

Chairman C.W. Bill Young
Subcommittee on Defense
House Committee on Appropriations
FY 2013 Air Force Budget Hearing
March 6, 2012

Good morning, and welcome to today's hearing on the fiscal year 2013 budget request for the United States Air Force. We are pleased to welcome back our distinguished witnesses, Secretary Donley and General Schwartz, neither of whom are strangers to this Committee.

The Air Force's total fiscal year 2013 budget request for programs under this Subcommittee's jurisdiction is \$138.9 billion, a decrease of \$3.9 billion from fiscal year 2012. The most notable aspect of this decrease is a \$3 billion cut in procurement.

The main lesson of this year's budget request is that, in the eyes of the Department of Defense, yesterday's vital requirement can quickly become today's unaffordable luxury. The one-two punch of fiscal misery and lowered strategic expectations is clearly reflected in the Air Force's plans this year.

The proposal we have before us envisions significant cuts in the tactical fighter and airlift fleets. It includes the termination of once prized programs such as the Global Hawk Block 30 and the C-27 Joint Cargo Aircraft. It leaves other programs and missions with an uncertain future. Finally, this budget is pregnant with implications for future base realignments and closures. I am especially concerned by the impact all of the above will have on the Air National Guard.

While I am pleased to see that the Air Force is sticking by certain programs such as the new bomber and an improved combat rescue helicopter, I do worry that even these programs could be delayed or terminated with future decisions driven by short-term budget considerations.

I understand the dilemma the Air Force has. We are at the point where it is very difficult to achieve significant savings and maintain readiness without sacrificing some force structure. At the same time, Congress has the final say through the power of the purse, and we hope that the Air Force will work with us to consider any alternatives.

General Schwartz and Secretary Donley, thank you again for being with us today. Any written statements you have will be entered into the record. Before we begin, let me turn toward our ranking Member, Mr. Dicks, for any opening remarks he would like to make.

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