



HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE DUNCAN HUNTER – CHAIRMAN

PRESS RELEASE

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CHAIRMAN HUNTER OPENING STATEMENT

Full Committee Hearing on the Air Force's Future Total Force

Washington, D.C. – Today, the full committee meets to receive testimony from the Air Force, National Guard Bureau, the Air National Guard, the Air Force Reserve and two Adjutants General. Our purpose is to understand and assess the Air Force's Future Total Force plan including its associated implications for future missions, force structure, procurement, manning, funding and basing.

At the outset, let me extend the committee's appreciation for all Air Force components who are represented here today—the active, Air National Guard, and Air Force Reserve—for their continuing service in Global War on Terrorism. As of yesterday, 26,386 airmen are deployed. This total includes 20,068 active duty Air Force, 4,301 Air National Guardsmen, and 2,017 Air Force Reservists. The Air Force also has 383 aircraft deployed. Of that total number of aircraft deployed, over forty percent are from the Air Reserve Component, or "ARC," the Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve. There is no question that now, and in the future, both the Air Force's active and ARC, together called the "Total Force," will be needed to meet National security requirements.

The Future Total Force plan is an effort to create a smaller, more capable and more affordable Air Force comprised of active, Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve airmen. The Air Force plan is to retire legacy aircraft, so that the end-state will be twenty-five percent fewer fighters, and ten percent fewer total aircraft.

The Future Total Force plan would also make changes in key personnel areas. Active Air Force end-strength is planned to be reduced from 359,700 to 349,800 by 2011, a reduction of approximately 10,000 active Air Force personnel. No substantial personnel changes are planned for the Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve which are currently at 106,800 and 76,100 respectively.

The retirement of legacy aircraft is likely to cause the most impact to the ARC since it flies the oldest aircraft in the Air Force's inventory. If these aircraft are retired, some installations could lose a flying mission but be retained as so-called "enclaves" which are units with an expeditionary combat support element to provide medical, logistical, communications, or security support to deployed units.

To begin to understand potential impacts of Future Total Force, I'd like to show two charts provided to me by the Air Force Chief of Staff.

The first chart shows a historical look at the Air National Guard. Note that after the Korean War, the number of Air National Guard aircraft drops from about 2200 to about 1500, then remains constant until the 1990s when the Air National Guard inventory drops to about 1200 aircraft. During this time, fighter and reconnaissance aircraft were downsized as more airlift and refueling aircraft entered the Air National Guard inventory.

The second chart shows the history of Air Force fighter procurement. Note that after World War II, the inventory of fighter aircraft falls from about 63,000 to about 3,400 today in the post Cold War period. This slide shows that the future force of F/A-22 and F-35 Joint Strike Fighter aircraft could be well below 2000.

There is no question that the individual fighter aircraft planned for the future are much more capable with their combination of stealth, speed and precision-guided munitions. But if we have further reductions in active, Air National Guard, and Air Force Reserve aircraft, especially in fighters, it's not yet clear how we can still meet the number of aircraft needed for Homeland Defense while continuing to provide the force structure necessary for the Air Force's ten Air Expeditionary Forces. I believe our Nation can, and must, afford both the numbers and the capabilities needed for the future total force.

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