

FLORIDA WEST COAST CHAPTER of the AIR FORCE ASSOCIATION**Vol.7, Issue 1****NEWSLETTER -- SPECIAL EDITION****JAN – MAR 2018**

TOP ISSUES 2017

EDITORS NOTE:

Each year at the annual AFA convention in September the delegates approve a slate of topical issues concerning the Air Force for AFA to pursue during the following year. They are called AFA's Top Issues.

The current Top Issues document is available on AFA's website and we have provided here for your review. Please read it carefully and take the issues to heart. These are the issues we need to advocate when talking to our elected representatives and use to educate the members of communities about the current state of the Air Force.

Remember we are all "Airmen for Life" and this is one way we can support our Air Force.



**“THE REALITY IS... WE ARE TOO SMALL FOR WHAT THE NATION EXPECTS OF US.”
DR. HEATHER WILSON, SECRETARY OF THE AIR FORCE, JUNE 6, 2017**



Provide for the common defense’ - these five words from the Preamble to the Constitution highlights the priority our nation places on defending the security of our nation and its citizens. In today’s global environment of armed conflict, terror, intimidation and instability, air power has emerged as the most important military arm to meet the dynamic and deadly threats arrayed against the United States. The Air Force possesses the unique capability to bring all aspects of aerospace power to bear and to deter potential adversaries. Should our deterrence fail, the Air Force must be able to bring the full weight of its capability to the fight and provide for the common defense.

Since its founding, our Air Force has been called to action for the Berlin Air Lift, the Korean and Vietnam Wars. It stood its ground in the Cold War against the massive forces of the Soviet Union. It responded to the brutality of Saddam Hussein in dramatic fashion during Desert Storm, the world’s most successful air campaign. After Desert Storm, the Air Force stayed in the Middle East and has remained there for the last 27 years. After the devastating attacks of September 11, our Air Force not only patrolled the skies of the United States, but it also led the charge around the globe in combating terror, including the defeat of Saddam Hussein and the world’s fourth largest army.

Forged against this backdrop of deterrence, readiness, and engagement, the Air Force has been engaged for 27 years in continuous combat operations—taking a severe toll on both weapon systems and, most importantly, Airman and their families. Despite being a much needed first-responder around the globe, it now operates the smallest, oldest and least ready force in its history. They are dangerously short pilots, maintainers, space operators and other critical specialties. Only 50 percent of its units are deemed ‘ready’ for assigned missions. Some aircraft in its vital tanker and bomber fleets are over 60 years old and will continue in service for decades more. It operates fighter aircraft over 30 years old. While technology advances and modernization have helped the aging weapon systems to keep pace, our adversaries are rapidly closing the gap, risking our current air and space superiority.

The reality is that our Air Force is too small for the missions that our nation requires, and it is forced to operate with budgets that are too constrained for its force structure. The Budget Control Act of 2011, and its resulting sequestration, placed our Air Force in a perilous position. It has, at times, forced the Air Force in a trade-off between readiness and modernization. Our national security strategy depends on our Air Force to respond globally, rapidly and, when necessary, with the dominant force of lethality. The resources to enable this capability are not sufficient. As a result, American security is at risk while global instability dangerously increases.

The Air Force Association’s mission is to promote a dominant United States Air Force and a strong national defense, and to honor Airmen and our Air Force Heritage.

More than budget top line, budget stability is needed at sufficient levels that allow for timely initiation and efficient continuation of people, modernization, and readiness programs. No single outcome promises more improvement in the overall Air Force posture than a predictable and stable defense budget.

AIR FORCE ASSOCIATION TOP ISSUES 2017

PREPARE AND SUPPORT AIRMEN AND THEIR FAMILIES; CARE FOR VETERANS AND RETIREES

Since people underpin everything we do, the Congress must provide sufficient resources to sustain the quality of life for all Airmen and their families, and address the needs of our wounded and ill service-members still in the service of their nation, or retired from service.

Recognize military and veteran benefits are earned through years of service, sacrifice, and in many cases, personal injury, and disability.



• HEALTHCARE

Healthcare is both a benefit and a readiness issue.

The active force is operating in a war time tempo. The TRICARE system is a readiness issue for our troops, preparing them here at home and supporting them overseas.

Caution is necessary to ensure no short term problems are fixed at a long term detriment to medical training. This direct care system provides ready medics who can operate promptly anywhere required.

TRICARE for Life (TFL) is appreciated by the force as a national obligation to retirees,

long ago earned. Actual data from recent years shows that TFL is costing less, not more. To adjust it for a revenue stream is a breach of faith which is observable by all — a short term gain at the cost of a long term loss.

AFA believes Tricare fees should be attached to COLA vice the DOD proposed Health Index.

AFA supports a BETA test of a new TRICARE option at a specific Guard location to assess the positive and negative impacts before wholesale changes.

• MILITARY RETIREMENT REFORM

The new blended retirement system offers the opportunity for Airmen who serve less than 20 years to earn retirement benefits.

AFA believes the impact of the new system should be continuously modeled and analyzed to ascertain its true impact on future retention.

• MILITARY PAY

Military pay raises have fallen below private sector rates for the last three years. AFA believes we need to move away from institutionalizing the pay gaps of the last four years and move towards equivalent pay raises to match the private sector.

PROMOTING AIR FORCE AIRPOWER

- **MORALE, WELFARE, AND RECREATION**

AFA believes that more should be done to maintain and support our bases as homes to our Airmen and their families. The Air Force owes it to Airmen and their families to ensure we fund and provide quality programs that enhance Airmen performance and ensure ready, resilient Airmen and families.

- **SEXUAL ASSAULT PREVENTION AND RESPONSE**

The Air Force has led the way among the services and improved every aspect of the response system. This has resulted in fewer sexual assault incidents and more victims reporting the crime; however, there remains more work to be done.

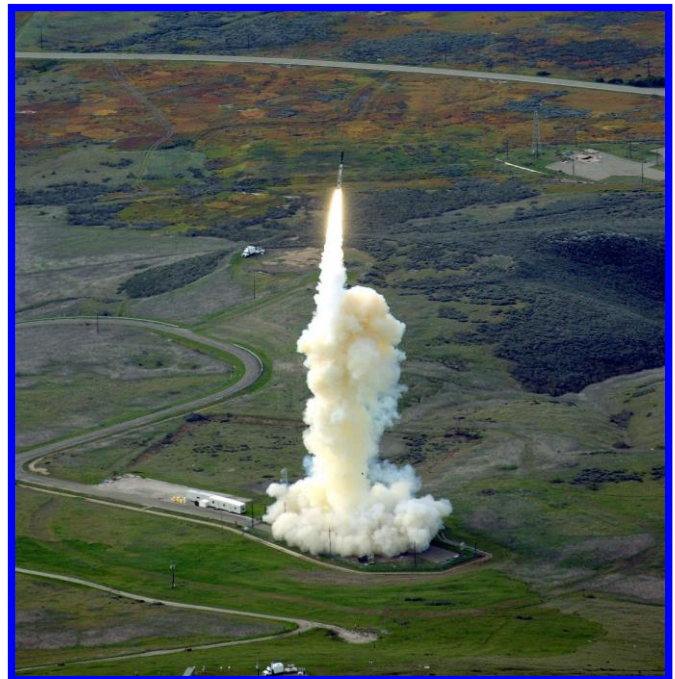
- **SUICIDE PREVENTION**

Developing and caring for our Total Force Airmen and their families is a top priority. AFA supports the multiple programs in the Air Force to improve resiliency among Airmen to help them overcome crises and adversity.

REBUILD FULL SPECTRUM COMBAT READINESS FOR AIR, SPACE, AND CYBER FORCES

The Air Force is the first responder for engagement around the globe. It must always face and be prepared for a full spectrum conflict from nuclear, to conventional, to cyber, to counter-terrorism.

- The demand is intensifying: Russia, Chinese Pacific posturing, North Korea, ISIL, Libya, Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, and future unforeseen crisis or natural disasters.
- The Air Force has proven the ability to execute its' missions in an uncontested environment but have accepted high levels of risk should they be called to operate in a contested environment due to reduced buys.
- Readiness eroded under Budget Control Act (BCA) restrictions. The potential return of BCA funding levels puts any gain at risk and will lead to decreases in readiness.
- Today the Air Force has fewest Airmen and aircraft since 1947, operations tempo has remained constant over the last 26 years; fewer “boots on the ground” now means more “jets in the air.”
- The Air Force has developed a predictive readiness model called the five levers of readiness that must be in sync with each other for success. These are: the flying hour program, weapons system sustainment, critical skills availability, training resource availability, and deploy to dwell/ops tempo.
- AFA believes we must set end strength commensurate with global requirements; divest aging platforms and excess infrastructure to free up fiscal resource. We must continue to advocate for funding stability and increased dwell time to sharpen needed skills.



PROMOTING AIR FORCE AIRPOWER

RECAPITALIZATION / MODERNIZATION

America's potential adversaries are rapidly closing the technological superiority gap the Air Force has historically held. AFA believes the Air Force needs to continue to invest, with strong Congressional support, in aircraft recapitalization and modernization programs for our aging fleets to ensure all core mission capabilities remain viable now and into the future.

F-35A, KC-46A Tanker, B-21 Bomber:

- Congress must provide the Air Force the resources to acquire the needed capability and capacity of operationally effective and survivable fifth generation fighter aircraft platforms, and sufficient intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance assets to meet growing threats and combatant commander warfighting requirements.
- The Air Force must sustain its commitment to our sister services in providing the preponderance of close air support and combat search and rescue capabilities, but also be given flexibility to make budget decisions for more survivable, multi-role platforms for these missions in high-end threat environments.
- AFA supports the full funding of the Air Force's top three acquisition priorities: the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter, KC-46 tanker, and B-21 Bomber programs. They must stay on schedule and on budget.



JSTARS, T-X, CSAR, LRSO, GBSD

AFA supports the Air Force's need for recapitalizing the Joint Surveillance Target Attack Radar System (JSTARS) fleet, its trainer fleet of aging T-38s, its Combat Search and Rescue (CSAR) fleet, and the Long Range Standoff Weapon (LRSO) with nuclear capability.

AFA supports full funding for the Ground Based Strategic Deterrent (GBSD) to replace the aging Minuteman III ICBM weapon system. While the Air Force continues to maintain exceptional alert rates for the Minuteman III, it's time to update this 50 year-old leg of the nuclear triad with a modern land-based system.

AFA supports the UH-1N helicopter replacement program for ICBM missile field security. AFA also supports recapitalizing the EC-130H Compass Call fleet by moving the electronics on the aging planes onto new business jet bodies.

FORCE STRUCTURE

The Air Force is the smallest it has ever been even while demand for airpower continues to climb. There is no excess, no bench to draw from. Quantity has a quality all its own.

AFA supports increasing the active duty end strength to at least 325,000 to address key capability gaps in the nuclear, maintenance, cyber, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance, and support career fields.

PROMOTING AIR FORCE AIRPOWER

AFA also supports an increase in the maximum allowable annual pilot retention bonus to \$48,000 for the most critical rated career fields as a hedge against significant increases in commercial airline pilot hiring. The current annual maximum of \$25,000 has not been increased since 1999 and is losing its value as a pilot retention incentive in the face of inflation and lucrative commercial opportunities.

AFA believes a study must be conducted to ascertain how many combat aircraft squadrons, and the optimal mix of weapons systems, are actually needed to execute the national defense strategy.

INVESTMENT IN INFRASTRUCTURE

AFA believes we must invest in and modernize the infrastructure that produces operational capability and readiness, such as training ranges, test infrastructure, live-virtual-constructive training capabilities, modernized nuclear facilities, assured space launch, satellite communications, and satellite ground infrastructure.

INVESTMENT IN TECHNOLOGY

AFA believes we need to preserve our technological edge. Other nations closing the gap and have even surpassed us in some technologies. A small force with yesterday's technology will lose. The stealth advantage will not last long. We need to be aggressively investing in newer technologies such as hypersonics and directed energy weapons. We also need to continue to invest in the next generation workforce to replace the generation about to retire.

TOUGH CHOICES

With so many security challenges and an uncertain budget environment, it is imperative America continue to have a strong national defense. The Department of Defense needs a budget that provides world-class training, readiness, and equipment, and it must offer service-members fair pay and a compensation package to recruit and retain the very finest. Tough decisions must be made and priorities established. Personnel compensation must be weighed against limited resources needed for readiness and recapitalization of an aging fleet. The Air Force of the 21st century must have the capability, capacity and readiness to perform its missions today and in the future.



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