



AIR FORCE ASSOCIATION STATEMENT OF POLICY

A BALANCED AIR FORCE

2010

PROMOTING AIR FORCE AIRPOWER



About the Air Force Association

The Air Force Association, founded in 1946, exists to promote Air Force airpower.

We educate the public about the critical role of aerospace power in the defense of our nation, advocate aerospace power and a strong national defense, and support the United States Air Force, the Air Force family, and aerospace education.

AFA is a 501(c)(3) independent, nonpartisan, nonprofit educational organization, to which all donations are tax deductible. With your help we will be able to expand our programs and their impact. We need your support and ongoing financial commitment to realize our goals.

AFA disseminates information through *Air Force Magazine*, airforce-magazine.com, the General Billy Mitchell Institute for Airpower Studies, national conferences and symposia, and other forms of public outreach. Learn more about AFA by visiting us on the Web at www.afa.org.

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Published by the Air Force Association
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Produced by the staff of *Air Force Magazine*
Design by Darcy Harris

A BALANCED AIR FORCE

“The mission of the United States Air Force is to fly, fight, and win ... in air, space, and cyberspace” (now and in the future).

The United States Air Force is changing, responding to the pressures of a troubled economy and long-running struggles with insurgents and irregular warfare in Afghanistan and Iraq. As the Chief of Staff has said, the Air Force is “all in,” fully engaged in this fight and adapting to new challenges.

Today’s Air Force is focused on its top five major issues: winning today’s fight, modernizing our aging air and space inventories, caring for our Airmen and their families, reinvigorating the USAF nuclear enterprise, and restoring acquisition excellence. *The Air Force Association concurs with these vital focus areas. However, we see a dangerous gap developing in our national security posture. We do not believe that the projected defense program will adequately carry out the national defense strategy or secure the nation’s long-term interests.*

We realize the Air Force had to make very difficult decisions this year within resource constraints and guidance provided by the President and the DOD leadership. Our aging fleet of air and space assets is a particular concern of AFA. A reduction in defense spending is coming at the worst of times, considering current operational demands and, for the Air Force, almost two decades of inadequate recapitalization. DOD is justifiably committed to winning wars in two nations—but we can’t focus on just the present. We must awaken the American public to the fact that the Air Force’s ability to provide the capabilities necessary to

deter aggression or win decisively if deterrence fails could be compromised in the future, placing American interests at risk.

No one doubts that counterinsurgent conflict has the potential to metastasize around the world and create continuing serious challenges for US interests and its allies. AFA lauds the Air Force’s many recent initiatives to improve support to US ground forces in Southwest Asia. Indeed, it is AFA’s view that air, space, and cyberspace power are critical elements to victory in insurgent conflicts, and assuredly save countless lives of American and allied troops. But we must remain prepared for the full spectrum of conflict.

Today’s almost singular focus on fighting the current fight is the seed of a serious danger: myopia. Future threats will demand a diverse mix of systems. Maintaining robust full-spectrum capabilities will be vital to military success in the future, no less than they have been in the past. This requires us to maintain a credible, modern force of fighters, attack aircraft, bombers, intelligence-surveillance-reconnaissance (ISR) aircraft, tanker, airlift, special operations, Remotely Piloted Aircraft (RPA), and space systems. This is not “next-war-itis,” as some have claimed. It is merely common sense.

We cannot wait for future threats to emerge before we prepare for them. State-of-the-art systems take decades to develop. Technological advances outpace acquisition

cycles. There is nothing to suggest that, just because low intensity conflict may remain a threat for the foreseeable future, conventional warfare is a thing of the past.

Our nation has historically been unsuccessful in predicting the nature of future military conflicts. We've had little time to prepare for any conflict since World War II. Fortunately, we've had flexible, adaptable systems and people with which to respond to the new challenges and be successful.

US technological superiority, our asymmetric advantage, is now in doubt. Every major weapon system in development is under attack to divert the funding to other uses. We must stand fast to ensure the F-35 is built at a sufficient rate and in adequate quantities to overcome the pending fighter gap. In addition, development of a new long-range strike capability to replace our ancient bomber fleet is critical. The bomber fleet is carrying the majority of our strike requirements in Afghanistan due to its range, payload, and precision. Termination of our only long-range airlifter would also be shortsighted given the advantage that rapid airlift provides US forces.

Therefore, when DOD endeavors to "balance" the force, it should not increase low intensity capabilities at the expense of conventional capabilities or preparations for an uncertain future. "Balance" should mean we can fight equally well across the spectrum of conflict. *Sufficient resources need to be made available to do both. This, AFA believes, should be the DOD's top priority.* This nation can afford to—and must make the commitment to—maintain a truly balanced force, despite our current economic challenges.

Achieving this goal will require a strong industrial base, as has always been true. *AFA applauds DOD's and USAF's commitment to regenerate a professional acquisition workforce.* Congress, for its part, should permit the retirement of aged aircraft and provide the flexibility for the Services to take innovative steps to economically procure new systems, including multiyear contracts that remove costly uncertainty from multibillion procurement programs. A long-range procurement plan that provides a predictable pace of replacement for major weapon systems will preserve jobs, prevent the attrition of critical job skills, reduce start-up costs, and offer a superior return on investment. *AFA supports the use of multiyear contracts to ensure predictable and cost-effective aircraft and satellite procurement programs.*

The Air Force's core functions of Nuclear Deterrence

Operations, Air Superiority, Space Superiority, Cyberspace Superiority, Global Precision Attack, Rapid Global Mobility, Special Operations, Global Integrated ISR, Command and Control, Personnel Recovery, Building Partnerships, and Agile Combat Support are all integral to our nation's security. Each of these functions needs to be strengthened. The Administration must commit to modernizing its air fleet and space systems. Decisions made today shape the force for a generation and are irreversible in the short term. *AFA advocates a strong recapitalization of our major weapon systems to achieve the right mix of investments for the present and future. Only then can we say the Air Force and the entirety of our Armed Forces are truly "balanced."*

PREPARING AND SUPPORTING AIRMEN; CARING FOR VETERANS AND RETIREES

For 19 years, the Air Force has been continually at war. From the first Gulf War to the present, we've required a nonstop commitment of Airmen and assets to support the joint warfighter in each of our core mission areas.

The strength of the Air Force is found in the men and women who serve. The Air Force Association supports them and honors their service. We are confident the reputation of our nation's Airmen remains strong, and the American people value and trust the US Air Force. But families are also making significant sacrifices to support their Airmen who deploy and fight our wars. For those Airmen who are injured, the families are the ones who provide the long-term care and support. *AFA salutes the Air Force family and vows to keep advocating on their behalf to Congress.*

The Air Force has undergone a transformation during the last 19 years. Air Force basic training has been lengthened to include ground combat training as Airmen have taken on new responsibilities that were traditionally filled by ground forces. At any one time, there are roughly 27,000 Air Force personnel serving in some 60 locations in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Southwest Asia. The ranks of our Battlefield Airmen have grown beyond Air Force Special Operations and include Tactical Air Control Parties (TACP), Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD), Security Forces, Civil Engineers, and others.

The Air Force has specifically grown the TACP arena to include a dedicated Air Liaison Officer (ALO) career field which integrates space, airlift, electronic combat, and ISR expertise in support of ground forces. It has also improved Command and Control by establishing Air and Space Operations Centers (AOCs) aligned with each Com-

batant Commander to integrate space, air, cyber, and missile defense capabilities into joint operations.

Since 2001, more than 71 percent of the 330,000 active duty Airmen, along with their Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve teammates, have deployed. In addition there are a growing number of Air Force personnel who are supporting joint operations from the CONUS. This includes RPA operations and exploitation, nuclear deterrence, and homeland defense operations.

The Air Force flies an average of 265 sorties per day over Iraq and Afghanistan, with many days well over 300. These include close air support, armed reconnaissance, and ISR sorties, as well as almost all airlift and air refueling missions. The Air Force has lost Airmen in combat operations and suffered many wounded. Indeed, the Air Force is “all in.”

As the ground commitment in Iraq diminishes, the Air Force commitment will remain for a considerable time to ensure the security of the Iraqi people in the absence of a viable Iraqi Air Force.

The Air Force Association salutes all of our troops for their service. The sacrifices that our men and women make to fight our nation’s wars are testaments to their dedication and loyalty to America. This Association is especially proud of Air Force men and women—Active, Guard, Reserve, and civilian—for their sacrifices on behalf of our nation.

Veterans and Health Care: The Air Force Association recognizes the obligation we have to those who have honorably served and sacrificed on our behalf. We will continue to advocate for timely and reliable funding for the Department of Veterans Affairs and for the creation of a permanent DOD-VA Interagency Office to make the transition from DOD to VA seamless. AFA applauds DOD and VA efforts to institute a joint, bidirectional electronic health record system. This task is important and must succeed.

The Air Force Association will strongly oppose any effort to change Tricare. Tricare is an earned benefit that meets the unique demands of military service; it must not be taxed or folded into a national health care plan.

MODERNIZING AND RECAPITALIZING THE AIR FLEET

Equipping and Affordability: Perhaps the most important facet of supporting our men and women currently serving is ensuring the force is properly manned, equipped, and trained to win when called upon to fight.

The United States Air Force will grow to an active

force of approximately 332,000. AFA believes this figure may be too low, given the cost of sustaining aging systems at the expected operations tempo.

It is in the area of modernization that the strain of the past two decades is beginning to affect the Air Force the most. Many Air Force aircraft and satellites are simply aging out with no replacement in sight. DOD’s commitment to replace them is weaker than at any time since before World War II. This is not an issue of affordability, but priorities. *AFA advocates a minimum defense spending base of four percent of the national gross domestic product.*

AFA believes the Administration and Congress must provide for the common defense of the nation, both in today’s and tomorrow’s fights and, therefore, must adequately resource the Services.

Global Reach—Tankers and Airlift: New tankers are the Air Force’s number one acquisition priority for good reason: Global Reach can’t happen without in-flight refueling. Tankers are the key capability that differentiates our forces from all others. However, most of the tankers in the Air Force are now approaching a half-century old. It is an unsustainable situation.

AFA strongly advocates beginning the production of new tankers and urges Congress and the Administration to find a solution to the contract issues quickly and to begin building airplanes.

Transport is the other side of Global Reach. Demand for transport will continue to rise as the Army and Marine Corps grow, and the global mobility fleet is already fully engaged. The US fleet of cargo aircraft enables the regular and timely supply and resupply of our forces in far-away places. The C-5 aircraft are useful but aging. The C-5B/Cs are being modified for increased reliability. The C-17 has become the workhorse of the airlift fleet. AFA has long supported keeping its production line open, as it is the only military strategic transport still being built.

AFA urges continued acquisition of the C-17, modification of the C-5B/Cs, and the flexibility to retire the older C-5As.

Air Dominance—Fighters: Air dominance/air superiority is a core mission and core competency of the Air Force—one that is an absolute requirement for joint forces to operate successfully. The Air Force has done this so successfully that it is easy to take air dominance for granted.

The F-15 has been the air dominance cornerstone of our fighter force for the past 25 years. But the F-15’s days of dominating the skies are coming to an honorable

close. Other nations, particularly Russia and China, both with a track record of selling technologies indiscriminately to rogue and hostile regimes, are developing fifth generation fighters. Just as important is the growth in the number and capabilities of new generation surface-to-air missiles (SAMs), such as the Russian SA-20. These missiles' great range and tracking capabilities make them devastating weapons against conventional fourth-generation fighters.

To answer these threats, the Air Force endeavored to develop a modern high-low mix of fifth generation F-22s and F-35s. These aircraft are key components of the Air Force's future Air Superiority and Global Precision Attack. The F-22, optimized for the air dominance mission, is the high end of the mix. Unfortunately, the termination of the program short of the required production numbers will increase our risk to gain and maintain air dominance.

The F-35 is optimized for its air-to-ground capability. It will replace most of the remaining legacy fighters in today's inventory. This nation's dependence on the F-35 increases the importance of a robust production rate sufficient to replace fighters aging out of the fleet. A recent decision to retire almost 250 aging fighters makes that even more critical. Current procurement rates for the F-35 are insufficient, making the development of a fighter shortfall inevitable.

Concerns about the state of the Air Force's air dominance capabilities are real. We know how much today's ground forces have come to rely on the intelligence and close air support capabilities provided by today's Predator-class and large Remotely Piloted Aircraft. However, many do not realize that, except for limited degrees of stealth, these aircraft have essentially no ability to protect themselves from attack by enemy aircraft and SAMs. US forces must have air superiority, if not air dominance, in order to use these systems. Without enough modern fighters to control the skies over future battlefields, American Soldiers and Marines will lose the vital information and support these systems provide. That will translate into American lives lost.

AFA urges a more rapid production rate of the F-35s—enough to sustain the ANG Air Sovereignty Alert mission and to fill the fighter gap as F-15s, F-16s, and A-10s leave the fleet.

Long-Range Strike: Bombers provide a hedge against lack of access to forward bases, a capacity to respond quickly to contingencies, the ability to base outside the reach of adversary anti-access and area-denial capabilities, and the ability to hold hardened and deeply buried targets at risk,

anywhere on the globe. They provide a flexible means for extending strategic and extended deterrence into this century. They also are supplying the bulk of the on-call strike capability in Afghanistan.

The US bomber fleet, consisting of B-52s, B-1s, and B-2s, is the oldest it has ever been. Approximately 47 percent of the bomber fleet predates the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962. The fleet is also smaller than at almost any time in our history, with just 20 B-2s with the survivability to penetrate highly defended airspace. Of those, only 15 are combat-coded aircraft.

With the skies under US control, both the B-1B and the half-century-old B-52 have been of great use in Afghanistan and Iraq. But neither is stealthy, nor can they penetrate airspace controlled by the newest air defense systems. Under a conventional warfare scenario, they are effective as standoff weapons platforms only. Future conflicts will require aircraft that can penetrate heavily defended airspace that the current aircraft are not equipped to defend against.

The Administration has proposed deep cuts to the nuclear arsenal and delivery platforms, both ICBMs and bombers. The exact number of delivery systems allowable under these proposals is as yet unknown. *AFA urges caution to avoid diminishing the effectiveness of this vital deterrent and urges the necessary steps be taken to ensure this capability is sustainable.*

A new long-range strike platform has been an Air Force priority for years but development is now on hold. *AFA believes the program should be restarted. A decision to terminate or delay the next generation bomber will severely diminish the ability of the United States to project power on a global scale in the future.*

Unmanned Systems: The Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) has taken great leaps forward since its early uses in Bosnia. It is an integral part of daily operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. The term UAV, however, is a misnomer. The vehicle is really a Remotely Piloted Aircraft (RPA). It takes several operators and many intelligence analysts to fly and take advantage of the data that RPAs provide, often based half the globe away from the actual operation.

Demand for these aircraft—and the instant data and firepower provided to air and ground commanders—is on the rise. In our view, the Air Force is doing a great job managing these assets and in developing the policies, training, and operational capabilities of this force. The Air Force quickly recognized the potential in these systems, made the necessary commitment to their development and purchase,

and has shown innovation and flexibility in their operational growth. The Air Force has expanded its ISR force of manned and unmanned systems and plans to increase the number of RPA Combat Air Patrols (CAP) from 34 CAPs to 50 by the end of 2011. The Air Force will also increase funding for additional Global Hawks to provide high-altitude ISR and is developing new personnel requirements and training programs to develop RPA operators.

As rapidly as these capabilities are being developed, unmanned systems can operate only in a permissive air environment. The notion that they will replace manned fighters in conventional warfare is not realistic in the near to mid-term.

AFA strongly supports aggressive development and increased production of RPA technology to provide an asymmetric battlefield advantage against insurgent forces, and continued research that could lead to use of RPAs in other mission areas. Further, AFA urges the FAA to develop procedures so these aircraft can be flown within the US.

Space: Air Force-provided space assets are essential to all military operations and to the nation. They provide battlespace awareness, communications, missile warning, positioning and tracking capabilities, and precision weapon guidance. We must be able to maintain space superiority. This requires improving current technologies, developing new capabilities, and denying the military use of space to potential adversaries.

The US superiority in space is not a birthright. It is increasingly under challenge. China has proved the military capability to shoot down satellites. Because of this vulnerability, the US needs to maintain its accelerated pace for the Operationally Responsive Space (ORS) initiative, focused on meeting new requirements and providing new capabilities to the warfighter. However, this program needs additional funding to stay on schedule for launch in 2010.

Critical satellite production and a replenishment strategy are necessary, along with the capacity to provide launch on demand. *AFA urges Congress and the Administration to boost the funding for ORS to keep this vital system on schedule.*

Working satellites, debris, space weather, and radio frequency interference all affect our ability to use outer space effectively. Space situational awareness is the ability to know not only raw information about what is going on in space but also how it affects our use of space. It helps our operators understand the constantly changing space environment, counteract perceived threats, and adapt to threats,

thereby increasing and enhancing the efficient use of space.

Like our aging fleet of aircraft, US satellites are performing beyond their intended life span and will begin to age out soon. The US has no choice but to invest in space infrastructure to replace satellites. With the termination of the Transformational Satellite Communications System (TSAT) program, it is necessary to leverage the investment back into the Advanced Extremely High Frequency (AEHF) and Wideband Global SATCOM (WGS) satellite programs to provide additional capability.

AFA urges the Administration to place an increased emphasis on space capabilities and to robustly fund this critical mission area.

Cyberspace: Cyberspace is a current and future battlefield and a realm that demands constant vigilance and increased resources. To date, we've only seen the rudimentary capabilities of cyber warfare demonstrated around the globe. The potential disruption caused by cyber attacks has yet to be seen.

The nation must focus on developing the next generation of cyber security experts and capabilities now. The Air Force is prepared to take on the challenge of securing cyberspace by recruiting and training a force of cyber experts to face the challenges that lie ahead.

AFA applauds the Air Force's vision and innovation in creating 24th Air Force to provide trained and equipped forces to the new US Cyber Command. This decision was ahead of its time and validated by the US decision to establish the Joint Command for cyber.

The Nuclear Mission: The Air Force has vigorously restored its nuclear focus. The nuclear mission remains a vital global deterrent, and the entire free world relies on the US commitment to this immense responsibility. *AFA applauds the creation of Air Force Global Strike Command to provide operational continuity, consolidation of USAF nuclear sustainment activities within the Air Force Nuclear Weapons Center, and creation of a Directorate of Strategic Deterrence and Nuclear Integration to give institutional focus to this mission.*

Despite the near-universal desire for a nuclear-free world, this noble goal is certainly a long way off. Russia and the US have drastically cut strategic stockpiles, but both remain reliant on nuclear weapons for their security. China, India, Pakistan, and North Korea are steadily building their nuclear systems and others are actively seeking nuclear capability. *AFA cautions the Administration and Congress against large nuclear weapon reductions that will*

undermine our security.

It would be a mistake to allow warheads—long untested—to age beyond use or fail to replace them. We cannot rely forever on nuclear weapons designed and tested decades ago. *AFA urges Congress and the Administration to provide life extension programs that ensure safe, reliable, and secure nuclear weapons and the responsive production infrastructure to deter, assure, and provide stability.*

Finally, we must not only sustain the delivery systems and warheads for the foreseeable future, but just as importantly, the nuclear support equipment and infrastructure. Often neglected over the years, test equipment, vehicles, and other mission-critical hardware are fundamental to the nuclear mission. *AFA applauds the Comprehensive Assessment for Nuclear Sustainment (CANS) studies that identify critical sustainability needs and urges aggressive implementation of the findings.*

Personnel Rescue: It is our solemn, moral obligation to rescue downed or stranded personnel of all services. The future viability of this mission is threatened because the current Combat Search and Rescue (CSAR) helicopter fleet is nearing the end of its service life and lacks the survivability, operational utility, range, and payload required for today's combat operations.

The termination of the CSAR-X helicopter is disconcerting. Personnel rescue is not an ad hoc mission. It is a core function of the Air Force and requires specialized training for crews, precise coordination with support aircraft, and dedicated equipment designed for the mission. This mission, which benefits all the services, is a commitment we make with our men and women of the Armed Forces: We will not leave anyone behind.

Accomplishing that goal demands a trained, ready force that specializes in these highly complex rescue and recovery operations using the best equipment and most up-to-date helicopters. *AFA urges DOD to retain CSAR as a core Air Force mission and to field a replacement CSAR helicopter without delay.*

USAF Special Operations Forces (SOF): Air Force Special Operations Command (AFSOC) personnel and their capabilities are among the most in-demand in the Air Force. AFSOC AC-130, MC-130, EC-130, CV-22, Non-standard Aircraft, Combat Aviation Advisors, Battlefield Airmen, and RPA operators remain globally engaged. Additionally, during the past 12 months, AFSOC CV-22s began their first operational deployments providing one-of-a-kind capabilities to the warfighter. Demanding combat require-

ments continue to take a heavy toll on aging aircraft, requiring AFSOC to designate recapitalization of its fleet as its number one priority. For example, AFSOC's AC-130s are, on average, almost 30 years old. To address this critical concern, AFSOC is pursuing several initiatives to modernize, recapitalize, and balance the force. Initiatives include development of the Precision Strike Package consisting of a modular set of sensors, fire control systems, and weapons that could be installed on various aircraft types. *AFA believes SOF precision engagement airpower continues to be a priority in the 21st century.* Failure to prioritize SOF precision engagement airpower will result in additional and increasing unscheduled maintenance costs and potential grounding of critical combat aircraft. In addition, AFSOC continues to place a high priority on recapitalizing its MC-130 fleet while acquiring light and medium aircraft to address Combatant Commander (COCOM) austere mobility requirements in irregular warfare (IW) environments. Specially trained Combat Aviation Advisors continue to deploy around the globe, building relationships with partner nations, resulting in access, presence, persistence, and influence in regions which might otherwise fall to extremists. AFSOC Battlefield Airmen provide the critical link between SOF ground forces and the decisive effects airpower provides, while AFSOC's RPAs provide real-time unmatched ISR and close air support to warfighters. *AFA further believes the Administration must continue to support AFSOC's aircraft recapitalization and expanding IW capabilities, allowing AFSOC to continue to provide Combatant Commanders with the world's premier specialized airpower.*

Building Partnerships: Enhancing long-term capabilities through partnerships is a prominent piece of leveraging capabilities with fiscal realities. Air Force personnel are currently working with their Afghan and Iraqi counterparts to develop the Afghan National Army Air Corps and the Iraq Air Force. This Global Partnership Strategy will leverage allies and potential partners around the globe who are able to defend their own territories while ensuring interoperability and integration for future coalition operations. *AFA applauds the Global Partnership Strategy for developing partnerships with allies around the globe to better ensure our own national security.*

A VITAL INDUSTRIAL BASE

One of the deep concerns about the recent termination or delays in vital Air Force programs is the unknown reper-

cussions for our nation's industrial base.

The industrial base is a strategic military asset. It was a crucial component of the Allied victory in World War II and in prevailing in the Cold War.

The industrial base has contracted and consolidated in recent decades, until there are only one or two competent sources for the complex weapons systems that the Air Force needs. There are now fewer than 10 aerospace companies, down from more than 50 aerospace companies capable of competing for large programs before the spate of mergers in the 1990s. Once a company decides to exit the modern defense industrial base, the expense of re-entry is so high that the exit will likely be permanent. Competition in the aerospace sector is essential to getting the best products at the best price.

AFA strongly urges DOD to establish a strategic plan to define the elements of a robust defense industrial base and the steps needed to maintain that robustness. DOD also must make the investments necessary to ensure that the industrial base maintains the skills, the capacity, and the technologies to reliably and affordably meet the defense needs of our nation in the decades ahead.

EDUCATION IS OUR FOUNDATION

Much of the US strength in industry over the years has started in the classroom. AFA believes our future resides in the classrooms of America. The nation is short of scientists and engineers. The facts are these: Just over half—56 percent—of all science and engineering doctorates were awarded to US citizens. However, only 32 percent of engineering doctorates went to US citizens. Of those non-US citizens who earned doctorates, China (4,774) had the most; India second (1,742); then South Korea (1,648). And 54 percent of those who graduated with a job in hand planned to teach in universities.

We are rapidly approaching the time when we will be short of graduates with science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) degrees in this country. The aerospace industry is especially affected.

We have a national interest in promoting early learning in foundational studies, including science and math, and stimulating the development of the next generation of engineers, scientists, and technicians. We also must nurture our teachers—those who devote their lives to our youth.

There are many needs in this educational area; they will not be fixed quickly or by a single program. It will take a protracted focus by educators, Congress, and industry

leaders to begin making a real difference. Failure to support classroom STEM initiatives will result in the United States falling further behind our peer competitors and may result in losing our status as a superpower.

AFA applauds the steps that have been taken to encourage the study of these core subjects and urges continued attention to this problem by government, industry, and AFA's peer organizations. AFA will actively pursue its leadership role through education advocacy for programs such as DOD STARBASE, grants and scholarships, our CyberPatriot competition, and other education programs.

CONCLUSION

The American public expects its security and vital interests to be protected whenever and wherever they are threatened. The nation will not tolerate anything less, nor should we. When US Armed Forces go to war, Americans expect them to prevail. We must provide our brave men and women the equipment they need—in sufficient numbers—to protect our nation and themselves. In this respect, AFA believes our nation has been far too casual about the potential for a high-intensity clash of arms in an uncertain future. We cannot expect all fights of the future will look like the ones we're in today. The past 100 years have taught us that our next conflict is likely to be one we did not anticipate (or did not correctly anticipate) before it began.

We cannot wait for an imminent conflict to begin to modernize our Air Force. American service members will pay for these errors with their lives and their blood.

This is a critical time for the nation. We need a strong Air Force with flexible capabilities. The focus on today's conflicts must be balanced constantly with the future capability of the joint force. And, of course, air, space, and cyberspace dominance can never be taken for granted. *AFA declares that the United States must always possess a balanced Air Force—a truly balanced Air Force, that will not only help win today's wars, but also deter and, if necessary, win tomorrow's wars.*

In keeping with our mission and those who came before us, the members of the Air Force Association will work actively and aggressively to educate the public about airpower, advocate for air, space, and cyberspace power development, and support the total United States Air Force and aerospace education.

In this, we dare not fail.

NOTES

AIR FORCE ASSOCIATION TOP ISSUES FOR 2010

SUPPORTING OUR AIRMEN

- The Air Force Association salutes all of our troops for their service.
- The Air Force Association will strongly oppose any effort to change TRICARE.

RECAPITALIZING THE AGING FLEET

- Begin the production of new tankers.
- Continue acquisition of the C-17, modification of the C-5B/Cs, and gain the flexibility to retire the older C-5As.
- Increase the production rate of the F-35.
- Retain CSAR as a core Air Force mission and replace the CSAR helicopter.
- Take the necessary steps to ensure Long-Range Strike capability is sustainable.

STRENGTHENING THE NUCLEAR ENTERPRISE

- Provide a life extension program that ensures safe, reliable, and secure nuclear weapons to deter, assure, and provide stability.
- Caution the Administration and Congress against large nuclear weapon reductions that will undermine our security.

SECURING SPACE AND CYBERSPACE

- Place an increased emphasis on space capabilities and robustly fund this critical mission area.
- Focus on developing the next generation of cyber security experts and capabilities now.

DEVELOPING AIR FORCE PEOPLE; EDUCATING AIRPOWER PROFESSIONALS

- Invest in technical education to build the support foundation the nation needs.
- Continue and expand national programs encouraging the study of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.

INVESTING IN AIRPOWER

- Support a minimum defense spending base of four percent of the national gross domestic product.
- Urge DOD to establish a strategic plan to define the elements of a robust defense industrial base and the steps needed to maintain that robustness.

