

Strategic, Global, Mighty Changes

Lt. Gen. James M. Kowalski assumed duties as deputy commander of US Strategic Command at Offutt AFB, Neb., in late October. The Senate on Oct. 12 confirmed Kowalski's nomination for the post. President Obama had announced it in July.

Kowalski had led Air Force Global Strike Command at Barksdale AFB, La., since January 2011. At AFGSC, he had played an integral role in the command since its beginnings in January 2009.

Lt. Gen. Stephen W. Wilson assumed command from Kowalski. Wilson, who now oversees the nation's ICBM force and nuclear-capable bombers, received a third star for this assignment. He comes to AFGSC from Barksdale's 8th Air Force, having led it since June 2011.

Replacing Wilson at the helm of "The Mighty Eighth" is Maj. Gen. Scott A. Vander Hamm, who assumed command during a separate ceremony. He received his second star for the new post. The numbered air force manages the Air Force's nuclear-capable B-2 and B-52 bombers.

The Next "Next Tanker"

Even as the first KC-46A aerial tankers are taking shape at Boeing's assembly plant in Everett, Wash., the Air Force has begun defining requirements for the next leg of its 40-year air refueling recapitalization plan, according to Maj. Gen. John F. Thompson, program executive officer for tankers.

In an Oct. 28 interview, Thompson said the Air Force proposed spending some \$1 million in Fiscal 2014 and \$1.5 million in Fiscal 2015 to start "future tanker capabilities work" on the KC-Y.

Air Mobility Command and the Air Force Life Cycle Management Center are ready to do "prerequisites work so that we can begin to take a look at what KC-Y will do," said Thompson. The KC-Y will have to have "all the basic capabilities" of a tanker-airlifter, he said. The Air Force will also have to sort out such issues for KC-Y in coming years, as: "how close to contested airspace we'll fly [it], what sort of defensive systems do we need to have in it, what's the optimum altitude it will refuel at, [and] how much gas it should carry."


The service will recapitalize the KC-135 fleet in three increments: KC-X, KC-Y, and KC-Z. Previously, the KC-X and Y had been identified with replacing only the KC-135 and the KC-Z with supplanting the KC-10. Now, though, how the KC-10 will be recapitalized "has not been determined," a spokesman said.

Boeing is scheduled to deliver 179 KC-46s by 2027. To keep recapping the 1950s-vintage KC-135s without a break will mean the KC-Y needs to get going around 2025.

—John A. Tirpak

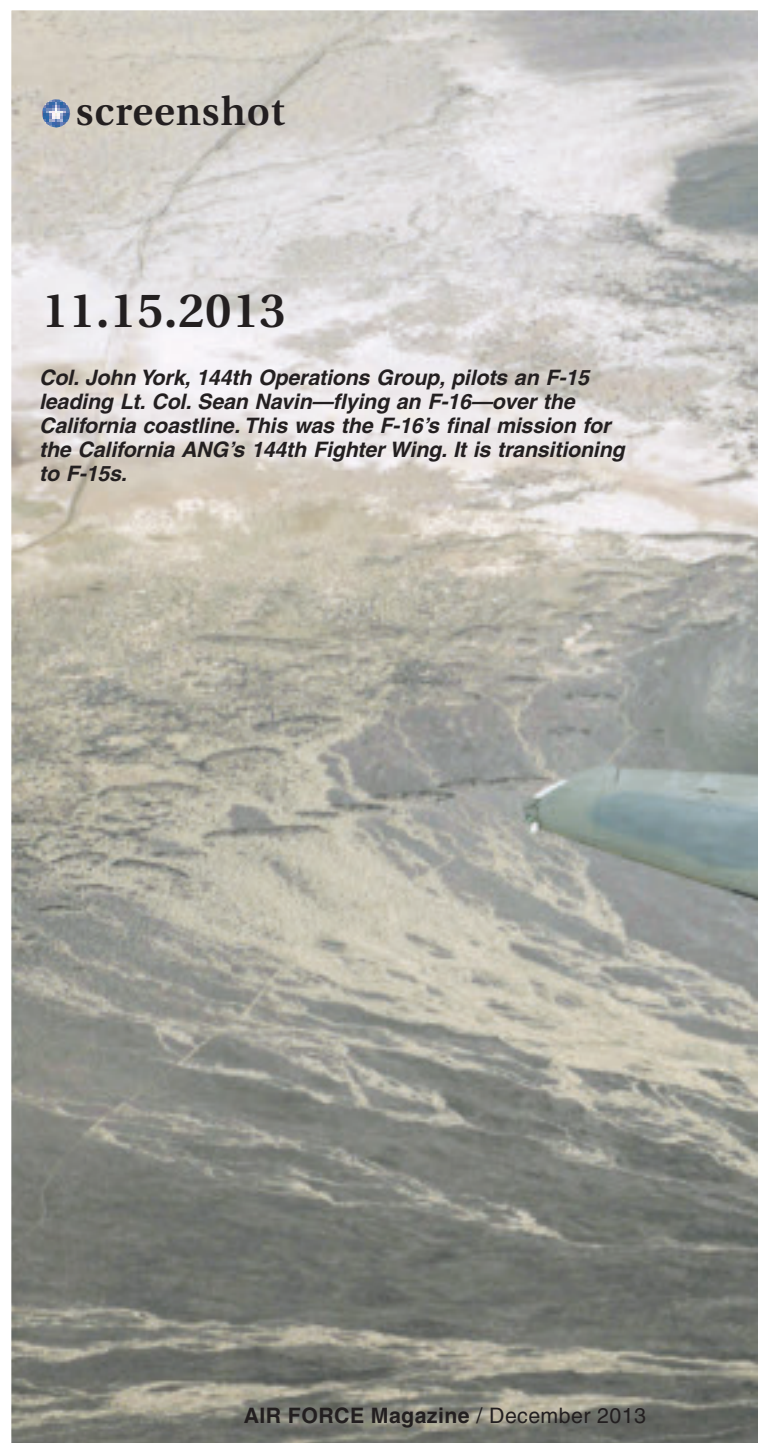
Acquisition-Reform Initiative

House Armed Services Committee Chairman Rep. Buck McKeon (R-Calif.) tapped HASC Vice Chairman Rep. Mac Thornberry (R-Tex.) and Ranking Member Rep. Adam Smith (D-Wash.) to lead a long-term effort to reform Defense Department acquisition.

 screenshot

11.15.2013

Col. John York, 144th Operations Group, pilots an F-15 leading Lt. Col. Sean Navin—flying an F-16—over the California coastline. This was the F-16's final mission for the California ANG's 144th Fighter Wing. It is transitioning to F-15s.



"We cannot afford a costly and ineffective acquisition system, particularly when faced with devastating impacts of repeated budget cuts and sequestration," said McKeon in announcing the initiative during an Oct. 29 HASC hearing on acquisition reform. McKeon said Congress and DOD must "look past Band-Aid fixes and parochial interests and have the courage to implement meaningful, lasting reform."

In an Oct. 29 opinion piece published on the Real Clear Defense website, Thornberry gave credit to Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel for the plan to cut 20 percent of DOD headquarters personnel over the next few years, but said that effort alone would not solve the "enormous" cost of the current acquisition system.

"It will take Republicans and Democrats, House and Senate, Defense Department and military services, industry and trade associations, as well as smart, experienced individuals in and out of government all working together to fix these problems," wrote Thornberry.

Jackson: Don't Merge Guard and Reserve

Lt. Gen. James Jackson, Air Force Reserve chief, urged members of the congressionally mandated commission studying the Air Force's structure not to advocate merging the Air National Guard and Reserve.

"I believe the nation benefits from the synergistic value of a three-component Air Force consisting of the Active Duty, Air Force Reserve, and Air National Guard," said Jackson in his Oct. 24 testimony in Arlington, Va. "I do not believe combining the AFR and ANG is beneficial or value-added to our nation," he said, noting the idea has surfaced "many times during the 65 years of our history, yet has never materialized."

The eight-member National Commission on the Structure of the Air Force is charged with making recommendations to Congress by Feb. 1 on how best to configure the Air Force to meet current and future mission requirements with available resources.



USAF photo by MSgt. David J. Loeffler

F-35A Training Squadron

Officials at Luke AFB, Ariz., reactivated the 61st Fighter Squadron, the first of six such units at the base that will train pilots to fly the F-35A strike fighter. The ceremony took place on Oct. 25, reported the *Arizona Republic*.

The unit, dubbed the "Top Dogs," is expected to receive its first F-35A in January and will be at full strength in about two years when it will have 24 F-35As, according to the newspaper.

Initially, the squadron will train the pilots who will serve as instructors at Luke. By 2015, the instructors are expected to begin training pilots who will go on to serve in F-35A combat-ready units. Overall, the Air Force plans to station up to 144 F-35As at Luke for pilot training, announced base officials back in June.

SR-72 Mach 6

Lockheed Martin's Skunk Works is developing an unmanned hypersonic strike aircraft called the SR-72 that is designed to travel at six times the speed of sound—twice the speed of the company's famed SR-71 Blackbird surveillance airplane, announced the company. The SR-72 could be operational by 2030, according to the company's Nov. 1 news release.

"Hypersonic aircraft, coupled with hypersonic missiles, could penetrate denied airspace and strike at nearly any location across a continent in less than an hour," said Brad Leland, Lockheed Martin's hypersonics program manager. "Speed is the next aviation advancement to counter emerging threats in the next several decades. The technology

Cruzin' in Brazil: A1C Antonio Garza readies an F-16 at Natal AB, Brazil. Six F-16s and a KC-135, along with more than 130 airmen, were in the country to participate in the multilateral exercise CRUZEX 2013. Several South American countries, the US, and Canada, are taking the opportunity to hone cooperation skills between forces.

Bucking the Trend

If the current drawdown in US military spending were to follow historical trends, the Defense Department would be spending—for "the first time in modern history"—more money on developing new technologies than in procuring equipment, said Todd Harrison, a senior fellow with the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments.

However, thus far during the downturn, which began in Fiscal 2010, the military is bucking that trend, he said, citing a new CSBA report during a media briefing in Washington, D.C. on Oct. 24. That's because the ratio of procurement funding to research, development, test, and evaluation funding actually has "steadily increased," meaning the Pentagon has cut RDT&E funding proportionately more than procurement funding, said Harrison.

Harrison noted the Pentagon's Fiscal 2014 budget request includes \$99 billion for procurement and \$68 billion for RDT&E. The largest procurement chunk, some \$33.8 billion, would go toward buying new aircraft, with the Air Force having \$10.8 billion of that.

The Pentagon also asked for \$16.5 billion in Fiscal 2014 for classified programs, "nearly all" of it for Air Force activities.

—Amy McCullough

would be a game-changer in theater, similar to how stealth is changing the battlespace today."

For the past several years, Skunk Works and Aerojet Rocketdyne have been developing a method to integrate an off-the-shelf turbine engine with a supersonic combustor.



USAF photo by S/A Camilla Elizeu

The War on Terrorism

Operation Enduring Freedom

Casualties

By Nov. 18, a total of 2,290 Americans had died in Operation Enduring Freedom. The total includes 2,287 troops and three Department of Defense civilians. Of these deaths, 1,796 were killed in action, while 494 died in noncombat incidents.

There have been 19,475 wounded in action during OEF.

First C-130H Mission

Just one day after receiving its first two C-130H airplanes, the Afghan air force conducted its first C-130H operational mission, according to NATO air advisors in Kabul.

Advisors accompanied the AAF's first two C-130 pilots on the flight from Kabul International Airport to Kandahar Airfield on Oct. 10, bringing several pallets of main landing gear parts for Mi-17 helicopters, along with maintenance gear and office supplies for the AAF's Kandahar Air Wing, according to an October news release from the advisors.

"The fact that we already have the C-130s flying ... is a big step," said Maj. Chris Garcia, a coalition advisor. The C-130s will be the mainstay of AAF airlift capability.

Before their arrival, the Afghans relied on C-208s and Mi-17s for aerial transport.

Manas Winds Down

The US military has begun the process of relocating from the Transit Center at Manas, Kyrgyzstan, and plans to complete the transfer of Manas back to the Kyrgyz government by July 2014 when the lease agreement for use of facilities there expires, announced the Defense Department.

The Kyrgyz government has hosted the TCM for more than 12 years, according to DOD's Oct. 18 release. The handover of Manas—an important air mobility hub for the movement of US military personnel and equipment into and out of Afghanistan—is scheduled to be completed a half-year before the pullout of US combat forces from Afghanistan is done. To compensate for the loss of Manas, Romania has stepped up.

Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel and Romania's Defense Minister Mircea Dusa on Oct. 18 finalized an agreement in Washington, D.C., for Romania to support that flow of US forces, according to a separate statement.

Over the past few years, the US military has been testing the feasibility of using Mihail Kogalniceanu Air Base in southeastern Romania near the Black Sea as a hub for that purpose.

Post-2014 Afghan Training Mission

NATO's planning for Resolute Support—the Afghan training mission that will commence following the end of the Alliance's combat operations in Afghanistan in 2014—is on track, said Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel in October at NATO headquarters in Brussels. Hagel emphasized the importance of quickly completing a bilateral security agreement with the Afghan government.

NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen told reporters Oct. 23 that Afghan forces are now leading more than 1,000 security patrols a day—most without any support from NATO forces.

"All this will put them in a strong position as they prepare to assume full responsibility for security at the end of 2014," he said.

Closing Down FOB Salerno

Six airmen assigned to the 744th Expeditionary Airlift Squadron at Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan, plus their C-130, recently helped close down Forward Operating Base Salerno in eastern Afghanistan by flying out the last US military personnel from there, according to an Oct. 29 Bagram news release.

"This mission was unique," said SSgt. Matt Pockette, C-130 loadmaster with the unit. "We had to deal with people walking up to the aircraft at the last minute to get on with extra baggage and cargo."

Overall, the C-130 lifted out 250 passengers, two all-terrain vehicles, and 2,500 pounds of baggage from Salerno, nicknamed "Rocket City" for the number of rocket attacks it endured.

tion ramjet to power the SR-72 from standstill to Mach 6. The SR-72 design leverages the company's work on the DARPA Falcon program that flight-tested the rocket-launched Hypersonic Technology Vehicle 2.

Building Better Generals

More than a decade of fighting two unconventional wars has "poorly" prepared today's general officer corps for future fights, according to a report from the Center for a New American Security.

"Twelve years at war in the unconventional conflicts of Iraq and Afghanistan have distorted the skills of the officer corps and much reduced the time that has been available for professional military education and broadening assignments," stated the report, issued in late October. As such, the United States must "redouble efforts to strengthen its current and future military leaders," it continued.

The report's authors suggested coding all two- and three-star billets either as "operational" or "enterprise" billets. This "would enable officers to optimize their development and education for the responsibilities of their assignment."

The report also suggested officers in the operational track attend a new "US higher command and staff course that emphasizes strategic and political-military skills." Those in

By the Numbers

2,500

the number of military working dogs on duty across DOD today.

430

the number of military dogs that leave the service each year.

90

the percentage of retired service dogs adopted by former handlers.



Source: 37th Training Wing Public Affairs Office, JBSA-Lackland, Tex.



Pull!: Capt. Charles Trovarello fires an M203 during weapons training on Nov. 3. The M203 is a single-shot 40 mm grenade launcher that attaches to a rifle and uses the same rounds as the older, stand-alone M79 break-action grenade launcher.

the enterprise track should attend business schools and corporate or executive leadership courses.


Teaming Up for Future Bomber

Boeing and Lockheed Martin will compete as a team to build the Air Force's Long-Range Strike Bomber, with Boeing as the team leader and Lockheed Martin as the follower.

The two companies "are bringing together the best of the two enterprises and the rest of industry" for the competition, said Dennis A. Muilenberg, Boeing Defense, Space, and Security president and CEO, in an Oct. 25 news release. The team will reduce risk on the program, he said, "by leveraging mature technologies and integrating existing systems."

The two companies teamed up to compete to supply the next generation bomber in 2008, but the arrangement went on hiatus after then-Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates in 2009 canceled the project.

A Boeing spokesman said on Oct. 25 the only item carried over from the earlier arrangement is the Boeing-Lockheed Martin leader-follower arrangement. The companies scrapped the rest and inked a new deal. The Air Force has forbidden the companies to say any more, such as the work share between them, said the Boeing spokesman.

 Read more about the teaming arrangement on www.airforcemag.com. Search "Together Again: Why Now?"

UN Security Council Rejection

Saudi Arabia rejected a seat on the United Nations Se-





Inhofe Press Office @InhofePress

"For members of SASC, participating in the upcoming briefings & hearings is a critical 1st step. Some1 should take attendance." -@JJCarafano
<<https://twitter.com/JJCarafano>>



CSBA @CSBA_

"Gen Dempsey: 'We can't pay [our soldiers] enough. Having said that, we also have an institution to manage.'
[excerpt from a *Wall Street Journal* article]

curity Council just hours after the UN General Assembly elected it, for the first time, to serve as one of the council's 10 nonpermanent members. In justifying the October decision, the Saudi foreign ministry said the Security Council was not capable of resolving global conflicts, such as the Syrian civil war, reported the Associated Press.

Saudi Arabia backs Syrian opposition forces in the two-and-a-half-year civil war and has criticized the international community for failing to stop the fighting that has claimed the lives of more than 100,000 people, according to UN figures. The Saudi snub to the Security Council came as a surprise to UN diplomats, since the Saudis had been lobbying for a seat right up until the General Assembly's vote, AP said.

"So Help Me God" Optional at Academy

The Air Force Academy will no longer require cadets to recite the final clause of the honor oath that mentions God, according to an academy release.



Lockheed Martin photo

US Rep. Ike Skelton, 1931-2013

Isaac Newton Skelton IV, a 34-year congressman from the 4th congressional district of Missouri and former chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, died Oct. 28, 2013.

Skelton, an attorney, was elected to the Missouri Senate in 1970. In 1976 he won election to the US House of Representatives and was returned to his seat 17 times by comfortable margins. Recognized by fellow members for his authoritative knowledge of military history and defense issues, he served as chairman of the HASC from 2007 until 2010, when he lost his House seat to Vicky Hartzler (R).

Skelton was an early supporter of the B-2 bomber. He got fellow Democrats to back it, and it was bedded down at Whiteman AFB, Mo., largely due to his efforts. He was also instrumental in steering functions to Ft. Leonard Wood, Mo., quadrupling its manpower during his tenure.

A conservative Democrat, Skelton opposed gun control and abortion and voted against the Affordable Care Act, but was nonetheless ousted by the Tea Party-backed Hartzler. On leaving the House, he went to work for the national law firm of Husch Blackwell.

In 2012, Skelton received West Point's highest honor, the Thayer Award, for his public service and as "an outstanding citizen whose service and accomplishments in the national interests exemplify the Military Academy motto, 'Duty, Honor, Country.'" He was also a presidential appointee to the American Battle Monuments Commission and the World War I Centennial Commission.

—John A. Tirpak

"We work to build a culture of dignity and respect, and that respect includes the ability of our cadets, airmen, and civilian airmen to freely practice and exercise their religious preference—or not," said Lt. Gen. Michelle D. Johnson, academy superintendent, in the Oct. 25 news release. "So in the spirit of respect, cadets may or may not choose to finish the honor oath with, 'So help me God.'"

The oath reads: "We will not lie, steal, or cheat, nor tolerate among us anyone who does. Furthermore, I resolve to do my duty and live honorably, so help me God." The academy's Class of 1959 adopted the first sentence of the oath, the cadet's honor code. In 1984, the Cadet Wing expanded the oath—after widespread allegations of cheating among some cadets—by adding the second sentence, stated the release.

Pilot Receives DFC With Valor

Capt. Charles C. Napier received the Distinguished Flying Cross with Valor Device for his heroic actions piloting an HH-60G helicopter during a rescue mission in Afghanistan in December 2012.

Col. Ginger L. Wallace, 517th Training Group commander at the Defense Language Institute in Monterey, Calif., pre-

Playing Hide the Bogey: An F-35 over an off-coast military test range executes the aircraft type's first live-fire launch of a guided air-to-air missile on Oct. 30. The AIM-120 was fired from the USAF version of the Lightning, acquired the target, and successfully followed an intercept flight profile. With only moments left before the missile engaged the target, a self-destruct signal was sent to the AIM-120 so that the drone target could be preserved for further tests.

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sented Napier with the medal during an Oct. 17 ceremony at the school, where Napier is now a student, according to an institute release.

Napier is credited with saving the lives of three critically wounded soldiers in an Afghan village west of Kandahar by skillfully maneuvering his HH-60 into firing position just 60 feet away from the enemy, shielding friendly forces from enemy fire, and allowing a second HH-60 to land pararescuemen to retrieve the wounded, stated the release.

"That is what we are trained to do. We help people who are in harm's way," said Napier.

Clapper on Surveillance Activities

James R. Clapper Jr., national intelligence director, defended US intelligence operations before the House Select Intelligence Committee, deeming them "lawful."

"The rigorous oversight we've operated under has been effective," said Clapper during the Oct. 29 oversight hearing. Committee members met to discuss potential amendments

to the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act and changes to National Security Agency programs in response to public concern regarding government surveillance practices unveiled by former NSA contractor Edward Snowden.

Clapper said the "manner" that some have characterized these intelligence activities has been "incomplete, inaccurate, or misleading."

"What we do not do is spy unlawfully on Americans or ... spy indiscriminately on the citizens of any country," he asserted. "We only spy for valid foreign intelligence purposes as authorized by law, with multiple layers of oversight to ensure we don't abuse our authorities."

The hearing took place on the same day that Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Sen. Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.) and Rep. Jim Sensenbrenner (R-Wis.), chairman of the House Judiciary Committee's crime, terrorism, homeland security, and investigations panel, introduced the US Freedom Act. That legislation would end the government's "dragnet" collection of phone records and require greater oversight of domestic surveillance activities.

CAP's New Structure

The Civil Air Patrol, the Air Force's auxiliary, is restructuring its noncommissioned officer corps to mirror the Air Force's NCO corps. With this change, CAP will be able to develop and promote its NCOs through its ranks in a promotion system similar to the Air Force's, according to an Oct. 21 release.

"The NCO corps is the backbone of any organization and brings a wealth of information to the table," said Maj. Gen. Charles L. Carr Jr., CAP national commander. Daniel B. Ginsberg, the Air Force's assistant secretary for manpower and reserve affairs, added, "It is no small task to create a framework for a professional volunteer force, and I'm very proud of the way everyone came together to create a workable proposal."

CAP's previous NCO setup did not allow for upgrade training for promotion. ■

Cold War Relic

It wouldn't serve US nuclear deterrence—or nonproliferation—goals to modernize the B83 nuclear gravity bomb in place of the B61, senior Defense Department and Energy Department officials told lawmakers in late October.

The megaton-class B83 is a "relic of the Cold War," Madelyn R. Creedon, assistant secretary of defense for global strategic affairs, told the House Armed Services Committee's strategic forces panel on Oct. 29. "We need the '61" for maintaining a credible, forward deployed tactical nuclear weapon for NATO and also for extending the US nuclear umbrella to protect allies in Asia, she said.

"The B61 is the best of the choices to go forward," said Gen. C. Robert Kehler, head of US Strategic Command, at the same hearing.

Creedon and Kehler were responding to questioning from Rep. John Garamendi (D-Calif.), who argued it might make sense to invest in keeping the comparatively newer B83 viable instead of the B61, one of the oldest nuclear weapons in the US stockpile. Garamendi was concerned about the estimated cost—more than \$10 billion—of the Obama Administration's planned B61-12 life extension program (LEP).

He also questioned the need for maintaining tactical nuclear weapons in Europe. "If the B83 is good with some repairs over the next decade or more, why do we need the B61?" he asked.

Kehler answered that the B61 is the only nuclear bomb "that can arm both the B-2 bomber and dual-capable fighter

aircraft deployed by the US and NATO in Europe" as part of the Alliance's nuclear mission. Further, the B61 is the candidate nuclear weapon for the F-35 strike fighter and the future US bomber, he said.

The B83 could arm the B-2. However, "the B83 is not currently compatible with NATO aircraft, nor with [US] fighters," said Donald L. Cook, the National Nuclear Security Administration's deputy administrator for defense programs.

The B61-12 LEP would refresh components of the 1960s-vintage B61 and replace the different bomb variants with the single B61-12 configuration.

Completing the B61-12 LEP would enable the United States to retire the B83, the last megaton-class gravity bomb in the US inventory, said Cook. This would make the B61-12 the only nuclear gravity bomb in the US inventory. That's part of the Obama Administration's broader nuclear modernization strategy—reducing to fewer nuclear warheads, yet ones that are safer, more reliable, and more secure.

Cook said maintaining the B83 inventory over the long term, including tasks such as integrating the bomb on additional aircraft types in lieu of the updated B61, "would be considerably more expensive" than a B61 life extension.

—Michael C. Sirak



Read the full article at www.airforcemag.com. Search "Cold War Relic."

J. Robinson Risner, 1925-2013

James Robinson Risner, a Korean War ace who gained world attention as a Vietnam War combat pilot and leader of fellow prisoners of war in the infamous “Hanoi Hilton” during more than seven years of captivity, died Oct. 22 at the age of 88. He was the first living recipient of the Air Force Cross and one of only a handful of airmen to be awarded the medal twice.

Risner's gutsy airmanship led to noteworthy victories, but he also helped create a code of conduct for POWs that endures to this day.

Born in Mammoth Spring, Ark., in 1925, Risner grew up in Oklahoma, the son of a sharecropper. At 18, he enlisted as an aviation cadet in the Army, receiving his wings and commission in May 1944. Though he requested World War II combat duty, he was assigned to fly fighters in Panama.

Risner mustered out in 1946 and worked in several automotive jobs. He joined the Oklahoma Air National Guard, however, and became an active F-51 Mustang pilot. Recalled to Active Duty in 1951, he learned to fly the F-80 Shooting Star and requested duty in Korea.

Soon after arriving there in 1952, he finagled a transfer to the 4th Fighter Wing and was assigned to fly the F-86 Sabre. He bagged his first MiG on Aug. 15, 1952. A month later, while escorting a strike package of F-84 Thunderjets, Risner pursued a MiG 35 miles into China, ultimately shooting it down over a Chinese air base.

In September 1952, Risner shot down a fifth MiG and became an ace, ultimately receiving credit for eight air-to-air kills by the end of January 1953, having flown 108 missions in Korea.

Receiving a regular commission, Risner took on a number of assignments as an operations officer and squadron commander, both Stateside and in West Germany. Chosen to fly an F-100F to Paris for the 30th anniversary of Lindbergh's solo flight across the Atlantic, Risner set an unofficial domestic speed record, coast-to-coast, and then another record across the Atlantic. He made two air-to-air refuelings—then a novelty.

After the Air War College and Pacific Command staff duty, in 1964 he took command of the 67th Tactical Fighter Squadron at Kadena AB, Okinawa, and soon led a flight of seven F-105D Thunderchiefs to Da Nang AB, South Vietnam, on temporary combat assignment. From the beginning, he was

an aggressive pilot, dropping two bridges on an early mission when he'd been ordered to destroy only one; he simultaneously got an Air Medal and a reprimand.

On another temporary deployment, this time to Korat AB, Thailand, Risner led the first strike of the Rolling Thunder air campaign, on March 2, 1965. Two weeks later, he took heavy damage on a mission and had to bail out over the Gulf of Tonkin, but was rescued.

On April 3 and 4, he led back-to-back missions against a railroad bridge—action that earned him his first Air Force Cross. Risner repeatedly pressed the attack, withstanding heavy enemy air and ground fire, directing the battle at low altitude, and flying on despite a damaged aircraft and smoke in the cockpit. Two weeks later, partly due to these heroics, Risner appeared on the cover of *Time* magazine. In continuing combat, Risner was hit repeatedly.

In September 1965, Risner was shot down a second time, while attacking a surface-to-air missile site in North Vietnam. This time, he was captured. Having seen the *Time* cover, the North Vietnamese knew they had a prize and treated Risner especially badly, trying to coerce information and propagandistic statements from him. During his seven years and four months in their hands, he endured prolonged solitary confinement, subsisted for months on bread and water, and was tortured—sometimes daily.

As senior officer among the POWs in the “Hanoi Hilton,” he held isolated prisoners together with optimism and faith, many of them later said. Organizing a forbidden prayer service in 1971, Risner was dragged away for more torture. Fellow prisoner George E. Day stood up and led the other POWs in singing “The Star-Spangled Banner” to encourage him. Risner heard the singing and later said it made him feel “nine feet tall.”

Ultimately, the torture became too much, and Risner was made to sign an “apology” for bombing North Korea. He instructed his fellow prisoners that they should resist but not endure torture beyond the point where “you lose your capability to think ... [or] lose the permanent use of your limbs.”

For his courage under torture and for establishing an honorable standard of resistance, he received a second Air Force Cross. The torture continued until 1973. He was among the first group of POWs released, on Feb. 12.

He emerged from captivity with few permanent physical injuries, and talked the Air Force into letting him fly again. He flew the F-4E Phantom and became commander off the 832nd Air Division. Promoted to brigadier general, his last uniformed job was as vice commander of the Fighter Weapons Center at Nellis AFB, Nev., where he ran early incarnations of the Red Flag series of exercises. He retired in 1976.

In retirement, Risner led Texas' war on drugs. He wrote a memoir, *The Passing of the Night*, about his POW experiences.

His friend, Ross Perot Sr., commissioned a statue of Risner that today stands at the Air Force Academy. Day, speaking at the dedication, called the statue—which is nine feet tall—“life size.”

—John A. Tirpak



See www.airforcemag.com. Search “Nine Feet Tall.”