

Prepared Opening Statement of Chairman CW Bill Young

House Committee on Appropriations

Subcommittee on Defense

United States Air Force Fiscal Year 2012 Budget

March 31, 2011

I want to welcome you all to this morning's open hearing on the Air Force's posture and fiscal year 2012 budget request.

We are joined by two distinguished witnesses:

- The Honorable Michael B. Donley, Secretary of the Air Force
- General Norton A. Schwartz, Air Force Chief of Staff

Secretary Donley, General Schwartz, thank you both for being with us today.

We have a number of topics to discuss with respect to the Air Force's budget request for fiscal year 2012. The Air Force's base request of \$147.8 billion represents a \$3.7 billion, or 2.6 percent, increase over the amount of \$144.1 billion included in H.R. 1.

We cannot fight the wars we are in today, or the wars of tomorrow, without a healthy Air Force capable of operations across the spectrum. Many of our recent discussions have centered on the Administration's goal to substantially withdraw ground forces from Iraq this year, and from Afghanistan by 2014. However, we all know that when we withdrew ground forces from the Persian Gulf in 1991, our Air Force stayed behind to patrol the skies over Iraq and reassure our Arab allies for the next decade.

At the same time, our Air Force must prepare to fight in future airspace environments that will be contested by both advanced fighters and ever-more capable air defense systems.

Before we begin, I am pleased to note that the competition for the KC-X tanker has mercifully come to a close. I look forward to working with the Air Force to ensure that these vital aircraft are delivered on time and within budget.

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