the directive to exclude military personnel accounts, the impact to the DAF would be an approximate eight percent cut, absent inflation, to absorb the remaining FY24 FRA topline cap.

While CRs and the associated limitations placed on the DAF ability to invest in modernization, as well as in our Airmen, Guardians, and civilians, are significant, **the one thing we cannot buy back with any amount of funding is time.** The longer the DAF operates under any CR, the more time our pacing challenge has to gain advantage and further increases their ability to inflict unacceptable levels of destruction against our people and capabilities. In 1940, General Douglas MacArthur said, "The history of failure in war can almost always be summed up in two words: 'Too late.' Too late in comprehending the deadly purpose of a potential enemy. Too late in realizing the mortal danger. Too late in preparedness. Too late in uniting all possible forces for resistance."

Any length of CR impacts DAF readiness, hinders acceleration of the U.S. Space Force, delays military construction (MILCON) projects, reduces aircraft availability, and curbs modernization in our race for technological superiority. Below are specific examples of current CR impacts on the DAF.

Great Power Competition Optimization Impacts

- Risks credibility of U.S. nuclear deterrence and undermines two legs of the nuclear triad:
 - For the future ground-based leg, LGM-35A Sentinel, delays weapon system construction, missile development, and delivery of MH-139 aircraft – essential to nuclear surety and security at a time when the PRC has built 100 new missile silos
 - For the future air-based leg, B-21 Raider, delays procurement as the contract award is held to the previous year quantity and funding

Great Power Competition Optimization Impacts (cont.)

- Stops 89 new starts, totaling \$2 billion, and 19 specific initiatives to counter the PRC, totaling \$4.8 billion, which would close key capability gaps and assure U.S. advantage through the Joint Strike Missile, Kill Chain Automation, Collaborative Combat Aircraft (CCA) development, and Moving Target Engagement
- Cancels \$2.8 billion in U.S. Space Force growth for new space architectures critical to the Joint Force in contested environments, including resilient Space Data Transport and Missile Warning/Missile Tracking (MW/MT); tactical sensing; and positioning, navigation, and timing (PNT)
- Delays procurement of seven National Security Space Launch (NSSL) missions thereby exposing Joint warfighters to significant risk

Military Personnel & Operations Impacts

- Limits DAF capability to cover any increase in military pay accounts including inability to initiate new bonuses or incentive pay designed to address critically-manned career fields
- Degrades operational readiness by underfunding critical accounts such as weapon system sustainment and the flying hour program

MILCON Impacts

- Prevents 34 new major construction projects totaling \$1.6 billion, including new weapon system beddowns, Quality of Life (QoL) facilities, and three Indo-Pacific projects fundamental to Agile Combat Employment (ACE) operations
- Prevents five new Energy Resilience and Conservation Investment Program (ERCIP) Defense-Wide MILCON projects, totaling \$138 million, for critical power and water requirements at two U.S. Air Force and three U.S. Space Force locations

The DAF greatly values your partnership and appreciates your commitment to our Airmen and Guardians. However, the longer the DAF operates under a CR, the greater the impact is on our people and programs. While change is hard and focus on short-term distractions seems enticing, **losing to the pacing challenge is unacceptable.** No one wants great power competition and no one can predict when conflict might occur, but we must be as ready as we can be – now, tomorrow, and every day. I implore you and your colleagues to advance full-year FY24 appropriations legislation as soon as possible. Thank you for your continued support of our U.S. Air Force and U.S. Space Force.

Sincerely,



Frank Kendall
Secretary of the Air Force

cc:
The Honorable Susan Collins
Vice Chair