

## Evaluating the Threat

In July's editorial ["*The Strategy's Last Stand?*" p. 2], you presented a long-needed, cogent statement on strategy. In today's political climate, it appears that it is not only the politicians who demonstrate that their only concern is "defense costs" but the civilian leaders of the Defense Department and the Joint Chiefs of Staff officers as well. The Air Force is under attack in the misguided belief that it is the Army and the Marines, with a modest reference to the Navy's patrol of the Gulf and Indian Oceans, that are protecting the United States and its "strategic" allies.

None of us, retirees, businessmen and women, active duty members of the military, or politicians, can safely disregard the threats that our beloved nation faces.

The evaluation of the threat cannot, safely, be predicated upon evaluating its cost. This nation's survival is dependent upon the dedication of its leaders to live up to their oaths of office—to protect and defend the Constitution of the United States. In this Quadrennial Defense Review, it is even more important to honestly evaluate the risks we face and recommend the force that is required to counter it.

History shows the effectiveness of our "triad" of land-based intercontinental ballistic missiles, bombers, and submarines firing strategic missiles. To that mix, the United States successfully promoted the need to counter the missile threat from others with a defensive system that is just beginning to be effective. Now is not the time to relinquish superiority, especially with respect to our strategic forces and weapons.

Lt. Col. Richard J. Christofferson,  
USAF (Ret.)  
Guilford, Conn.

## Fighter of the Future

As a Project Management Institute-certified project management professional, I read with amazement that the Pentagon's director of portfolio systems acquisition, David G. Ahern, used "percent complete" as a measure of project deliverable or phase completion ["*Fighter of the Future*," July, p. 22]. PMPs who hear that metric from project team members are trained to retort with, "Percent of what?" since execution of

complex projects is rarely linear. This fully explains the F-35's cost increases and schedule delays.

MSGt. Rick Brumble,  
ANG (Ret.)  
Hillsboro, Ore.

## Into the History Books

I read with great interest your recent Predator article ("How the Predator Grew Teeth," July, p. 42). It really helped fill in some of the gaps between my experiences and the rest of the story. A career airfield ops officer, I was lucky to get a fair share of early "Predator stink" on me as operations officer with the provisional operations squadron at Taszar AB, Hungary, where early Predators were based in 2006.

During my rather austere deployed experience at Taszar, I was involved firsthand with what you described as the Predator's "inauspicious start." I believe it was at Taszar that the Army officially transferred the program to the Air Force, with USAF Maj. Gen. Ken Israel, the then director of the Defense Airborne Reconnaissance Office, on hand to make the appropriate historical remarks and cut the cake.

It was a fledgling UAV cadre of military and contractors, led by then-Maj. Phil Pearson, the deployed operations officer from the new 15th Reconnaissance Squadron at Indian Springs, who were faced with the daunting task of standing up the operation literally from scratch, after the handoff. As the host Air Force unit, we joined with the cadre to scrape together tents, computers, furniture, cell phones, radios, vehicles, etc.—everything needed to set up and maintain day-to-day operations.

Do you have a comment about a current article in the magazine? Write to "Letters," *Air Force Magazine*, 1501 Lee Highway, Arlington, VA 22209-1198. (E-mail: letters@afa.org.) Letters should be concise and timely. We cannot acknowledge receipt of letters. We reserve the right to condense letters. Letters without name and city/base and state are not acceptable. Photographs cannot be used or returned.—THE EDITORS

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**To educate the public about the critical role of aerospace power in the defense of our nation.**

**To advocate aerospace power and a strong national defense.**

**To support the United States Air Force and the Air Force family and aerospace education.**

### Letters

We had a large cloth "hangar" on the field, where the transfer ceremony occurred, which served to house both the aircraft and maintainers. A taxiway was constructed out of wood, to enable the UAVs to be towed from the hangar to the paved surface for engine start, followed by taxi and takeoff.

Initial missions amounted to launches out of Taszar, then a flight south for an extended loiter in the "the box" over Bosnia, followed by a hoped-for recovery back at Taszar. Unlike in the US, our air traffic controllers treated Predators pretty much like any other aircraft, although with special consideration for their comparatively low airspeeds.

Had I only known at the time where the Predator was headed in the history books, I'd have taken pictures and secured some souvenirs.

Col. Bill Malec  
Scott AFB, Ill.

Walter Boyne's article in July's edition of *Air Force Magazine*, "How the Predator Grew Teeth," was an especially revealing documentary of the innovative abilities of American ingenuity. As has happened so many times in our history, success became the mother of invention as commanders, leaders, engineers, technicians, pilots, former pilots, and almost everyone else contributed to the success of proving a new weapons system for the Air Force and for our nation.

And the leaders of our Air Force Association did not err when they presented the prestigious Member of the Year award to then-Lt. Col. James G. "Snake" Clark at the 1993 AFA National Convention. I remember, as then-AFA President Jim McCoy introduced Colonel Clark to the audience, he remarked, "I'm just not used to calling a senior Air Force Officer 'Snake,'" but here he is, ladies and gentlemen, your Member of the Year, Lt. Col. James G. 'Snake' Clark!" Everyone laughed and applauded.

I'm sure that all of AFA joins me in toasting Snake for his brilliant success in weaponizing the Predator!

Ivan L. McKinney  
Bossier City, La.

### The Mayaguez Rescue

Your recent article on the Mayaguez missed some key details on the involvement of F-111 aircraft from the 347th Fighter Wing, at Korat Royal Thai Air Base [*"The Mayaguez Rescue," July, p. 68*]. In fact, it was F-111s that were initially tasked to conduct a search for the *Mayaguez*, based on their long-range ability; the ship was located by an F-111 crew, and a handheld picture taken that was verified and began the mission planning. As you correctly note,

Air Force security police were initially tasked until a tragic helicopter crash.

The mission focused on locating the ship's crew and preventing the enemy from leaving the island with the captured crew while the air assault forces were gathered and the attack plan finalized. I flew as part of a two-ship F-111 formation that launched around 3 a.m. from Korat Royal Thai Air Base, armed with 2,000-pound bombs. We arrived at Koh Tang, and were able to spend time in the target area while other aircraft were forced to retire for lack of fuel. We were ordered to drop our bombs in front of several small boats trying to leave the island, and that was successful (a 2,000-pound bomb makes a big splash)—the boats turned back.

It was an ideal mission for the F-111, flying from Korat to the target area and returning with ordnance and without refueling. The F-111s from the 347th played a key role in finding the ship and stopping enemy boats from escaping the island, while the mission unfolded.

Lt. Col. Steve Altick,  
USAF (Ret.)  
Auburn, Wash.

I read the article on "The *Mayaguez* Rescue" by George M. Watson Jr. In addition to the USAF aircraft listed in the article, the 432nd Tactical Reconnaissance Wing was based at Udorn RTAB, Thailand, with four fighter squadrons (4th, 13th, 25th, and 421st TFS) and one reconnaissance squadron (14th TRS).

The 432nd TRW was an active player in the *Mayaguez* incident. I was privileged to be No. 2 in a four-ship of F-4s, call sign Dallas. The flight leader was our 13th TFS commander, Lt. Col. Benoni Nowland. We each carried two Mk 84s (2,000-pound bombs).

Air cover for our four-ship was provided by the US Navy. We took off from Udorn, aerial refueled, and set up orbit near Koh Tang. Our flight leader directed No. 3 and 4 to return to base due to fuel.

We were cleared to expend ordnance on Koh Tang and released both Mk 84s. We recovered at U Tapao Royal Thai Air Base and returned to Udorn. Needless to say, the ground support crews were elated that we returned minus the ordnance.

I have read several articles on the *Mayaguez* incident, and each one has omitted the role of the 432nd TRW. Perhaps historians can research this and correct the record.

Col. John W. Zink,  
USAF (Ret.)  
Flagstaff, Ariz.

Usually when *Air Force Magazine* publishes a historical account, someone will write in with a minor correction. I don't have a minor correction, I have a major addition. The author of "The *Mayaguez* Rescue" completely ignored and failed to mention the efforts of the F-111As in the recovery of the container ship. I know: I was there, at Korat Royal Thai Air Base, as commander of F-111A squadron, 428th TFS.

In the early afternoon of May 12, 1975, Col. Russ Thoburn, commander of the 347th TFW, called me to his office and tasked my squadron with sending an F-111 down to the Gulf of Siam "to look for a US ship that is missing." I, in turn, tasked my acting ops officer, Lt. Col. Roger Bogard, and his navigator, Maj. Ken Law, for the mission. They launched and after searching, found the ship anchored just off Koh Tang, with no steam up. Lieutenant Colonel Bogard and Major Law reported the discovery to 7th Air Force headquarters (the F-111 crew's discovery was covered in an issue of *Airman Magazine*). It was only some years after the fact that the Navy stepped forward to claim discovery. If the Navy had actually discovered the ship, they should have told someone.

One of our squadron pilots, Capt. Paul Reichel, provided a camera and film for the crew, and Ken Law took

many photos of the ship, dead in the water. The following day, those photographs were published in every major newspaper in the world.

Also forgotten was that Capt. Gil Bertleson, 428th TFS, provided "pathfinder" duties for the C-130 and called the drop of the 15,000-pound BLU-82 expended by the Spectre gunship. I understand the hole that the BLU-82 made on Koh Tang can still be seen today.

So, an F-111 found the *Mayaguez*, and we had F-111s over the container ship 24 hours a day, some expending ordnance, some not, for the entire period of the incident. The last airplane over the ship as it steamed away was an F-111—and we didn't even get a footnote.

Col. Lester G. Frazier,  
USAF (Ret.)  
Georgetown, Tex.

### **Playing With Fire**

Just to set the story straight regarding "Playing With Fire," July, p. 32): [On] Nov. 12, 2001, two F-15E Strike Eagles, call sign Croquette 51, departed Kuwait and were retasked multiple times over Afghanistan. All told, these two aircraft and four airmen dropped 16 GBU-12, 500-pound LGBs and took out multiple Taliban and top al Qaeda leadership targets, while logging an incredible

15.6-hour duration (the longest fighter combat sortie in history).

From mid-October 2001 to early January 2002, the 391st Fighter Squadron "Bold Tigers" flew more than 200 sorties from Kuwait to Afghanistan, totaling over 2,200 combat hours (mostly at night with night vision goggles) for an average sortie duration of 10.6 hours; they dropped over 450,000 pounds of precision guided munitions in less than 90 days. (The typical loadout was nine GBU-12s per aircraft.) This was accomplished with 122 aircraft, 36 crew members, and fewer than 200 maintainers. To put this many hours on this few aircraft, the Bold Tiger maintainers performed an impossible 17 full-phase inspections in 69 days, in a place not equipped to do so.

As improbable as this story is (Tom Clancy could have crafted a tale in the '90s about USAF fighters taking off from Kuwait and bombing Afghanistan night after night, and no one would have believed it!), it would not have been possible without massive and well-coordinated tanker support. A typical two-ship F-15E mission required over 300,000 pounds of aerial refueling. A single KC-135 could offload only about 80K over Afghanistan. This mission required multiple 135s and the Strike Eagle pilot's best friend, the KC-10 (which could offload 220 to 280K). The typical refueling profile for two Strike Eagles was this: Meet a single 135 over the Gulf about 90 minutes after takeoff, follow him to PAKSOUTH for about an hour, and take all the fuel he had and send him home. Then meet up with a KC-10 over Afghanistan, direct the 10 to "follow us" (you could always tell when a new tanker crew rotated in; they would say, "But there's no tanker track over there!") for about the next four hours; then when his fuel was gone, meet with one more 135 over the Gulf, top off, push it up, and go home.

Sometimes it took another KC-135 or part of a second KC-10's offload to get the mission done. The tanker guys were great during this campaign—there is nothing better than joining on a USAF tanker when you are low on gas, there are "troops in contact," and the nearest friendly base is 500 miles to the south. There is no doubt that USAF is way behind in revitalizing the "force enabler" of the aerial tanker. We need to buy the KC-10/30/767/777 or whatever now.

Lt. Col. James C. Gunn,  
USAF (Ret.)  
Horseshoe Bend, Idaho

Rather than focusing KC-135 tanker replacement on widebody types such as the 767 and A330, which would logically be considered more as replacements for the widebody KC-10

than the narrow body KC-135, has it occurred to anyone to consider a variant of another airframe already in the military inventory in the form of the 737-700-based C-40 or 737-800-based P-8A? An AEW & C variant also already exists with foreign air arms as well (Australia and Turkey). The latest 737 variant (737-900ER) has a gross weight of 60 percent of the KC-135R (about 190,000 pounds vs. 320,000 pounds), and all current generation 737s utilize the same basic CFM56 engines as existing KC-135Rs, which would ease transition and maintenance. If nothing else, replacement of all ANG and AFRC KC-135 variants with 737 variants would make even more sense, given

that many ANG/AFRC crews made up of airline pilots may already be 737 qualified. Cancellation of 737 delivery positions due to airline cutbacks in the prevailing economy could make early availability of such "KC-737s" a good possibility. If even quicker replacement of KC-135Es and/or Rs was desired, conversion of the many earlier generation 737-300/400 aircraft being phased out or already phased out by operators such as United and Continental might even make sense, as these aircraft are also all equipped with CFM56 engine variants.

Just as it made sense, starting back in the 1980s, to acquire surplus airline 707/720 aircraft to enable upgrading

nearly 200 primarily ANG/AFRC KC-135As to more capable E versions, it would seem to make just as much sense today to make use of surplus airline assets such as 737-300/400 aircraft, and perhaps even 757 (C-32) and 767 variants.

The book *The Boeing C-135 Series*, by Don Logan, on p. 30-31 contains a table titled, "JT3D/TF-33-P-102 Re-Engined 135 and Their Commercial Donors," listing the 187 EC-KC-135E conversions and their corresponding 707/720 "donors" from which engines and tail surfaces were obtained. Perhaps this would make a good subject for a future article on an acquisition program that actually saved or made money!

Some might argue that a 737 tanker variant might not be capable of a worthwhile fuel offload, but I'd be willing to bet it would equal, if not exceed, any existing KC-130 variant (USAF, USMC, or foreign) as well as far exceeding the capabilities of any carrier-based tanker, such as the Vietnam-era KA-3 "Whale" or the KA-6. Incidentally, somewhere in my archives I still have a Boeing brochure proposing a variant of an early 737 to the Navy as a "COD" transport (carrier onboard delivery) to replace the C-2, believe it or not. Just about as incredible were actual Navy evaluations

of the C-130 from carrier decks, around the mid-1960s, as I recall.

T. J. Gibson  
Taylor, Ariz.

Rebecca Grant's article supports an argument that all services require the new tanker. What is lacking is the commitment of the armed services, the President, and Congress to move decisively to make the requirement a reality.

Although I normally would not consider splitting the contract between two contractors cost effective, there is a necessity to procure new tankers before the KC-135s begin to fall from the air and cripple our defensive and offensive capabilities. The major advantage of the dual contract is the ability to use the production facilities of both contractors to put wheels on the runway faster. Each contractor should step up to the line to build 12 aircraft a year over a 15-year period (24 per year). Following this concept, instead of 179 new tankers in 15 years, they could build 360 tankers in 15 years. Follow-on contracts for the remaining 177 tankers, at a slower rate, would be awarded to the contractor demonstrating the best reliability, maintainability, and cost savings over the 15-year period. As a result, the competition is maintained over the build period, ensuring a continuous dedication to cost-effective production and

improvements. Additionally, the higher rate of production should decrease the cost per aircraft.

Of course, this tact requires the Air Force, Navy, and Army, who need tankers to support war plans, to put aside differences and unite in presenting the tanker requirements to the President and Congress as their highest priority. In addition, it will take a bold and farsighted President to support the tanker requirement and press Congress to provide the funds for the compressed build without drastic cuts to other needed programs. Yes, that means a bigger defense budget, but the price of failure will be absorbed by our service personnel and our status in the world and potentially endanger our country.

The tanker need is so important to all DOD plans that the 15-year build should be fully funded with no ability for Congress or the President to change it other than nonperformance of a contractor. Without a viable tanker capability in the future, all DOD plans for action and reaction are nothing but paper. Our nation needs to step up to the plate on the tanker requirement and get it right—now.

Lt. Col. Alan L. Strzemieczny,  
USAF (Ret.)  
Riverside, Calif.

“Playing With Fire”: Another great article by Rebecca Grant. This article should be made mandatory reading for all the powers to be that have any connection with the developing and letting of the new contract for the new Air Force air refueling tanker.

She points out some very important points about the requirements, the need, and the past history and performance of the KC-135s in world combat support situations. The picture on p. 30 of the July magazine helped reiterate just one of the past performances of the KC-135s. Even though it is in SEA, the same scenario applies today in the combat areas of Iraq and Afghanistan.

I had the privilege of being the maintenance supervisor on several tanker task forces to SEA, and what a great feeling it was, when all the tankers completed their offload to their receivers, on time as scheduled.

As Grant pointed out, the pace of the current operations requires more loiter time, thereby putting a greater demand on an already very tired tanker. Just another reason why the Air Force needs a Boeing-built tanker—now.

Gen. Carrol H. Chandler’s comment about taking about seven hours of ground maintenance for every one hour of flight time is probably a little conservative. All the tanker crews are doing an outstanding job under bad circumstances. So also are the great maintenance crews, the backbone of the Air Force operations, doing an outstanding job, with old equipment, parts shortages, and a heavy flying schedule.

Keep up the great job, all you tanker personnel. Remember, nobody goes anywhere without tanker gas.

CMSgt. Donald W. Grannan,  
USAF (Ret.)  
Benbrook, Tex.

### Heroes or Bums

This is another General Doolittle story [“Letters: Meeting Jimmy,” July, p. 5]:

I served in the 97th Bomb Group in England, which was the bomb group that did the first daylight raid on occupied Europe with B-17s. In the [Imperial] War Museum in London, that raid is listed as one of the most important events of World War II. As duty officer of the headquarters base of the 97th Bomb Group, I was in charge of the base at the time of the bombing attack on Europe. I will never forget that on the blackboard in the operations room, there was written, “Ruin Rouen” [the French city whose railroad marshaling yards were bombed by the unit]. In any event, sometime after that raid, we had an important visit from General Doolittle.

General Doolittle called a staff meeting in the conference room of the 97th Bomb Group. There were about 10 of us

in the room. He briefed us on the coming invasion of North Africa, and he gave us that information in some detail. When he finally finished, he went to the door, turned, and said to us, “Gentlemen, we’re going to be heroes or bums” and out he walked. I will never forget that day. I will always remember General Doolittle, and we didn’t turn out to be bums.

Leon Davis  
Houston

### Eliminate Which Force?

The [quote] in July’s “Verbatim” about eliminating the Air Force appears to be laced with fuzzy logic [“Eliminate the Air Force,” p. 58]. If Paul Kane’s argument is predicated upon redundancy, then the most reasonable service to be abolished would—and probably should—be the Marine Corps. Their ground combat and amphibious duties and missions could be effectively absorbed into the Army, with their tactical air shared by both the Navy and Air Force.

A contrary argument could be made, however, that individual service culture, tradition, and methodology precludes any such corrective measures. Precisely so, and this is also true of the Air Force, whose experience, doctrines, culture, and technical expertise are proven and indispensable assets in both tactical and strategic major warfare. When we are again faced with military hostility from an armed, formidable nation, those very assets will once more become our salvation.

Mr. Kane’s assertion that the Air Force is not at war begs clarification. He needs to ask those boots on the ground about USAF close air support, ISR, airlift, and cyber operations among many Air Force contributions.

MSgt. C. E. Shaver,  
USAF (Ret.)  
Highland, Ill.

### Classics

Mr. Boyne makes it sound like the T-28 Trojan was about done by the middle 1960s [“Airpower Classics: T-28 Trojan,” July p. 80]. They were still flying out of Keesler AFB, Miss., when I was there in 1974, and I think they were still flying at Luke AFB, Ariz., at that time too. They were used to train a variety of foreign military students through most of the 1970s.

Bruce Krohn,  
Los Lunas, N.M.

I enjoyed the “Airpower Classics” in the July issue regarding the T-28 Trojan—a neat old bird to fly. However, I found one flaw regarding USAF using it as a trainer through 1956 and it being replaced with the T-34 (and the T-37).

Members of Class 59-F, Bainbridge AFB, Ga. (civilian contract), graduated in

August 1958 after flying 30 hours in the T-34 and 100 hours in the T-28. At least at Bainbridge, this was supposed to be the last class before Tweets replaced the T-28.

It’s also interesting to note that the class patch “Charlie Brown coming down” may have been the first patch designed and approved by Charles M. Schulz. The class military training instructor was 1st Lt. Carlyle S. Harris, later a long-term guest at the Hanoi Hilton.

Always enjoy your excellent magazine.  
Col. George H. Howard,  
USAF (Ret.)  
Auburn, Wash.

I wish to contribute a small add-on to the informative article by Walter Boyne. I was based at Laredo Air Force Base from June 1957 to December 1958, assigned to the 3641st flight line maintenance squadron. I was informed that the T-28s left Laredo over a year or so before my arrival. The replacement aircraft was the T-33. Our squadron had approximately 90 T-33s, and our sister squadron, the 3640th, also had 90 T-33s. What a sight, when many of the aircraft took off for their training missions morning, noon, and night. Thanks for a fine article covering the evolution of fine aircraft that served the Air Force for so many years.

Richard Bochkay  
Ochlocknee, Ga.

### Black Shoe

In a side line titled “The Last Manned Aircraft” of the article “Fighter of the Future” in July’s issue, it states that Adm. Michael G. Mullen is a naval aviator. Not true. He’s what we aviators call a “black shoe.” He is not an aviator.

Cmdr. H. C. Nickerson,  
USNR (Ret.)  
Palm City, Fla.

### Fully Developed

The first sentence of the caption to the photograph on p. 73 of your July 2009 issue (“Flashback: The Image Catchers”) is misleading. Aerial photography in World War I began as early as September 1914, and was in wide-scale use by all combatants well before the US entered the conflict (April 6, 1917). Appropriately, your photograph shows what appears to be a British ground crewman handing a camera to an observer in a Royal Aircraft Factory FE2. The critical role of aerial reconnaissance during any major conflict since World War I has been underplayed by the emphasis on fighter aces and strategic bombing.

Lt. Col. Stephen H. Miller,  
USAF (Ret.)  
Fredericksburg, Va.