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HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON TACTICAL AIR AND LAND FORCES

STATEMENT OF

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JOINT STAFF, J8

BEFORE THE

HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON TACTICAL AIR AND LAND FORCES

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Chairman Norcross, ranking member Hartzler, distinguished members of this committee, thank you for your support of the men and women in uniform who serve our nation and for the opportunity to address your questions related to Tactical Air and Land Forces initiatives.

The recently released 2022 National Defense Strategy has focused the Department on the urgent need to sustain and strengthen U.S. deterrence. With China as the Department's pacing challenge, the U.S.' Tactical Aircraft forces are vital in that deterrence. The PRC's economic rise and rapid military technological advancements, especially in the TACAIR portfolio, have eroded advantages the U.S. has long enjoyed. To be clear, the U.S. still has the advantage, but the margin is not what it once was, and the Joint Force requires timely and deliberate action to regain the overmatch needed to secure our nation's vital interests, especially in the Indo-Pacific and European Areas of Responsibility.

To shape the Joint Force of tomorrow, the Joint Staff has made strides to change how we evaluate and develop capabilities for the warfighter. Under the leadership of the former Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and continuing under Admiral Grady, the Joint Requirements Oversight Council embraced a top-down, concept-driven, threat-informed approach to capability development to produce a future Joint Force that is lethal, sustainable, resilient, survivable, agile and responsive. This approach to capability development is rooted in Title X statutes

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and guides the Joint process from “concept to capability.” From the conceptual framework outlined in the Joint Warfighting Concept, we derive Concept Required Capabilities and perform Capability Portfolio Management Reviews to identify gaps in Joint Force capabilities and inform service planning.

Our capability reviews of the TACAIR portfolio, looking at both platforms and weapons, provided key insights and recommendations to ensure the Joint Force’s success in an increasingly lethal and electromagnetically complex future operating environment. That future environment requires platforms capable of sensing, communicating, and surviving while delivering advanced weapons through our adversary’s A2/AD capabilities. Fourth-generation platforms currently form the backbone of our force, providing the capacity we need to deter and win today while bridging to the advanced capabilities we need in the near future. To complete that bridge, many of our fourth-generation platforms will require upgrades to increase their lethality and maintain a credible combat capability for Combatant Commands. The Joint Force will also require platforms such as the F-15 EX and EA-18G to deliver new stand-off weapons and advanced E.A. capabilities at the capacity needed in a peer or near-peer conflict.

The Department’s fifth-generation aircraft inventory is growing rapidly. It serves as the “must-have” fleet in any future conflict with our Great Power Competitors due to their increased sensing, communication, and survivability capabilities

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compared to fourth-generation assets. All three services with fixed-wing Tactical Aircraft have invested heavily in the F-35 program. The F-35A will serve as the “cornerstone” and future capacity fighter of the U.S. Air Force, while the F-35B and C will be the sole TACAIR platforms for the Marine Corps. Finally, the F-35C will serve as the U.S.’s only carrier-based fifth-generation fighter, flown by the U.S. Navy and US Marine Corps. Even as the Department’s fifth-generation aircraft are still being fielded, the adversary is increasingly contesting the operating environment these aircraft were designed to operate in, which requires effective modernization planning. F-35 modernization efforts such as the Block 4 and Technical Refresh 3 will ensure the platform’s relevance as the Services continue to procure them well into the next decade. The F-22 remains the Department’s premier air dominance platform and requires modernization to provide air superiority in the rapidly advancing threat environment. While the Joint Force looks to the F-35 and F-22 to provide Air Dominance into the future, the Services must also continue to advance the technologies that will inform their Next Generation Air Dominance initiatives, which are necessary to deliver Air Superiority beyond 2030. Finally, as technology readiness levels in areas such as A.I. and machine learning mature, the Department must look to integrate these technologies onto unmanned systems to augment and enhance the effectiveness of manned TACAIR systems.

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In addition to modernizing and fielding advanced Tactical Air platforms, the Joint Force requires a new suite of advanced weapons for air-to-air and air-to-surface missions. This development must include air-launched hypersonic munitions.

Properly balancing the capacity of current platforms and weapons with the development of future capabilities will ensure the Joint Force has the capabilities required to meet current and future warfighter needs while maximizing value for the American taxpayer. In that effort, the Department seeks to leverage improved modeling and simulation to better determine optimal mixes of capability and capacity for both platforms and weapons within the TACAIR portfolio. These efforts will assist planners in accurately determining required capabilities and capacities through better campaign analysis. Improved Joint campaign analysis tools will also enable better testing of conceptual theories to sustain the “concept to capability” process more efficiently.

In addition to bringing new capabilities online, the 2022 NDS directs the Department to continue strengthening the U.S. network of Allies and partners. These relationships contribute significantly to Joint Force capability and capacity through shared programs such as the F-35 and International Agreements such as AUKUS. In addition to building capacity with our partners, we must also ensure interoperability. Exportability should be considered from the outset of Joint Force capability development. Additionally, current export controls should be reviewed

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so that the Joint Force can share development efforts more freely with its closest Allies and partners wherever possible. The Joint Staff supports the Department's efforts to enable better Information Sharing, so our procedures to protect highly sensitive information do not preclude collaboration with our closest coalition partners.

Finally, and most importantly, the Department must continue to pursue process improvement across the defense enterprise to achieve relevant Warfighting capability development and timely delivery to the Joint Force. Specifically, warfighter requirements must be acted upon faster to ensure relevance in the face of a quickly advancing adversary. Future capability development must leverage open system architectures and modularity throughout the acquisition process to enable cross-program collaboration and preclude vendor lock. Additionally, the Department must explore options to avoid serial processes and promote parallel capability development and incentive structures to achieve a more timely delivery of capabilities into the hands of the warfighters.

Again, thank you for your leadership and continued support of today's warfighters and those who will comprise the Joint Force of tomorrow.

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