

Department of the Air Force Posture Statement

Fiscal Year 2025

**Department of the Air Force
Presentation to the Committees
and Subcommittees of the
United States Senate
and the House of Representatives
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Statement of:

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OVERVIEW

The President's Fiscal Year 2025 (FY25) budget request continues the Department of the Air Force's (DAF) implementation of the 2022 National Defense Strategy (NDS), while striking alignment with the 2023 Fiscal Responsibility Act (FRA). The DAF remains focused on the Department of Defense's mission to defend the U.S. homeland, safeguard and advance vital U.S. national security interests, and meet growing threats to a stable and open international system, especially those posed by our pacing challenge, the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the Chinese Communist Party. In line with the priorities of the Secretary of Defense, this budget request supports that **mission** and invests in the **people** and **teams** that are our decisive advantage.

The DAF is currently undertaking a Department-wide effort to optimize how we organize, train, and equip the Air Force and Space Force to meet the PRC pacing challenge. These efforts are necessary for us to remain competitive and are being undertaken with a strong sense of urgency. They cannot, however, substitute for the resources the DAF needs to execute its missions.

The total DAF budget request for FY25 is \$217.5B, an increase of 1.1% from the FY24 President's Budget request. The USAF budget for FY25 is \$188.1B, a 1.7% increase from the FY24 request. The Space Force budget decreases modestly in FY25, from \$30.0B to \$29.4B. This is due in part to fact-of-life reductions in planned satellite availability for launch and to some key military space requirements shifting to the National Reconnaissance Office. The DAF had to implement some difficult tradeoffs, and take risk in certain areas to stay within the funding levels provided under the FRA.

A forced reliance on funding through Continuing Resolutions has already significantly hampered the DAF's ability to keep pace with evolving threats by withholding authorization and appropriations to initiate new programs of record or increase spending on existing programs. Unfortunately, the time we have ceded cannot be recovered. Timely and consistent authorizations and appropriations for defense spending in line with this budget request are necessary to deter and, if required, defeat threats to our national security. Continued failure to provide on-time authority and appropriations will leave the Air Force and Space Force inadequately prepared for the dramatic geopolitical, technological, economic, and environmental challenges we are facing. To keep pace with the threats in the changing strategic landscape, we urge the Congress to enact this budget request without delay.

Responding to Increasing Threats

The threats to our national security are dramatically increasing. The 2022 NDS identified the PRC as the only country with the will and increasing capability to reshape the international order. In 2023, the PRC increased its annual military budget by approximately 7 percent with estimates showing it can support continued defense spending growth for at least the next five to ten years.

The People's Liberation Army (PLA) already fields the largest aviation force in the Indo-Pacific region. It has combined a growing arsenal of long-range precision weapons with improving space-based capabilities to expand the capability of its long range kill webs and enable strikes against

U.S. and Allied forces, air bases, carriers, and high-value airborne assets.

In addition to using space capabilities to target U.S. and partner terrestrial forces, the PLA is rapidly increasing its fielded suite of kinetic and non-kinetic counterspace capabilities. These include antisatellite missiles, “inspection and repair” systems that can grapple and disable satellites on orbit, laser weapons and jammers, and reusable spaceplanes with a range of potential military uses.

The PRC is also advancing its electronic warfare and cyberspace attack capabilities to threaten U.S. bases and capabilities in the region and the U.S. homeland. For example, the PRC has targeted critical infrastructure in Guam that could be used to disrupt U.S. air operations.

The PRC has also continued its rapid nuclear expansion, on track to exceed previous projections, with more than 500 operational nuclear warheads and a nascent nuclear triad. China is moving ahead of expectations to field a nuclear arsenal comparable to that of the United States. The PLA Rocket Force has at least 2,800 theater class ballistic missiles and 350 international-range ballistic missiles, including hypersonic missiles, highlighting its approach to diverse potential nuclear-delivery systems. Many of these systems have dual-use (conventional or nuclear) potential.

We must keep pace with the growing military capabilities of the PRC while also managing the acute threat from Russia, deterring threats from other regional actors, while remaining vigilant to potential Violent Extremist Organization threats. Russia continues to place a strong emphasis on modernizing strategic weapons that will allow it to hold the United States homeland at risk, particularly with hypersonic and other next-generation weapons. Russia is developing and deploying a range of counterspace systems including surface-launched, air-launched, and orbital anti-satellite weapons, laser weapons, electronic warfare systems, and cyber capabilities that can threaten military and dual-use space assets. Both Iran and North Korea are also working to expand their military capabilities.

In the midst of these growing threats, the capabilities of the Department of the Air Force are integral to the four priorities of the NDS: defending the homeland; deterring strategic attacks against the United States, our Allies, and our partners; deterring aggression and being prepared to prevail in conflict when necessary; and ensuring our future military advantage by building a resilient joint force and defense ecosystem. With budgetary pressure, the DAF budget request balances short-term risks and readiness against the need to rapidly modernize capabilities required to deter future threats and meet NDS priorities.

Complying with FRA

The DAF’s budget is aligned with the FRA. The global obligations and enduring missions of the DAF have not changed. Our global commitments have not changed. As a result, our force structure and human capital structure remain roughly constant from FY24. The requirements to maintain adequate operational readiness, support global deployments, and meet immediate mission requirements were met, but funded to the highest level of risk considered acceptable. For example, the so-called “foundational accounts” for Weapons Systems Sustainment, Facilities, and Flying Hours were funded at the lowest level considered acceptable in both the Air Force and the Space

Force. This practice can be tolerated in the short term under the constraints of FRA.

With these “current force” related elements of the budget allocated, investments in the “future force” were adjusted to manage risk. The DAF budget request protects essential modernization, especially the investments derived from our work on Operational Imperatives and Cross-cutting Operational Enablers, and chose to marginally reduce procurement of systems already in production in order to sustain as much as possible the planned pace of research and development funding for capabilities necessary to keep pace with existing and imminent pacing threats. Procurement accounts were adjusted downward in the Air Force from previous levels for some key programs, including F-35 and F-15E/X. Procurement accounts also decreased with fact-of-life delays in T-7 and E-7 production. The Air Force procurement account decreased from \$30.6B in the FY24 request to \$29.0B in FY25 and the Space Force procurement account decreased from \$4.7B to \$4.3B. These adjustments generally allowed research and development accounts to keep pace with inflation. They did not permit the desired growth over time. This is particularly true for the Space Force where transformational modernization is needed urgently.

Meeting National Defense Strategy Priorities

Defense of the Homeland

Our first priority remains defense of the homeland. The DAF supports this priority through investments in domain awareness, air and space defense, early warning that increases strategic deterrence and enables defense of critical infrastructure, and cyberspace defense programs. These investments are closely tied with the DAF Arctic Strategy and position the DAF to support implementation of the 2023 Homeland Defense Policy Guidance.

Deterring Strategic Attacks

Our second priority is to deter strategic attacks against the United States, our Allies, and our partners. The DAF provides two legs of the Nuclear Triad and 75 percent of Nuclear Command, Control, and Communications (NC3). The DAF’s full-scope nuclear modernization program recapitalizes all current systems and supporting infrastructure to deliver modern and credible deterrence capabilities, which are essential in today’s increasingly uncertain international environment. Decades of deferring modernization of Cold War-era systems, combined with adversary nuclear modernization, make it imperative to modernize U.S. nuclear forces to maintain a safe, secure, and effective nuclear deterrent to protect the U.S. homeland, as well as Allies and partners.

DAF nuclear capabilities provide unique, complementary, and credible options in support of integrated deterrence. Decades of deferred modernization have left little room for error in our recapitalization program if we are to maintain a safe, secure, and effective nuclear deterrent. The FY25 budget requests more than \$19.4B for nuclear modernization efforts including the Sentinel Ground Based Strategic Deterrent, B-21 Raider, Survivable Airborne Operations Center (SAOC), Long-Range Standoff Weapon, Next-Generation Overhead Persistent Infrared programs, and the Evolved Satellite Communication System. Additionally, the Space Force is in the early stages of developing and fielding a more resilient missile warning and tracking capability focused on

tracking advanced threats by integrating new critical missile tracking capabilities. While B-21 and LRSO are currently close to planned cost and schedule profiles, other programs are experiencing difficulties, and these programs have not completed development. Sentinel is undergoing a critical Nunn-McCurdy review due to cost and schedule increases. The SAOC cost estimate has also increased and is putting pressure on the DAF's budget.

Deterring Aggression and Prevailing in Conflict

The third priority of our NDS is to deter aggression and be prepared to prevail in conflict when necessary. The DAF needs immediate and significant capability modernization to keep pace with the growing military capabilities of the PRC. Each year, the threat continues to advance as does our effort to define cost effective competitive operational innovation. The DAF deeply appreciates the "Quick Start" provision placed in the FY24 NDAA and will take full advantage of this opportunity to save precious time. Our effort to Reoptimize for Great Power Competition is intended in large part to create institutions with the mission of ensuring continuous competitiveness against our pacing challenge. The seven DAF Operational Imperatives and the Cross-cutting Operational Enablers body of work continues to guide the DAF's modernization effort. The FY25 DAF budget request includes \$6.1B for these efforts, \$4.0B in the Space Force and \$2.1B in the Air Force excluding B-21 investments available at a higher classification.

Building a Resilient Joint Force and Defense Ecosystem

The fourth NDS priority is to build a resilient Joint Force and defense ecosystem to ensure our future military advantage. Our Airmen, Guardians, and civilian teammates are the decisive advantage in our strategic competition, and this budget request invests to ensure they can serve to their full potential. Programs that respond to the most pressing problems of our Airmen, Guardians, and their families are detailed for each DAF Military Service in the sections below.

UNITED STATES AIR FORCE

Strategic competition with the PRC while also managing acute and persistent threats requires the Air Force to modernize to maintain its preeminent status in the world. The Air Force continues to implement the programs identified under the Operational Imperatives and follow through on initiatives designed to maintain the Air Force's qualitative advantages over any competitor. The Air Force is investing in force structure and capabilities aligned with the NDS. As the strategic environment is rapidly changing and technology fundamentally alters the character of war we are in a time of consequence. The Air Force is determined to maintain its position as the leader in speed, agility, and lethality upon which the joint team, the Nation, and allies rely.

The FY25 Air Force budget request is \$188.1B. The Air Force budget invests in foundational accounts in an attempt to arrest the year-over-year degradation of the capabilities, operational readiness, and supporting infrastructure necessary to implement the NDS, but doing so mandates a slower rate of needed modernization which increases the risk to the DAF's overall readiness. The budget fully funds nuclear modernization programs to deter strategic attacks, continuing the most extensive recapitalization effort of the nuclear enterprise in the Air Force's history. (The recently announced Nunn McCurdy cost breach on the Sentinel ICBM program is still being

addressed and final estimates are not available at this time.) It also continues investment in modernization focused on critical long-range kill webs (\$310.6M) and affordable mass (\$719.8M) central to the ability to deter and, if necessary, defeat aggression. This is in clear recognition of the PRC pacing challenge and Russian acute threat. The Air Force budget request also invests in the Air Force's most precious asset--its Airmen--to ensure they remain the decisive advantage the Nation depends upon.

AIR FORCE'S ROLE IN DEFENDING THE NATION

For FY25, the Air Force must make difficult choices to balance risk today and into the future. Today, the Air Force is accepting risk across the Service's modernization accounts in order to maintain minimally acceptable near-term operational readiness. This places additional risk on the Air Force's ability to deter and defeat any adversary going forward.

The FY25 Air Force budget request prioritizes operational readiness in the current year and seeks to preserve previous years' substantial advances in modernization and procurement. The Air Force's operational readiness is near the minimum level acceptable for the Service to meet the Nation's demands.

While this budget attempts to sustain the modernization momentum created by the Operational Imperatives and Cross-cutting Operational Enablers, it takes risk in the medium term to balance immediate operational readiness needs at the level of maximum tolerable risk. The medium-term risk most noticeably impacts the Air Force's ability to field the Next Generation Air Dominance (NGAD) Family of Systems, as well as a mature Command, Control, Communications, and Battle Management (C3BM) system, the Air Force contribution to JADC2.

The Air Force is requesting \$2.1B to meet the immediate Operational Imperatives required to maintain the Air Force's qualitative advantage and ability to deter and, if necessary, win whenever called upon by the Nation. The Operational Imperatives provide the Service with critical capabilities, readiness investments, and the foundation required to transition and sustain a wartime posture against our pacing threat. Notably, the USAF FY25 budget request continues progress toward fielding an operationally optimized Advanced Battle Management System (ABMS) (\$174M) that will improve situational awareness and provide decision-support tools to close hundreds of kill chains within relevant timelines while operating in a highly contested environment. The FY25 Air Force budget supports achieving moving target engagement at scale (\$177M), which will be decisive in a conflict with a well-resourced peer- or near-peer adversary. Fielding the NGAD Family of Systems (\$675M), particularly Collaborative Combat Aircraft, will allow the Air Force to augment current and future platforms with lower-cost complementary systems that can cost-effectively achieve control of the air in highly contested environments. The B-21 and its Family of Systems (details available at a higher classification) will be the backbone of the Air Force's bomber force and provide critical operational capability for both conventional and nuclear missions and provide precision effects en masse against targets worldwide. The Air Force is committed to building resilient forward basing (\$594M) that ensures sustainable and networked bases capable of sufficient sortie generation and mission execution in a contested environment. The Service is also investing toward securing the critical readiness required to mobilize and move the Air Force and Joint Force into theater (\$232.9M), including hardening

mobilization and support capabilities against cyber and non-cyber threats. These investments represent significant efforts in critical systems and assets required by the increasingly challenging threat environment.

Among the Air Force's highest priorities is achieving electromagnetic spectrum dominance and an information advantage in highly contested environments. The Air Force's budget includes a \$50M budget request in FY25 for investment in EA-37B Baseline 4 capability enhancements and advanced waveform development. Furthermore, the Air Force is investing in mission resilience and adaptability efforts such as the 350th Spectrum Warfare Wing's rapid reprogramming to ensure effective electronic attack, support, and defensive capabilities; synchronization efforts such as Air Combat Command's Electromagnetic Battle Management (EMBM). The Air Force's investments in electromagnetic spectrum dominance are vital to ensuring that the Nation's warfighters, Joint mission partners, and Allies build, achieve, and maintain mission effectiveness, survivability, and, ultimately, warfighting advantage over the Nation's adversaries. These efforts aid in maintaining the Air Force's credibility in both assurance and deterrence roles.

As the Air Force adapts to the changing strategic environment, we are reoptimizing every aspect of the Service around meeting the PRC pacing challenge. The Air Force is focusing organizations responsible for strategic readiness on current operational readiness, creating and/or elevating organizations that are critical to this strategic environment such as cyber and the nuclear enterprise, and creating a single command to focus on future capabilities. These reoptimization decisions make changes that are within the current authorities and, to the extent possible, the resources of the Department of the Air Force. As we strive to keep pace in a strategic environment where the competition has sustained and consistent growth in funding, these efforts alone will not be enough.

AIR FORCE'S ROLE IN TAKING CARE OF PEOPLE

The Air Force is committed to attracting and retaining the best Airmen in the world. In FY24, the Active Duty Air Force is currently on track to meet its recruiting goals. Air National Guard and Reserve recruiting are trending upward but continue to remain a challenge for the Service. The Air Force has continued to break down barriers to service and made progress thanks to Congress's significant support to provide requested pay increases and increasing economic security for Airmen through cost-of-living adjustments to basic pay, BAH, and BAS. Additionally, the Air Force is opening its bases to local communities to showcase the service to the public and connect with the Nation's possible recruits. The then VCSAF's cross functional team on Barriers to Service implemented 18 policy changes since Jan 2023 to expand future recruiting opportunities and increase eligibility to serve. These changes include accelerated naturalization at BMT, aligning the body composition to the DoD standard, and expanding the tattoo policy. These changes have provided tangible improvements without sacrificing quality. The CFT will continue to review and adjust DAF policies and initiatives to best address future recruiting challenges and amplify efforts to increase propensity to serve for all.

To maintain talent, the Air Force has focused on quality-of-life impacts for its Airmen, investing to ensure they have the resources required to thrive. The Air Force has concentrated on improving access to childcare; this budget request includes a \$40.0M MILCON submission for a CDC at Mountain Home AFB, on top of 11 CDC MILCON projects that the Air Force is executing in

FY25, and \$50M in Facilities, Sustainment, Restoration, and Modernization focused investment in CDCs. The Service is also on track to implement the Independent Review Commission on Sexual Assault in the Military's recommendations and programs as approved by the Secretary of Defense, expanding victim care and support for victims of sexual assault. Specifically, the Air Force is increasing the presence of embedded mental health personnel in line units to prepare for contingency operations. Demand for these mental health services has increased twofold over the last decade while mental health manning has remained relatively unchanged. To offset the lack of providers, the Department of the Air Force is training service members at every level on basic mental health skills. The Air Force has also invested in Interpersonal and Self-Directed Violence Prevention and Response with \$451M in the FY25 budget request to implement initiatives supporting and protecting Airmen.

Quality of life also demands the best living and working facilities possible. Due to fiscal constraints resulting from the FRA, the Air Force was unable to reduce the \$46.8B of deferred maintenance and repair backlog, nor achieve the 2.3% plant replacement value (PRV) reinvestment goal envisioned in the Infrastructure Investment Plan. The FY24 budget request set this goal at 1.58% and the FY25 budget request reduces it to 1.5%. Additionally, the existing CR has directly impacted the Air Force's ability to release funds and award dormitory contracts in the current fiscal year. The inability to release funds increases risk to meet the Air Force's dormitory investment goal of \$1.1B by 2026, and the inability to fund and award dormitory projects in FY24 will roll into FY25. However, with this budget request, the Air Force will meet the FY22 NDAA requirement to invest at least 5% of the estimated replacement cost of the total inventory of permanent party dormitories for facility improvements. The Air Force is deliberately investing to sustain adequate dormitories. The FY25 budget request includes a planned investment of \$250M for future prioritization of dormitory repair, but that does not include FY24 rollover due to funding delays. The Air Force is also engaging with local leaders to increase the availability of affordable housing options for families. These moves, along with the substantial increase in BAH for many localities, have increased housing opportunities and living facilities for Airmen.

To be the best, we must manage our Airmen's talent. The Air Force is defining new Total Force skills required to meet the demands of Air Force Force Generation (AFFORGEN), Agile Combat Employment, and Future Force Design. As part of reoptimization, the technical tracks for Officers and Enlisted Airmen as well as the introduction of Warrant Officers for Cyber and IT, seek to attract and retain the critical talent needed in fast-paced and rapidly evolving critical technology sectors that are shaping the modern battlefield. We are also improving talent management by investing in processes and systems that increase agility, flexibility, and data access. The Air Force is exploring ways to identify the most innovative Airmen, network them, and ensure they can field innovative solutions to meet the Air Force's most significant challenges.

AIR FORCE'S ROLE IN SUCCEEDING THROUGH TEAMWORK

Teamwork is critical in the total Air Force, including the Reserves and the Air National Guard, all as part of the Joint Force meeting the NDS objectives. That teamwork begins within the DAF, where the Air Force relies on and supports the Space Force. Both Services depend on each other in developing and fielding the Operational Imperatives and achieving the Department's reoptimization efforts. Cooperation of both the Space Force and Air Force is required to meet the

challenges posed by the nation's adversaries. The ability to conduct precision strikes, engage moving-targets, close kill chains, and build situational awareness in a highly contested environment requires the seamless integration of both Services. The Air Force and Space Force are inexorably intertwined, ensuring that both services, the Joint Force, and our allies and partners will prevail wherever called upon.

Meeting our pacing challenge also demands that the Air Force seamlessly integrate with the larger Joint Force, the combatant commands, and our allies and partners. This is the essence of Integrated Deterrence. As part of the reoptimization efforts, the Air Force is executing large-scale exercises to test its capabilities against peer threats in highly contested environments and re-designing force presentation models to ensure combatant commanders most stressing operational needs are met. The FY25 budget includes \$428M in investment to support the integrated priority lists of the combatant commanders. The Operational Imperatives and capability investments across the Service are critical to ensuring the Joint Force can succeed against the pacing challenge.

While the Air Force focuses on supporting the Joint Force in meeting the NDS priorities, the Service also realizes that Allies and partners are a center of gravity for United States national security. Allies and partners facilitate access, basing, and overflight. The Air Force is committed to working with our Allies and partners, especially in the Indo-Pacific, Europe, and the Middle East, to advance an international order grounded in rules and norms. The Air Force continues to streamline FMS programs and work with allies to develop interoperable capabilities beginning from the initial design of systems.

Teamwork is also required with the Defense Industrial Base to ensure a robust industry that is the world leader in technology and production capacity that can adapt at speed and scale. As we promote the strength of the Defense Industrial Base, the Service is working with industry partners on delivering relevant capabilities with increased speed and capacity and ensuring mission-dependent supply chain and logistics resilience.

Teamwork inside the Department of the Air Force; the Joint Force; the Defense Industrial Base; and Allies and partners will be the cornerstone of integrated deterrence and combat capability in strategic competition with the PRC. The interdependence of these forces demands constant attention to drive seamless integration and interoperability. Unity in action and capabilities developed between the Air Force, Joint Force, and Allies and partners will provide our Nation and our Allies an advantage that no potential adversary can match.

Perhaps as much as any time in history, teamwork is required across the whole of our government to tackle the increasingly complex and dangerous challenges that face our Nation. The Air Force will continue to work transparently and collaboratively through the Department of the Air Force, Department of Defense, Executive Branch, and Congress to field and maintain the most ready and dominant Air Force for the Nation.

UNITED STATES SPACE FORCE

Since its establishment in 2019, the United States Space Force has focused on one, overarching imperative: *to secure the Nation's interests in, from, and to space*. As the threats in space to

American prosperity and security both increase and become more sophisticated, the Space Force must transform and therefore, it is prioritizing investments that prepare the Joint Force and the Nation to confront the dangerous operating environment that space already has become. This transformation is severely complicated by the constrained fiscal environment, which has forced the DAF and the Space Force to make hard choices.

SPACE FORCE'S ROLE IN DEFENDING THE NATION

The world's use of space is growing at an accelerating rate, making space simultaneously more important and more dangerous. The domain is no longer the benign expanse of the past. Counterspace threats continue to destabilize the environment, and space-enabled attack increasingly holds the Joint Force and our homeland at risk. The PRC, and to a significant extent Russia, have operationalized space. The United States has not kept pace. With space undeniably defined as a warfighting domain, the Nation depends upon the Space Force to secure its interests in, from, and to space.

To meet this challenge, the Space Force has organized its modernization efforts around a theory of success that aims to protect the Nation and its interests, while also preserving stability and long-term usability of the domain. This approach adheres to three guiding principles: (1) avoid operational surprise in the space domain, (2) deter attacks against U.S. interests in space and (3) prevent an adversary from using space to attack our homeland or the Joint Force. The destruction of forces in space risks creating long-lasting hazards and indiscriminate risks. For this reason, the Space Force's concept of space superiority seeks to protect U.S. interests without jeopardizing the future of the space domain.

Avoiding operational surprise in space requires the Space Force to maintain constant awareness of the battlespace, supplemented by a robust capability to accurately produce indications and warnings for malign behavior. Over 8% of the Space Force's FY25 budget is dedicated to this purpose. Specifically, the Space Force budget invests \$1.25B into the space domain awareness mission area, including funding for the Deep Space Advanced Radar Capability, SILENTBARKER, and Space Data Fusion. These programs extend the Space Force's umbrella of awareness in the space domain, by establishing a clear picture of the operating environment and denying adversaries the ability to strike U.S. assets without warning.

To deny the benefits of a preemptive counter-space strike, the Space Force must build resilient space capabilities that guarantee continuity of critical services to the Joint Force despite current and growing adversary counterspace forces. These critical services include missile warning; communications; targeting; and Position, Navigation and Timing. The Space Force must transform these services to make them resilient to attack. As airborne systems providing communications and targeting have become more vulnerable and as threat long-range precision strike systems have proliferated, the Joint Force dependency on space is significantly increasing. To that end, the Space Force budget invests \$2.58B, or 55% of the total space-based missile warning budget, to field a proliferated multi-orbit missile warning network. Operating across different orbital regimes and sensor types, this hybrid approach complicates an adversary's attack options against U.S. space assets, enhances resiliency of a no-fail warning mission, and assures critical decision-making data will be available at the tactical, operational, and strategic levels. The Space Force is procuring two

additional GPS-IIIIF vehicles. Presently, there are 31 satellites in orbit with four in storage and two slated for launch in FY25. Simultaneously, the Space Force is researching more resilient PNT options. The FY25 budget also devotes \$4.4B to developing satellite communications (SATCOM) systems capable of operating through contested and degraded environments. The Space Force is working to ensure that all of its capabilities can deter, overcome, and operate through enemy action.

\$7.25B—nearly a quarter of the Space Force’s FY25 funding—invests in the ability to counter an adversary from using space to attack the U.S. homeland or the Joint Force. This set of investments, which cannot be discussed in detail in an unclassified setting, is a major transformational effort for the USSF because it enables the newest Space Force mission, space superiority. The need to gain and maintain space superiority over peer adversaries is the distinguishing characteristic of a transformed Space Force and it is a top priority. Unfortunately, the compounding effects of Continuing Resolutions and the FY25 top-line funding constraints under the FRA have had significant impact on the Space Force’s ability to meet the demands of this critical mission.

Finally, to reoptimize for the pacing challenge, sustain our long-term competitive advantage, and ensure the relevance of our technical investments, the Space Force is establishing a Space Futures Command. Overseeing the forward-looking force design process by which we determine our objective force, Space Futures Command will provide vital structures and processes for our force development activities. Working closely with the Air Force Research Laboratory this Command will routinely assess the relevancy of and make recommendations on the priority of areas of scientific research. This will provide a clear and consistent demand signal to all partners, unambiguously identifying the technologies we consider to be essential to our success.

The Space Force is in the early stages of a major transformation, from a force focused only on peacetime capabilities to a force that also includes the full range of warfighting capabilities. The Space Force we have today, no matter how ready it is, does not have the range of capabilities needed against the pacing challenge. Preserving current force capabilities is necessary but not sufficient. We must invest to transform our legacy space capabilities into a credible warfighting force to deter and, if needed, to defeat our adversaries; and we must do so with a sense of urgency. This requires on-time and stable funding. Continuing Resolutions force the Space Force to rearchitect programs, miss launch windows, and break delivery timelines, spreading mission delays across the FYDP. For example, hypothetical year-long CRs can force the Space Force to slow its launch procurements, precipitating impacts for years to come by reducing the capability it can get on orbit, creating industrial base challenges, delaying test and training activities, and generating more barriers to its transformation.

SPACE FORCE’S ROLE IN TAKING CARE OF PEOPLE

The Space Force’s small but technologically sophisticated workforce means the Space Force must deliberately manage talent on an individual basis. In 2023, Congress passed the Space Force Personnel Management Act. This landmark legislation will enable the Space Force to build a modern personnel management system that will better allow the Space Force to develop and retain the elite military cadre it needs to be competitive and successful. The permeability between full-time and part-time military service the single component creates will allow Guardians of the

relatively small Space Force to flexibly manage their careers and better meet their personal and professional goals while meeting Space Force operational needs.

The Space Force is also piloting the Defense Civilian Training Corps in FY25. This program, which will act as a civil service counterpart to the Reserve Officer Training Corps program, will recruit civilian Guardians with desirable backgrounds following the completion of their undergraduate education. Additionally, FY25 resourcing will allow the Space Force to expand developmental opportunities for all Guardians. Here, the first step will be a redesigned Officer Training Course. Under this program, all newly accessed officers will attend the same initial skills training course to learn the fundamentals of cyber operations, intelligence, and space operations. This combined initial skills training will ensure all officers have a comprehensive operational background prior to pursuing more specialized duties like acquisition. The Space Force is truly committed to being operationally focused.

The demands placed on Guardians continue to grow as space becomes a more dangerous operating environment. To prepare for this challenge, Guardians must be able to develop, train, and exercise their operational tradecraft in a secure environment against high-fidelity simulated threats. To meet these requirements, the Space Force is building the necessary test and training infrastructure from scratch. In FY25, the Space Force budget invests \$438.7M into the Operational Test and Training Infrastructure (OTTI) program. The Space Force is also expanding its investments in the test enterprise to account for the electromagnetic and orbital warfare mission areas. Recently, the DAF organized all of these activities under a single Program Executive Officer, ensuring resourcing transparency, accountability, and interoperability across the test and training enterprise.

One personnel challenge the Space Force faces as a small service is creating the organizational capacity to perform current operations while simultaneously building operational readiness for a high-intensity conflict. To better balance these two, the Space Force is formalizing how it builds operational readiness in combat force elements. The Space Force is accomplishing this by implementing the Space Force Generation model for readiness, which is made possible by a requested additional \$344.2M invested across several accounts. This investment enables a rotational model for Employed-in-Place missions, allowing personnel to accomplish threat-focused combat training before they are presented to the combatant commanders for day-to-day operations.

SPACE FORCE'S ROLE IN SUCCEEDING THROUGH TEAMWORK

The Space Force is not just an important teammate, but an essential one to the Joint and Combined Force. Broader operational success across all domains and theaters will depend on the Space Force succeeding in its missions. First, the Space Force provides services that the Joint and Combined team must have, or they will fail. Achieving that requires not just fielding effective capabilities joint warfighters need, but also securing those capabilities from adversarial attack. Second, the Space Force protects the Joint and Combined team from space-enabled attack. The Space Force cannot succeed in either regard without robust relationships across the U.S. enterprise and with indispensable Allies and partners.

To that end, partnerships with the other Services and throughout the Joint Force is a top Space Force priority. In FY24, the Space Force established several service components to integrate Space Force capabilities and expertise into the Combatant Commands. For example, the Space Force established U.S. Space Forces Europe and Africa, giving both USEUCOM and USAFRICOM a dedicated team of experts in space planning and operations. The FY25 budget invests an additional \$27.8M to build service components in support of every Combatant Command. Once fully implemented, this program will give every Combatant Command access to Guardians who can help integrate space capabilities into their joint operations.

Nationally, there are many agencies and organizations with equities in the space domain. This is why the Space Force is partnering with a variety of government agencies to unify effort and leverage common interests for mutual benefit in space. For example, space-based surveillance, reconnaissance, and targeting is a critically important emerging mission area for the Space Force. Therefore, the Space Force is working with the intelligence community, as well as industry partners, so that the Space Force can accomplish this important mission as part of the Joint Force.

As a highly technical service, the Space Force depends on a strong industrial base. An eighth of the Space Force FY25 budget is dedicated to commercial space services which will help reinforce and energize the space industrial base our nation depends upon. Moreover, the Space Force is continuing to develop its commercial space strategy within the larger DAF and Department of Defense industrial policy framework to identify areas for deeper partnerships with the diverse commercial space market.

The Space Force can no longer afford to delay its necessary transformation. Space capabilities are foundational to how the Joint Force projects power across the world and are increasingly at risk—they are old, vulnerable, and already not fully meeting joint warfighter needs. Lessening these risks requires transformational change—transcending the status quo and making smart investments in not just new systems, but also people—America’s Guardians

CONCLUSION

The Department of the Air Force is in a race for technological superiority against a well-resourced strategic competitor. The United States is now facing a competitor with national purchasing power that exceeds our own, a challenge we have never faced in modern times. The PLA is actively developing and expanding capabilities to challenge strategic stability, attack our critical space systems, and defeat our ability to project power, especially air power. Conflict in the Indo-Pacific region is not inevitable. The United States is actively working to prevent conflict by strengthening combat-credible deterrence. However, acute and persistent threats still exist, and the security and prosperity undergirded by the United States military for decades is increasingly challenged. The DAF FY25 budget request is focused on addressing this reality. The DAF has funded current readiness accounts at the lowest acceptable level while investing remaining resources in essential modernization. Some Air Force procurement has been deferred to free up funding for new capabilities in development. The Space Force lacks similar trade-off options, forcing delays in needed systems, especially counterspace systems. The DAF FY25 budget request is aligned with the NDS. It addresses mission requirements while taking care of people and fulfilling our role in the Joint, interagency, and combined team. We urge timely approval of this budget request to allow

us to keep pace with the challenges facing the United States.