

■ **Norway Proposes Block Buy of 12 F-35s**

Norway's department of defense has submitted a request to the Norwegian parliament to participate in a proposed block buy of 12 new F-35As, according to F-35 joint program office spokesman Joe DellaVedova. The new purchases would be made in 2018-20 and would bring Norway's total number of F-35s purchased up to 40. Norway has said that it plans to purchase 52 F-35s overall.

"Due to vast economies of scale, all countries will achieve significant reductions on the price of their jets," said DellaVedova. The block buy would eventually be joined by the US and other nations. It is expected to procure a total of 450 aircraft and produce an overall savings of close to \$2 billion. The cost of an F-35 purchased within the block buy will be \$80 million to \$85 million by 2019, DellaVedova said, in contrast to the \$112 million paid in 2014.

Norway received its first F-35 in September 2015, and Royal Norwegian Air Force pilots have trained on F-35s in a global training squadron under the 56th Fighter Wing at Luke AFB, Ariz., since then.



Lockheed Martin photo by Liz Kaszynski

■ **Raymond Now Head of Space Command**

Gen. John W. "Jay" Raymond assumed command of Air Force Space Command from Gen. John E. Hyten on Oct. 25 during a ceremony at Peterson AFB, Colo. Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. David L. Goldfein called Raymond "the obvious choice" for the job because of his "experience, cyber expertise, and proven leadership." In accepting his new position, Raymond said, "There's no other organization in the world that does what you do."

Goldfein praised Hyten for his two years of leadership at AFSPC, especially in standing up the successful Joint Interagency Combined Space Operations Center (JICSPCC). "All I want to do is say 'thank you,'" Hyten said. In reflection on his time at AFSPC, he noted, "In cyber we delivered effects around the world that were only theories" a few years ago.

Hyten became the commander of US Strategic Command on Nov. 4.



USAF photo by Craig Denton

■ **Three GBSD Proposals Submitted**

Boeing, Lockheed Martin, and Northrop Grumman responded to the Air Force's request for proposal for the next generation Ground-Based Strategic Deterrent (GBSD) system ahead of the Oct. 12 deadline.

The Air Force released the RFP in early August, and the service plans to award up to two cost-plus-fixed-fee contracts in summer 2017, with eventual deployment in the late 2020s. The expected value of the program is about \$62.3 billion.

USAF photo by Elmer F. Franz



### ■ North Korean Missile Launch Fails Again

US Strategic Command on Oct. 19 detected another failed North Korean missile launch, a provocation Defense Secretary Ashton B. Carter said was an attempt to destabilize the Korean Peninsula. STRATCOM said it detected the Musudan intermediate-range ballistic missile test at about 5 p.m. Central Daylight Time near the northwestern city of Kusong, and NORAD said it “did not pose a threat to North America.”

Carter, in a joint briefing Oct. 20 with South Korean Defense Minister Han Min-koo, said “even in failing,” the test violated several UN Security Council resolutions, and it “only strengthens our resolve to work together with our Republic of Korea allies to maintain stability on the peninsula.”

North Korea has repeatedly tested the Musudan system, at one time failing five times in a row, showing the “limits” of its ability, said Han. However, “we have assessed the stability of Kim Jong Un’s regime and North Korea’s nuclear and missile capabilities as continually advancing. ... We have agreed to

strengthen our stalwart combined defense posture so that we may respond to any North Korean provocation,” Han said. It was the second time in a week a Musudan test by the regime failed.



North Korean Central News Agency photo

### ■ Air Force Exceeds Recruiting, Retention Goals

The number of Active Duty airmen currently in service has exceeded the Air Force’s goal for Fiscal 2017, thanks to an increased effort in recruitment and retention. There are about 317,800 airmen in uniform, up from 309,000 a year ago—that’s 800 more than USAF’s stated goal of 317,000, said Lt. Gen. Gina M. Grosso, the service’s deputy chief of staff for manpower, personnel, and services, at an AFA-sponsored, Air Force event Oct. 12 in Arlington, Va.

Air Force Secretary Deborah Lee James has placed a high focus on building the ranks, which she said dropped too low because of budget constraints. James told reporters earlier in 2016 she was considering enacting a little-known law that enabled her to bolster the service’s end strength by up to two percent—or as many as 6,340 airmen—above congressional mandates.



### ■ Too Close for Comfort

A Russian fighter jet and US aircraft unwittingly passed within a half-mile of each other over Syria on Oct. 17, Col. John L. Dorrian, spokesman for Combined Joint Task Force-Operation Inherent Resolve, said. The Russian jet passed in front of the “larger framed” US aircraft. It was close enough to for the American crew to feel the jet wash. “So that’s closer than we’d like,” Dorrian said.

He said there was immediate contact between the two aircraft and then follow-up on the deconfliction channel, which remains in daily use. The Pentagon does not believe there was “nefarious intent” on the part of the Russian pilot, Dorrian said.



Russian Federation Ministry of Defense photo



### ■ Air Force Sets Transgender Policy

The Air Force outlined its policies for airmen undergoing gender transition while in service and said the new policy is necessary for accession of transgender persons by July 1, 2017. "A transgender airman [who is currently serving] must receive a diagnosis ... that gender transition is medically necessary," states the memo, dated Oct. 6.

Airmen must make use of "lodging, bathroom, and shower facilities" in accordance with their Military Personnel Data System (MilPDS) gender marker both before and after transition. The memo forbids "a commander to deny medically necessary treatment to a transgender airman" and declares, "No otherwise qualified airman may be involuntarily separated, discharged, or denied reenlistment or continuation of service solely on the basis of their gender identity."

Forthcoming accession policy is required by the memo

to establish an 18-month period of gender stability before recruits who have undergone gender transition may be accepted into service.



USAF photo by TSgt. Jonathan Fowler

### ■ Enlisted Airmen Begin RPA Pilot Training

The first group of enlisted potential RQ-4 Global Hawk pilots began training to fly remotely piloted aircraft at Memorial Airport in Pueblo, Colo., on Oct. 12, marking the first time since the 1940s that the Air Force has trained enlisted members as pilots, according to Air Education and Training Command spokesman Randy Martin. (See "By the Numbers," p. 20.)



USAF photo by Randy Martin

Secretary of the Air Force Deborah Lee James visited the four trainees at the Air Force's Initial Flight Training School in Pueblo on Oct. 17. "The integration of enlisted RPA pilots into RQ-4 Global Hawk operations is part of a broader effort to

meet the continual RPA demands of combatant commanders in the field, ensuring they are provided with intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance capabilities in their areas of responsibilities worldwide," she said.

The beginning of enlisted RPA training coincides with a broader increase in RPA pilot production in Fiscal 2016, from 192 to 384, at a cost of \$1.2 million, according to Martin.

### ■ Clark Takes Command of 3rd Air Force

Lt. Gen. Richard M. Clark took command of 3rd Air Force at Ramstein AB, Germany, on Oct. 21. Clark, who previously commanded 8th Air Force (Air Forces Strategic) at Barksdale AFB, La., and recently received his third star, replaced Lt. Gen. Timothy M. Ray, according to a US Air Forces in Europe press release.

USAFE chief Gen. Tod D. Wolters presided over the change of command. "A year from now ... when we have a ceremony like this and talk about the accomplishments of Lieutenant General Clark, the promise is this: He will be the finest [numbered air force] commander this United States Air Force has ever seen," said Wolters, according to the release.

In his new position, Clark leads the 603rd Air and Space Operations Center, nine wings, and one expeditionary wing, as well as nearly 35,000 personnel.

Ray, who held the position since July 2015, now serves as deputy commander for US European Command.



USAF photo by TSgt. Roldan Carlson

### ■ Grounded F-35s Returning to Flight

The Air Force's F-35As grounded by an insulation problem in September began to return to flight in October. On Sept. 16, the service announced it had grounded 15 aircraft—including 10 operational jets at Hill AFB, Utah; two training jets at Luke AFB, Ariz.; and one test plane at Nellis AFB, Nev.—and would need to repair 42 aircraft still on the production line because improperly installed avionics cooling lines deteriorated and left debris in the fuel lines and tank.

Two of Hill's affected jets flew again on Oct. 24 after undergoing the repair process that requires cutting through the

aircraft skin and stripping the faulty coating from the coolant lines, according to a 75th Air Base Wing news release. Three more were expected to be repaired by Nov. 4.

After the grounding, Hill was left with only five operational F-35s, and some pilots were sent to Luke, Nellis, and Eglin AFB, Fla., to maintain proficiency. Hill maintainers expected all 10 of the base's affected F-35s to be in service by the end of the year, according to the release. The 42 in-production aircraft were also expected to be ready to go by then.

## US Central Command Operations: Freedom's Sentinel and Inherent Resolve

### Casualties

By Nov. 16, a total of 32 Americans had died in Operation Freedom's Sentinel, and 30 Americans had died in Operation Inherent Resolve.

This includes 59 troops and three Department of Defense civilians. Of these deaths, 24 were killed in action with the enemy while 36 died in noncombat incidents.

There have been 132 troops wounded in action during OFS and 20 troops in OIR.

### Air Strike Reportedly Hits Friendly Forces in Iraq

A coalition air strike near the Qayyarah airfield in Iraq allegedly killed at least 20 Sunni tribal fighters who were reportedly mistaken for ISIS militants. After midnight on Oct. 5, coalition strikes hit a position that was reportedly firing on Iraqi forces, said Canadian Armed Forces Brig. Gen. D. J. Anderson during an Oct. 5 briefing. He is the director of partner force development and the ministerial liaison team for Combined Joint Task Force-Operation Inherent Resolve.

The coalition has heard reports that friendly forces were hit and is beginning an investigation, he said. The commander of the Tribal Mobilization in Nineveh province told the BBC that his group had repelled an attack by ISIS when it was hit by fire from an aircraft. US aircraft were reportedly flying support for friendly forces during the battle.

### Al Qaeda Leader Killed in Syria

The Pentagon said the death of a senior al Qaeda leader in Syria on Oct. 3 provided a "significant disruption" to the group. Abu al-Faraj al-Masri, an Egyptian national also known as Ahmad Salamah Mabruk, was killed in a strike near Idlib, Syria.

His death will serve as "a blow to their ability to conduct external attacks," Pentagon Press Secretary Peter Cook said. Al-Masri was a long-standing al Qaeda member who previously had ties to Osama bin Laden, the Pentagon said in a statement.

### Defeating ISIS With "Constant Pressure"

"Constant pressure on the Islamic State" is the key to defeating ISIS in Iraq and Syria, Army Gen. Joseph L. Votel, commander of US Central Command, said in comments delivered at the Center for American Progress in

Washington, D.C., Oct. 19. By attacking oil infrastructure and information systems, as well as military positions, US forces seek to "present [ISIS] with as many obstacles as we can."

Calling ISIS an "adaptive enemy," Votel also insisted that, even as the US military has focused on the effort to retake Mosul, it is "extraordinarily important to apply pressure in many areas in Iraq and Syria" to prevent ISIS fighters from simply abandoning one stronghold and reconstituting in new locations.

Ultimately, Votel said, the defeat of ISIS will require a political solution. In Mosul, he said CENTCOM has "synched our military planning with humanitarian planning and political planning" to put a postconflict "framework in place" that includes a "high-level commission" made up of key regional stakeholders.

### Losing Ground in Afghanistan

The security situation in Afghanistan is eroding, according to a quarterly report to Congress from the US Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR). Only 63.4 percent of the country's districts remain under the control of the Afghan government, down from 65.6 percent in May. The report, released Oct. 30, says 33 of Afghanistan's 407 districts were under insurgent control or influence, and another 116 were "contested" as of Aug. 28. Afghan National Army and police numbers are only at about 87 percent of authorized levels and the security forces "suffer from high levels of attrition," states the document.

SIGAR reports that "the United States lacks visibility into most Afghan units' actual levels of training and effectiveness." One result of this lack of transparency is the overuse of Afghan special forces for missions that could be completed by conventional troops. US military advisors are working mainly with these elite units and have "little or no direct contact" with Afghan units below headquarters level. So while Afghan special forces have achieved a high level of success, ANA units "have questionable abilities to sustain and maintain units and materiel" in support of the government's strategy of "hold" in districts the government is unwilling to give up, "fight" in districts where the government wants to resist insurgent advances, and "disrupt" in districts held by insurgents.





■ **Bob Hoover, 1922-2016**

Robert A. “Bob” Hoover, described by AFA founder Gen. James H. “Jimmy” Doolittle as the “greatest stick-and-rudder pilot who ever lived,” died Oct. 25 at age 94. Hoover was a World War II pilot in the Army Air Forces, who went on to be an Air Force test pilot and a storied performer at air shows, famous for his elaborate dead-stick, or power-off, maneuvers.

Hoover started flying in 1937, mastering the Piper Cub in his teens, working at a grocery store to pay for lessons and fuel. He joined the Tennessee National Guard and became a “flying sergeant” in World War II, eventually assigned to fly British Spitfires operated by the 52nd Fighter Group, stationed in Sicily. Shot down in 1944, he was captured and sent to Stalag Luft 1 in Germany. Late in the war, Hoover escaped, stealing a Focke-Wulf 190 from a poorly guarded airfield and making it as far as the Netherlands before he ran out of fuel and crash-landed. With the help of locals, he made it back to Allied lines.

After the war, Hoover became a test pilot and was one of three chosen for the X-1 supersonic program. During Chuck Yeager’s Oct. 14, 1947, faster-than-sound flight, Hoover flew chase in a P-80 jet. (He re-enacted the chase flight for the 50th anniversary in 1997, flying chase as a backseater in an F-16 while Yeager flew supersonic in a two-seat F-15).

Hoover left the Air Force in 1948 to work as a private test pilot, first for the Allison Engine Co., and then for North

American Aviation. During the Korean War, he went to the front lines to teach Air Force pilots how to dive-bomb with the North American F-86. While doing this work, he participated in actual combat bombing missions, but was not allowed to engage in air-to-air combat. He later did test work on the FJ-1 Fury and F-100 Super Sabre. During his years as a test pilot, Hoover set a number of altitude and time-to-climb records.

He became famous in the flying community for his ability to recover aircraft that had suffered midair calamities.

Hoover left North American to work as an air show pilot, flying P-51 Mustangs and later an Aero Commander Shrike. Hoover would conclude an air show by cutting his engines, then executing rolls, landing, and coasting to a show-center parking spot purely on momentum. He continued working the air show circuit into the 1990s and wrote an autobiography, *Forever Flying*.

During his career, Hoover accumulated a vast array of awards, some of them later named in his honor. He received AFA’s Lifetime Achievement Award in 2015.



USAF photo by A/C William Blankenship

■ **Moving Forward With 3DELRR**

The Air Force has amended the current solicitation for the Three-Dimensional Expeditionary Long-Range Radar (3DELRR) to include options for full-rate production, according to a USAF news release.

The service originally awarded an engineering and manufacturing development (EMD) contract to Raytheon in 2014 for the next generation radar that will track aircraft, missiles, and remotely piloted aircraft. However, rival competitors Lockheed Martin and Northrop Grumman protested the award and the Air Force eventually changed its mind based on advice from the Government Accountability Office.

Raytheon then appealed that decision, but a US federal claims court in 2015 rejected the claim, allowing the Air Force to reopen the contract. USAF now expects to award the contract

in the second quarter of this fiscal year. It will include EMD, low-rate initial production, interim contractor support, and full-rate production, according to the release. Competition for the 3DELRR contract is “limited to the incumbent prime contractors—Lockheed Martin, Northrop Grumman, and Raytheon—for the pre-EMD period of the ... technology development phase, states the release.



Lockheed Martin photo

**By the Numbers**

**TWO**

Number of enlisted airmen who have piloted flights since the termination of the Cadet Aviation Program in 1961. Two unidentified master sergeants completed solo training flights at Initial Flight Training in Pueblo, Colo., on Nov. 3. They will fly RQ-4 Global Hawks.



USAF photo by SSGT. Cory Payne