

DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE

**PRESENTATION TO THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON READINESS AND
MANAGEMENT SUPPORT**

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

UNITED STATES SENATE

SUBJECT: FORCE READINESS

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Introduction

Chairman Ensign, Senator Akaka, and distinguished members of the Committee, thank you for giving me the opportunity to appear before you today to present the status of our Air Force in Operations ENDURING FREEDOM (OEF) and IRAQI FREEDOM (OIF). As the Commander of United States Central Command Air Forces, it is my privilege to report on our readiness and sustainment efforts. On behalf of Acting Secretary Dominguez and General Jumper, thank you for your continued strong support of the more than 18,000 Airmen deployed to fight the Global War on Terror in the Central Command AOR.

Force Readiness

Air forces deploying in support of OEF and OIF arrive in theater well trained and properly equipped to conduct their assigned missions. On the ground and in the air, our Airmen are performing exceptionally well in often hostile conditions. On the ground, our Security Forces have provided airbase defense outside the base perimeter for the first time since Vietnam. During a 60-day deployment to Balad AB early this year, they captured over 100 weapons and significantly reduced the number of attacks on the base. Air Force Joint Tactical Air Controllers (JTACs) are excelling under fire, providing the critical link between tactical ground commanders and overhead air support. From the air, we are leveraging intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance assets to uncover and track insurgent activity for Coalition forces to engage. And our aircrews continue to do a superb job minimizing collateral damage while dropping munitions in extremely close proximity to friendly forces and civilians, in support of Coalition and Iraqi Security forces. I could not be more proud of the professionalism and commitment of our

Airmen, and their successes on the battlefield are the best evidence that they are well prepared for the operations they are called to perform.

The Air Expeditionary Force (AEF) cycle provides a solid foundation for the readiness and sustainment of Airmen deployed in support of the Global War on Terror. Designed primarily for sustainment, this mechanism provides fresh forces to the field on a frequently rotating basis in accordance with a predictable schedule, enabling us to conduct long-term operations like the ones in which we are currently engaged. Most Airmen can expect to deploy for 120 days in every 20-month cycle, though there are certain stressed career fields that are exceptions to this rule – most notably Security Forces, which typically deploy for 179 days. During the preparation period between AEF deployments, our forces hone their readiness skills with a variety of training tools. To ensure Airmen are equipped with the latest tactics, techniques and procedures, we often incorporate fresh lessons learned from combat operations into peacetime exercises during the preparation period. For example, Exercise ABLE ARCHER last November included urban Close Air Support (CAS) scenarios from OIF and provided both the participating JTACs and aircrews with instruction on new techniques used in Iraq.

Given the counter-insurgent nature of today's combat environment in both Iraq and Afghanistan, collateral damage mitigation has drastically increased in importance. Not only are ground forces calling for fire support closer to friendly positions, most of today's targets are interspersed in civilian areas requiring supreme diligence and care in weapon selection and employment. Under these conditions, even a minor tactical error can have strategic consequences, providing a basis for the enemy's propaganda

campaigns. Our robust peacetime training cycle ensures our aircrews can employ their ordnance to meet this ever increasing requirement for precision.

Not only are our forces well trained, deploying units are also fully equipped. All Airmen arrive in theater with the individual equipment needed to sustain them through the deployment, regardless of their deployment location or conditions. Our Airmen can find themselves in widely varying field conditions, from very austere camps where you'll find our JTACs, combat communication teams and special operators; to forward operating locations in hostile territory, such as Balad Air Base in Iraq and Bagram Air Base in Afghanistan; to vital enduring bases with robust support on the Arabian Peninsula, such as Al Udeid Air Base in Qatar and Al Dhafra Air Base in the United Arab Emirates.

Every flying unit deploys with 100% mission capable aircraft and a tailored package of maintenance equipment and parts designed to keep them light, lean and fit to fight for their entire rotation. Likewise, Red Horse and special operations units deploy with the full compliment of equipment required for their missions.

Force Sustainment

While operational units deploy with their gear, equipment for support units and various combat expendables are pre-positioned through the War Reserve Material (WRM) program. Our five WRM storage locations in theater give us a capability to rapidly deploy equipment during a contingency, but they are also an exceptional tool for force sustainment. Through a USCENTAF contract, DynCorp manages our \$4.2B WRM inventory and provides accountability and storage for all the equipment, to include vehicles, munitions, fuel mobility support equipment, medical rations and aerospace

ground equipment. As equipment in the field wears out, we leverage WRM inventories for expeditious replacements, minimizing the impact to force readiness.

In addition, we reconstitute supplies not available in WRM through our standard logistics channels. Supplies from US mainland arrive on average in just over 12 days from the time of order. In the event we need supplies faster, we have methods to expedite the process and ship material in only 4 days.

Our robust logistic support is a key enabler to equipment maintenance in the field. With parts readily available, we perform routine maintenance at our deployed air bases or at WRM maintenance facilities in theater. Flight line crews conduct day-to-day and phase level maintenance as they would at home station. For aviation equipment repairs that cannot be accomplished in the field, we utilized repair facilities in Europe and the continental US, depending on the level of maintenance required.

In addition to equipment availability, training currency is a critical aspect of readiness. For most Airmen, training currency spans the deployment duration without lapsing. In the cases where currencies are shorter than the deployment duration, Airmen maintain qualification through daily mission activities or in-theater training. When training is required, it is done on a non-interference basis. For instance, we support JTAC training with on-call close air support sorties if available. Proficiencies not required in the AOR, however, are not maintained. As an example, a pilot's air-to-air skills may lapse, but since there is no air-to-air threat in Iraq there is no mission impact.

While the professional side of readiness and sustainment is highly regimented, the personal side varies greatly from Airman to Airman. To meet these varying needs, each air base within the AOR provides a wide assortment of MWR activities. Fitness and

recreation centers at each base provide a location to work out and relax. Food operations such as Burger King and Subway, give Airmen a taste of home. Morale phones and computers allow Airmen to stay in touch with family. Learning resource centers allow Airmen to continue their education or to progress in their PME. And resale operations such as on-base bazaars allow Airmen to experience the local culture and share it with family and friends through gift purchases. The availability of activities outside the work environment refreshes the force by giving Airmen a break from their daily routines.

Family support before, during and after deployment is also a significant part of force readiness and sustainment. The Air Force provides support to the families of deployed Airmen through the Integrated Delivery System (IDS). The primary components of the installation-level IDS are the Family Support Center, Life Skills Support Center, Family Advocacy Program, Family Member Programs Flight, Health Promotion and the Chapel. These agencies support families with education, childcare, counseling, spiritual and practical support. In short, they train and equip our families in the tactics, techniques and procedures required to thrive at home while a member of the family is deployed.

Reconstitution

Following deployments the Air Force utilizes the AEF cycle to reconstitute its Airmen. Upon return, Airmen take leave in accordance with home station policies to rest, recuperate and reconnect with their families. Units slow their operational tempos to allow maintainers time to refurbish equipment. Finally, unit commanders establish training programs to return their Airmen to deployment ready status.

Summary

As we continue to prosecute the Global War on Terrorism, our ability to prepare and deploy our forces remains critical to our success. Using the AEF cycle, the Air Force has done an excellent job of training and equipping our young Airmen to fight. Our pre-positioned WRM inventories and supporting logistics and maintenance systems ensure Airmen maintain a high level of readiness during combat operations. Our MWR and family support programs do a phenomenal job of maintaining the personal aspects of readiness for our members and their families. And the AEF cycle quickly reconstitutes our equipment and Airmen to deployment ready status upon return. Sustained Congressional support of these programs will help secure our victory in the future. Chairman Ensign, Senator Akaka, and distinguished members of the Committee, on behalf of our nation's Airmen, thank you for your continued support.