

# United States Air Force Reserve

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Testimony

Before the House Appropriations  
Subcommittee on Defense

## ***Guard and Reserve Hearing***

Statement of  
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## UNITED STATES AIR FORCE RESERVE

The Air Force Reserve is a combat-ready force, with a Fiscal Year 2024 (FY 2024) authorized end strength of 69,600 Reserve Airmen, stationed throughout the United States. As a cost-efficient and mission-effective force, the Air Force Reserve provides the Nation with operational capability, strategic depth and surge capacity, both overseas and at home. The Air Force Reserve's wide-ranging operational capabilities serve the diverse needs of every Combatant Commander, whose requirements are as varied as the geographic and functional areas they support.

With 74 percent of our Reserve Airmen serving part-time, their combat-tested experience is retained in a cost-efficient force, available whenever our Nation calls. The Nation benefits from the intrinsic value gained by a Reserve member's civilian experience in a variety of careers, from pilots and nurses to teachers and cyberspace professionals, enhancing our mission with a broad spectrum of professional insights and capabilities.

The Air Force Reserve directly supports the United States and neighboring countries with special capabilities, including weather reconnaissance, better known as the "Hurricane Hunters," aerial firefighting and aerial spray. The Air Force Reserve's relationship with other federal agencies, including the National Weather Service and U.S. Forest Service, demonstrates how federal, military and civilian organizations work together to support the entire Nation.

The Air Force Reserve is a proven part of the Total Force and vital to the Department of the Air Force's (DAF) effort to address the four National Defense Strategy (NDS) priorities: defending the homeland, deterring strategic attacks, deterring aggression and building a resilient joint force. We execute the full spectrum of DAF missions, providing strategic depth and maintaining operational readiness to deter our adversaries, defend the United States, our Allies and partners, and respond to any contingency—at a fraction of the cost of the full-time members of the U.S. Space Force and the Regular Component of the U.S. Air Force.

As the DAF confronts the challenges presented by Great Power Competition (GPC), the Air Force Reserve stands ready to ensure its success. Air Force Reserve Command (AFRC) is the most diverse Major Command (MAJCOM) in the DAF and with nearly three-quarters of our force serving in a part-time status, we are optimized for Great Power Competition by providing surge capacity and strategic depth. Emerging threats demand a resilient, experienced, and accessible force that is responsive, agile, and lethal - all of which are attributes of the Air Force Reserve. Our cost-effective framework amplifies resource utilization while upholding fiscal responsibility. Focused on talent retention, we draw from a deep pool of institutional knowledge with robust support for Reserve Airmen. This approach not only bolsters our strategic depth but also keeps us resilient and adaptable, essential for maintaining a competitive edge.

## AIR FORCE RESERVE FISCAL YEAR 2025 POSTURE STATEMENT

Total Force operations require Total Force investments. The Joint Force faces a complex battlespace across multiple domains. As two parts of the DAF, the U.S. Space Force and the Regular Component of the U.S. Air Force are working to fulfill the NDS priority of building a resilient joint force and defense ecosystem. As part of the Total Force, the Air Force Reserve ensures the DAF can achieve these efforts. Our mission capabilities rest on one foundation – our people. Our Reserve Airmen must be able to work

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side by side with the U.S. Space Force and our Regular Component partners in the U.S. Air Force. To do that, the Air Force Reserve must train and equip our Reserve Airmen in a manner that is proportional and concurrent with the Regular Component. This will ensure we remain a credible operational and strategic reserve that can provide a surge capacity in crisis or contingency.

Our FY 2025 budget request invests in foundational accounts, focused on preventing year over year degradation, to maintain the capabilities and readiness required to defend the homeland. The Fiscal Responsibility Act dramatically increases the importance of the timely approval of the FY 2025 budget request. Continuing Resolutions delay budgets and prevent the Air Force Reserve from receiving the funding it needs to maintain operational readiness.

With Congress' support, we continue to improve our strategic readiness. I issued a Task Order upon taking Command of Air Force Reserve Command in 2022 that emphasized two priorities: Ready Now and Transforming for the Future. The order empowers Reserve Airmen to own their individual readiness and established accountability across the entire Command to be the Reserve the Nation needs. We issued a revision to the Task Order in 2023 and developed metrics that allowed us to track our progress to maintain operational readiness and transform for the future. By employing data analytics coupled with new tools and processes, we are making timely and informed programmatic decisions. We developed and refined data visualization tools, like the Status of Funds and Flying Hour Tools, that allow us to make timely and informed programmatic decisions. We are implementing policy reform that facilitates modernization and reduces administrative requirements. The result is an agile and judicious execution of financial resources. The timely approval of our FY 2025 budget request will enable the Air Force Reserve to continue improving operational readiness while also transforming into a data dominant Command. We hold ourselves accountable from planning to execution of a comprehensive and effective strategy to build a ready force and transform the organization.

The Air Force Reserve will support the DAF as it makes hard choices in Air and Space power modernization to keep pace with our strategic competitors. Airpower and Spacepower modernization are necessary to address the four NDS priorities, which depend upon effective Command and Control capabilities that are survivable in the threat environment of today and tomorrow. In this joint endeavor, the Air Force Reserve plays a pivotal role, ensuring seamless integration with the Regular Component. For the Air Force Reserve to remain a viable contributor to joint operations, the Total Force must maintain equipment parity and interoperability. These modernization investments require a balance between current and future risk. Some current capabilities must be divested to ensure we have the Reserve Force necessary to prevail in potential future conflicts. As our strategic environment changes, the risk is increasing over time, requiring hard choices to keep pace with evolving threats. We appreciate Congressional support as the Air Force Reserve prioritizes concurrent modernization and proportional fielding. This modernization and proportionality are coupled with a DAF-wide effort to re-optimize every aspect of the Department around GPC. The FY 2025 budget continues to integrate Air Force Reserve capabilities with the DAF to ensure that we can serve as a Total Force contributing to the Joint Force.

Reserve Airmen and their families are the foundation of our operational readiness, capabilities and organizational success. Our Airmen's diverse talent and depth of experience are force multipliers. Their dedication to our mission is second to none and we owe our Airmen stability and predictability. The Air Force Force Generation (AFFORGEN) model will increase predictability and lessen Reserve Airmen's time away from family and the financial burdens they may incur being away from their civilian occupations.

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The Air Force Reserve value proposition is simple: we are a cost-effective strategic force that is experienced, accessible and ready. We will use budgeted funds to ensure the Air Force Reserve has the capabilities and training required to generate combat power for the future security environment. We also ensure that the Total Force is ready to answer our Nation's call. Congress's support of our FY 2025 budget request will ensure the Air Force Reserve has the continued ability to organize, train and equip our Reserve Airmen and remain a ready force to defend our Nation and its interests.

## AIR FORCE RESERVE'S ROLE IN DEFENDING THE NATION

The Air Force Reserve is codified in law to provide trained and qualified personnel available to the Joint Force and Regular Component in time of war, national emergency, or in response to a crisis or contingency. Recognizing that Joint Warfighters need Air and Space Power, the DAF plays a critical role in defending the homeland, deterring strategic attacks, deterring aggression and building a resilient joint force. Because operational demands fluctuate, the Regular Component cannot be manned to meet peak demands and is therefore right-sized for steady-state operations. The Air Force Reserve provides the strategic depth and operational support the DAF needs to meet these demands. This requires Reserve Airmen to be organized, trained and equipped in line with the Regular Component to be a ready, resilient and combat-credible force in reserve.

Secretary of the Air Force Frank Kendall is posturing the DAF to meet the challenges of Great Power Competition. At the Air and Space Force Association Warfare Symposium in February 2024, he unveiled 24 decisions which are designed to optimize how the U.S. Air Force and the U.S. Space Force organizes, trains and equips their forces. During this period of optimization, the Air Force Reserve is ready to ensure the DAF's success. The DAF has identified key areas for review, investment and re-optimization. The Air Force Reserve will be an important part of this transformation and needs to be considered in all the DAF's efforts.

### Core Functions

Our ability to meet current taskings and to maintain a strategic reserve capacity are predicated on equipment parity and our readiness. The Air Force Reserve provides daily operational support to the Joint Force, while maintaining a ready and accessible strategic force during major conflict or surge operations in an unforeseen event, such as national disasters and contingencies. We also contribute to the DAF's five core functions.

#### *Air and Space Superiority*

Preserving the advantage in air and space during GPC requires generating combat power in contested environments. Maintaining equipment parity with the Regular Component ensures our ability to match pacing threats and secure air and space superiority. Legacy divestiture without recapitalization and delayed modernization programs adds substantial risk.

The Air Force Reserve provides vital experience to the DAF's 5th Generation fighter capabilities. The Air Force Reserve's first unit-equipped F-35 wing at Naval Air Station (NAS) Joint Reserve Base (JRB) Ft Worth, Texas is on track for first aircraft arrival in FY 2024 as the unit converts from F-16s to F-35s. We currently

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execute F-35 Combat Operations through our Classic Association, with the Regular Component as the lead organization, at Hill Air Force Base (AFB), Utah. We conduct F-35 Formal Training at Luke AFB, Arizona and Eglin AFB, Florida through Classic Associations. We also perform Operational Test and Weapons Instructor Courses at Nellis AFB, Nevada through a Classic Association. The experience of our Reserve pilots and maintainers in all aspects of 5th Generation fighter operations reduces costs and improves both the Reserve and Regular Components. The Classic Association at Joint Base Elmendorf Richardson, Alaska demonstrates this with the Reserve Airmen of the 477th Fighter Group being the most experienced F-22 pilots and maintainers in the world. They lower training costs for the Regular Component and will be one of the first units to engage an adversary in the event of a conflict in the Pacific. The Air Force Reserve ensures the preservation of experience across the fighter community. An Active Association, with the Reserve component as the lead organization, at Nellis AFB, Nevada is responsible for the Aggressor mission flying pre-block F-16s in support of many Joint and Coalition exercises. These Reserve Airmen ensure wartime readiness across all mission sets within the Total Force.

The establishment of the U.S. Space Force underscored the criticality of space operations to our National Security. Recent space weapons tests by our strategic competitors amplifies this point. With just under 1,400 space professionals conducting 26 percent of daily missions, the Air Force Reserve is a major contributor to United States Space Command (USSPACECOM) taskings. The Air Force Reserve also provides 50 percent of the Total Force's Space Aggressor capability. Many of our Reserve Airmen bring civilian experience from the aerospace industry and provide the U.S. Space Force an experienced workforce who are a force multiplier that ensures Space Superiority. In 2023, over 200 Reserve space operators mobilized domestically and abroad to conduct space operations in support of Combatant Commander requirements. The Air Force Reserve will continue to provide focused support to the U.S. Space Force and USSPACECOM.

#### *Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR)*

Our ISR enterprise is optimized to provide strategic depth and operational surge capacity in traditional and emerging mission sets. Currently the ISR enterprise supports distinct intelligence functions such as Targeting, Signals Intelligence, Human Intelligence, Geospatial Intelligence, Measurement and Signatures Intelligence and Acquisition Intelligence. The enterprise drives operations by providing ISR to Special Operations, Combat Air Force, Mobility Air Force, Cyber, Space and Combat Operations Squadrons (COS). We continue to develop capabilities that support the Joint Force while ensuring current mission sets provide decision advantage against pacing threats.

There are 3,300 ISR Reserve Airmen supporting every Air Force MAJCOM and all the Functional and Geographic Combatant Command Intelligence Directorates. As the DAF realigns for GPC, ISR will play a critical role ensuring the Air Force Reserve has access to Sensitive Compartmented Information Facilities (SCIF) to be part of Next Generation Air Dominance (NGAD) systems. The Air Force Reserve continues to invest in the training and development of Chinese and Russian linguists. Air Force Reserve ISR units are available to the Global Force Mission Allocation Plan (GFMAP) enabling the Regular Component and Combatant Commands access to dependable critical capabilities and personnel.

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### *Rapid Global Mobility*

Global power projection through Rapid Global Mobility hinges on a robust Airlift enterprise and the extended range provided by a modern aerial refueling fleet. The Air Force Reserve enables combat delivery through our Strategic and Tactical Airlift fleets. The C-5M provides 21 percent of the Air Force's Strategic Airlift capacity and the Air Force Reserve provides 65 percent of the total aircrews and 100 percent of student aircrew training capabilities for the C-5 community. The C-17 provides 79 percent of the Air Force's Strategic Airlift capacity and the Air Force Reserve provides 31 percent of aircrews for the C-17. The Air Force Reserve's C-5 and C-130H fleets continue to face sustainment challenges due to aging aircraft, diminishing vendors and increased parts costs. Each of our mobility platforms require continued investment in modernization to ensure survivability in contested environments. In FY 2024, the Air Force Reserve is forecasted to perform 50 percent of C-17 and 31 percent of KC-135 long term orders for U.S. Transportation Command. In addition to the mobility platforms, the Air Force Reserve provides the majority of the Aeromedical Evacuation (AE) global capability through 18 Aeromedical Evacuation units with over 1900 assigned airmen. AE units deploy every six months in every deployment cycle, supporting over 60 percent of the aeromedical mission. Finally, Airmen assigned to Aerial Ports Squadrons (APS) make a significant contribution, accounting for a remarkable 45 percent of the Air Force's overall air transportation capability and leading the way in 42 percent of rotational deployments to several combatant commands, thereby underscoring their contribution to global power projection and military readiness.

### *Global Strike*

Global Strike allows the United States to project military power rapidly around the world. The U.S. Air Force and U.S. Space Force provide deterrence through nuclear and conventional weapons systems and the Air Force Reserve is committed to ensuring both are credible. Nuclear capability is foundational to our national security and Nuclear Deterrence Operations assets include Nuclear Strike, Air Refueling, and Nuclear Command, Control and Communications capabilities (NC3). To modernize the Air Force Reserve's capabilities and maintain Total Force interoperability we are equipping all seven of our NC3 capable command posts with the new primary strategic communication system, the Global Aircrew Strategic Network Terminal. Fielding to units has begun in FY 2024. The Air Force Reserve is also standing up the MH-139 Field Training Unit at Maxwell AFB, Alabama as part of the 908th Airlift Wing mission conversion. It is postured to begin training in FY 2026. The MH-139 will enable increased Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM) security and represents a Total Force Partnership between the Air Force Reserve, Air Force Global Strike Command and Air Education and Training Command. The Air Force Reserve continues to be an integral part of the bomber portfolio. The B-52 is tasked with conventional and nuclear missions and is AFRC's linchpin bombing platform. The Air Force Reserve is responsible for the B-52 Formal Training Unit (FTU) mission at the 93d Bomb Squadron, an active associate unit. Of the three bomber FTUs in the DAF, the 93d is the largest producer of bomber pilots. The Reserve also contributes to combat operations through the Classic Association of the 343rd Bomb Squadron. With the B-1, an Air Force Reserve Classic Association is tasked with supporting Conventional Combat Operations and the Formal Training Unit. The Air Force Reserve is committed to maintaining its Classic Association in the B-1 until it sunsets and will then transition to the B-21 as the Raider program comes online according to the bomber roadmap.

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### *Command and Control (C2)*

Joint All-Domain Command and Control (JADC2) is the Department of Defense's top modernization priority. The Advanced Battle Management System (ABMS) is the DAF's primary contribution to JADC2 as it provides the situational awareness and decision support tools to close hundreds of kill chains on relevant timelines in all domains – air, land, maritime, space and cyber – while operating in a highly contested environment. As the Regular Component continues to evolve Air Operations Centers (AOCs) to meet emerging operational Battle Management/Command and Control (BMC2) requirements, the Air Force Reserve's Combat Operations Squadrons will provide experienced C2 operators at all AOC Divisions. This evolution of C2 capabilities also extends to the E-3 AWACS as the Regular component divests from the aircraft and transitions to the E-7 Wedgetail. The Air Force Reserve remains the sole surge capability, via the 513th Air Control Group, for the E-3. The Air Force Reserve will also support the E-7 Wedgetail as it enters service.

As the DAF fields new capabilities, the Air Force Reserve must maintain equipment parity to achieve enterprise mission optimization and assure strategic depth. This includes ensuring legacy platforms are equipped with ABMS capabilities to guarantee interoperability and lethality. The Air Force Reserve also provides non-material support for ABMS initiatives with C2 manpower. Investment in digital infrastructure and applications, along with modern air and space communication platforms, provides the foundation of C2 with the speed, adaptability and resilience needed to achieve these objectives. If the C2 enterprise is prevented from adapting at speed and scale, on parity with warfighting requirements to dominate the pacing threat, the Joint Force could be assuming unmanageable risk in other mission areas.

Integrating cyber capabilities enhances our ability to generate combat power but exposes us to new threats, as digital technology is both pervasive and inexpensive. The Air Force Reserve is exploring continued growth in cyber mission sets to counter persistent threat actors. There are currently 3,622 Reserve Cyber professionals assigned to the 960th Cyber Wing or serving as Individual Mobilization Augmentees (IMAs), who are postured to better align with United States Cyber Command and Air Force Cyber and Air Combat Command requirements.

### Force Structure

With 74 percent of Air Force Reserve members serving part-time, the majority of Reservists serve alongside our Regular Component counterparts in association constructs. Approximately two-thirds of the Regular Air Force's associations are with the Air Force Reserve. Integrating through associations delivers significant taxpayer value, both in cost savings and improved mission effectiveness, by sharing aircraft, equipment and facilities with the Regular Component. In addition to reservists' military training and experience, our part-time force brings a wealth of knowledge and expertise from their civilian careers to their military service. This strengthens our capabilities, enables the integration of commercial best practices and facilitates beneficial partnerships with industry and other institutions. The Air Force Reserve's Bullpen initiative is one such example fusing military experience and civilian best practices. Bullpens leverage IMAs who have high demand low density (HD/LD) skills that are lacking in the Regular Component. These Bullpens directly support the Secretary of the Air Force's Operational Imperatives (OIs) in preparing the DAF for GPC. Two great examples are the Bullpens that study Hypersonics and China. The Hypersonic Bullpen has 13 Reserve Airmen who are experts from industry and academia. The China Bullpen is stood up in March 2024, with Reservists who have expertise spanning several disciplines

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including language, internal politics and strategy. This initiative is ongoing with future concentrations planned and is an example of how the Air Force Reserve leverages Reserve Airmen's civilian experience to meet shortfalls within the DAF.

#### *Associations*

There are 79 Associations between the Reserve and the Regular Component which span nearly every major mission set. Most of these are Classic Associations, in which the Regular Component is the lead organization. Active associations, in which the Reserve is the lead unit, comprise a little more than twelve percent of current associations. The Air Force Reserve also has units that are equipped where the Air Force Reserve unit is solely responsible for maintaining and operating their weapon system.

#### *Full-Time Staffing*

Adequate full-time staffing is essential to readiness. Our full-time force is a mix of Air Reserve Technicians (ART), DAF Civilians and Active Guard Reserve (AGR) members. Currently the Air Force Reserve has a ratio of 26 percent full-time and 74 percent part-time members. The FY 2024 National Defense Authorization Act maintained our AGR end strength at 6,003. For FY 2025, we have requested an AGR end strength of 6,311. Our ART end strength authorized for FY 2024 is 6,882. In FY 2025, we requested an ART end strength of 6,697. Proper full-time manning is necessary for the Air Force Reserve because our AGRs and ARTs are responsible for training our Traditional Reservists (TR). Finding the right balance between ARTs and AGRs is critical and it is essential we are funded to be able to hire the best talent possible. The increase in FY 2025 AGR end strength will support civil engineering, flightline security, cyber operations, and the operational readiness for transitions involving key aircraft and systems such as the F-16 to F-35, KC-135 to KC-46A, HH-60G to HH-60W, and the standup of the MH-139.

#### Equipment and Infrastructure

Credible strategic depth requires concurrent fielding of systems for the Regular and Reserve Components. Effective support to the Joint Force demands continuous upgrades to legacy platforms to assure interoperability. Rapid technological advancement and the wide proliferation of digital technology have increased the tempo of strategic competition. These forces drive the need for equipment modernization and parity with the Active Component.

In addition to concurrent fielding and proportional modernization, the Air Force Reserve must be able to divest its legacy platforms. Deliberate divestment avoids gaps in capabilities by freeing up resources for investment in capabilities to match pacing threats. Asynchronous airframe divestment can cause significant per platform sustainment cost growth due to diminishing vendors for spare parts. Further, it can also drive increased training costs as we are unable to hire qualified Regular Component members for obsolete legacy platforms.

#### *Weapon System Sustainment (WSS) and Modernization*

Fully funding the Air Force Reserve FY 2025 WSS request will help to bridge the fielding gap between the Regular Component and the Air Force Reserve. Aircraft modernization and system upgrades will provide



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capabilities needed for strategic competition by ensuring survivability in contested environments. A balanced portfolio of new and legacy platforms will achieve adequate wartime readiness. The FY 2025 WSS budget request of \$1.2 billion is an increase of \$176 million from the FY 2024 Presidential Budget request and will ensure upgrades, repairs and component replacements are provided to Air Force Reserve aircraft.

### *Infrastructure and Facilities*

Maintaining and modernizing our infrastructure is absolutely necessary for readiness, force protection and ensuring a safe work environment. Military Construction (MILCON) appropriations fund new facilities and major infrastructure projects. The Facility Sustainment, Repair and Modernization (FSRM) funds included in our Operations and Maintenance (O&M) appropriation are used to repair and modernize existing facilities and to extend the service life of existing infrastructure. While we work diligently to maximize use of existing facilities at our nine host installations and fifty-seven partner locations, we still have \$1.24 billion in MILCON projects and \$1.69 billion in validated FSRM projects in backlog.

## AIR FORCE RESERVE'S ROLE IN TAKING CARE OF PEOPLE

Taking care of our Reserve Airmen and their families is a top priority. It begins the moment a member joins the Air Force Reserve and continues throughout their career. The Air Force Reserve does everything possible to support our Airmen as they balance their military career, civilian obligations and family responsibilities. This assures the Air Force Reserve retains talented Airmen who can leverage diverse experience from their military service and civilian lives. This support includes improving suicide prevention through investments in resilience, social support through the Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program, implementing recommendations from the Independent Review Commission on Sexual Assault in the Military as approved by the Secretary of Defense, and efforts to expand childcare availability.

### Members

#### *Recruiting and Retention*

In FY 2023, the Air Force Reserve did not meet its end strength and we are projected to fall short of our FY 2024 authorized end strength of 69,600 by approximately 2,900 personnel. The recruiting environment continues to present significant challenges based on multiple factors including a reduced propensity to serve, competitive civilian compensation and difficulty in medically clearing recruits. Along with the Chief of Staff of the Air Force and collective Total Force team, we have identified accession policies that limit our ability to recruit young adults to serve in the military. The DAF has already made changes to include revising the tattoo policy to allow for limited hand and neck tattoos and adjusting body fat standards to align with the other Services (increasing to 26 percent for males and 36 percent for females for accessions). In FY 2024, we have also granted members a waiver to re-test following a positive drug test for THC during their accession process into the military. We have also continued to streamline the naturalization process in partnership with the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services for inbound recruits. This FY 2025 recruiting goal is not based on completely closing the personnel end strength shortfalls but on what the Air Force Reserve believes we can realistically achieve in the current market

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with the tools available. These initiatives will bolster recruiting, but it will take time for them to mature and close the end strength gap.

The Air Force Reserve Human Capital Strategy calls for a 70 percent prior service (PS) and 30 percent non-prior service (NPS) recruiting mix. In FY 2023 we were at 63.4 percent PS accession. In FY 2024 we are project to end the year at 65.7 percent. The accession model is built on the expectation that there will be sufficient PS members leaving the Regular Component who will affiliate with the Air Force Reserve. The Air Force Reserve strives to affiliate ready and trained Airmen. However, current trends indicate increased reliance on NPS recruits which increases training costs and dilutes unit experience. The Air Force Reserve is also executing a plan of action to mitigate recruiting challenges with Reserve Component Affiliation Incentive Bonuses and a deliberate on-boarding process to increase recruiting production.

Increasing retention provides a cost savings by decreasing training requirements. Air Force Reserve retention is at 88.3 percent which is a strong position and in line with the historic ten-year retention average of 88.2 percent. We implemented a tiered retention bonus in FY 2024 to retain enlisted Airmen with 5-10 years of service (our lowest retention segment at 80 percent). We have also stood up a division dedicated to retention in our Manpower, Personnel and Services Directorate at AFRC. Thanks to the funding from Congress, we have been able to offer retention bonuses between \$5,000 to \$7,500 dollars. We have also been expanded the travel reimbursement program to all Air Force Specialty Codes (AFSCs) for Airmen, E1 to E7. This removes an undue burden on our Reserve Airmen, who previously had to pay for their own travel to attend drill weekends with their units. Travel costs were identified as a contributing factor for members separating from the Reserve and allows units to expand the geographic areas for recruitment.

The Air Force Reserve provides a mechanism to retain talent by providing a continuum of service for members who would otherwise leave military service. The DAF understands the importance of retaining experienced talent from both a cost-effectiveness and capacity perspective. A Total Force Service Commitment is one way to retain these highly trained members. Data shows that members who affiliate with the Air Force Reserve are likely to remain in the DAF for up to 28 years. The Air Force Reserve offers flexible service options designed to retain low-density, high-demand talent, capitalize on investment and leverage experience. This ensures that a member's talent is retained beyond the initial service commitment and the investment in their training continues to be available to the DAF and Joint Force. The narrative needs to change as a member who joins the Reserve is not "quitting Active Duty," they are continuing to serve their country – they are an Airman for life!

### *Pilot Manning*

In FY 2023, the Air Force Reserve achieved a pilot staffing level of 94%, matching the high from FY 2021 and marking a significant improvement over the previous year. Despite challenges posed by aggressive recruitment from civilian airlines, full-time pilot manning remained steady at 78%. To bolster our ranks and retain talent, we increased aviation bonuses with \$50,000 to AGR pilots, \$30,000 to ART pilots and \$10,000 to \$15,000 for TR pilots. For ART pilots, we also offer Recruitment, Relocation and Retention (3R) incentives, which can equal up to 25 percent of annual base pay and Special Salary Rates (SSRs) which provide for base pay supplements of up to around 24 percent above otherwise applicable 2024 locality pay levels. Thanks to congressional support, funding for the Aviation Bonus Program was significantly increased from \$3 million in FY 2017 to \$34 million in FY 2024. This strategic investment is crucial, as it

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not only sustains our current workforce but also avoids the estimated \$10 billion cost of replacing over 3,600 pilots.

### *Maintenance Manning*

In FY 2023, the Air Force Reserve achieved an overall maintainer staffing level of 84%, mirroring the challenges we face with pilot retention due to competitive recruitment from the commercial sector. Notably, our part-time maintainer force reached 90% staffing, while full-time maintainer staffing remained more challenging at 75%. With 44% of our enlisted maintainers holding the highest level of technical proficiency and an average of 14 years of experience, they are highly sought after in the commercial industry. Similar to our pilot initiatives, we have implemented several strategies to address these challenges, including the use of SSRs, paid Permanent Change of Station (PCS) and 3R incentives. Thanks to the support and funding provided by Congress, we have been able to offer these incentives, which are essential for maintaining our readiness and ensuring the Air Force Reserve remains a competitive and rewarding career path for maintenance professionals.

### *Training*

To make a meaningful contribution to the DAF core functions, the Air Force Reserve maintains a focus on being Ready Now which requires us to have the capability to train Reserve Airmen. The FY 2025 budget requests training funds and flight hours that allows the Air Force Reserve to work closely with Combatant Commands and gain joint experience in training events.

A fully funded Flying Hour Program is essential to maintaining proficient combat-ready aircrews. In FY 2025, the Air Force Reserve will continue to use the Flying Hour Program management tool to assist in effective oversight of the program. This tool uses automation to allow for near real-time flying hour and financial updates to facilitate better utilization of the Air Force Reserve's flying hour funding, maximizing the time aircrews can be in-flight improving their proficiency.

Accelerated Mission Readiness Training (AMRT) is crucial to developing technically proficient Airmen to provide a qualified force to Combatant Commanders. In FY 2023, nearly 59 percent of the enlisted personnel and 35 percent of the officers in the Air Force Reserve were NPS. This places a significant strain on readiness thresholds. Emerging GPC threats and evolving requirements of building Multi-Capable Airmen requires a technically proficient force that cannot be achieved through Unit Training Assemblies and Annual Tour days alone. Without AMRT funds, the average NPS Reservist would need 2-3 years to become minimally proficient on mission requirements. With decreasing numbers of fully qualified members transferring from the Regular Component to the Reserve, there is an increased training burden upon Air Force Reserve Command. Without continued funding, the Air Force Reserve can expect to see a 20 percent decrease in qualified, deployable Airmen, and an increase in excessive training times across all career fields.

The Air Force Reserve is implementing training to develop Multi-Capable Airmen proficient in sustaining operations, hardening air bases and recovering air bases following attack. The FY 2025 budget requests funds for training, ensuring our Reserve Airmen are Ready Now to support the Regular Component as well as the Joint Force. At several Air Reserve Bases (ARB), we have developed organic training centers that

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allow Reserve Airmen the chance to meet Agile Combat Support (ACS) and Agile Combat Employment (ACE) training requirements and hone their expeditionary skillsets. These centers also support the Regular Component, the Joint Force, and federal and local agencies. At Westover ARB, Massachusetts, the Dogpatch Expeditionary Training Area offers an expeditionary airfield, as well as a drop zone and tactical vehicle training route. At Youngstown Air Reserve Station (ARS), Ohio, we identified a training need for Security Forces to build proficiency through a 180-hour program of realistic training that simulates combat situations and prepares Security Forces members to deal with stress under fire. The training also prepares participants for ACE and ACS missions. The site has been so successful that we are partnering with U.S. Army Reserve and U.S. Marine Corps Reserve to use the area for joint force training events. Civilian and federal law enforcement have also used the Youngstown site for training. Finally, at Grissom ARB, Indiana, we developed bivouac sites to better rehearse ACS and ACE events and conduct deployment exercises. Thanks to the funding from Congress, we can provide our Reserve Airmen the facilities to conduct realistic training.

In addition to establishing training sites, the Air Force Reserve provided our Reserve Airmen realistic training through the Rally series of exercises. These exercises began in 2020 and with Congressional funding, we have conducted them annually to conduct ACE operations and provided real-world experience in an austere environment. The most recent, Rally in the Pacific, saw over 400 Reserve Airmen, from a cross section of career fields including Security Forces, Force Support, Logistics, Supply, Medical, Flight Operations and Transportation, simulate deploying with over 185 short tons of cargo from multiple stateside bases to a downrange location in the Pacific. They operated across a 9,000-mile training area setting up a forward operating base in Guam and temporary contingency locations in Palau and the Philippines. The Rally series shows how the Air Force Reserve has been able to maximize its budget to execute targeted training that members need. The total cost of Rally in the Pacific was \$2.9 million. To continue providing our members relevant training, we need timely budgets which enable our planners to develop future exercises that prepare our members for GPC. Affording our members the opportunity to perform their primary duties has been one of the Top 5 influences for members to stay in the Air Force Reserve over the last three years.

#### *Stability for Members*

Our Reserve Airmen and their families and employers need stability and predictability. Exit surveys suggest the high operations tempo and demands of maintaining a work/life balance are the top reasons for leaving the Air Force Reserve. Without deliberately planned deployments and training, Reservists are unable to adequately prepare their families and notify their civilian employers. AMRT funding allows Reserve Units to offer predictable future training timelines.

The Air Force Reserve is also working to normalize the use of pre-planned forces through AFFORGEN. This predictability enables Combatant Commanders and the DAF to plan and budget for the utilization of Air Force Reserve forces that is consistent with Congressional intent and Title 10 USC Section 12304b. It also enables Reserve Airmen, their families and their employers to prepare for deployments and mobilization as they meet the demands of defending our Nation. As a Reserve Element, we strive to ensure the Regular Component sees access to the Reserve as assured and never assumed. This ensures that accessing the Reserve is deliberately programmed and budgeted, providing an experienced and cost-effective force.

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### *The Space Force Personnel Management Act*

In 2023, the Space Force Personnel Management Act was passed by Congress. This significant legislation enables the U.S. Space Force to enhance its personnel system, facilitating the development and retention of a highly skilled military workforce. The act allows more flexibility between full-time and part-time service, helping Guardians to effectively balance their career and personal goals with the operational needs of the U.S. Space Force. Over a 5-year period, our Air Force Reserve space professionals will transition over to the U.S. Space Force. During that period, we will continue to provide support to the U.S. Space Force and U.S. Space Command. We are working with the U.S. Space Force to develop transfer policies that will ensure continuity of operations within current Air Force Reserve space units until the transition is complete. As our Reserve space professionals decide whether to become Guardians, they will be supported throughout the transition to the U.S. Space Force. Not all Reserve space professionals will make the decision to transfer. Reserve space professionals who decide to remain in the Air Force Reserve will be offered the opportunity to retrain, retire or separate. An accurate count of transfers and retraining costs is currently unknown. The enactment of the Space Force Personnel Management Act allows us to work within the DAF and prepare for how the transition of reservists to the U.S. Space Force will occur.

### Family

#### *Air Force Reserve Access to Childcare*

Recognizing the unique challenges faced by our Airmen, especially those who are single parents or part of dual military couples, the Air Force Reserve is dedicated to addressing childcare availability during weekend training periods. The Home Community Care (HCC) is a no cost program that addresses gaps in coverage at host locations without Child Development Centers and at Regular Component host facilities without weekend childcare options. Currently, the HCC is available, or is in progress, at 41 Air Force Reserve locations and we are working to recruit more providers by zip code. The Air Force Services Center Child and Youth Program experts work with wing HCC representatives to recruit new providers and to determine feasibility of creative solutions to increase childcare available to Airmen during drill weekends. Ensuring maximum childcare options is vital to retention, as 50 percent of Reservists cite family and work/life balance issues as their reason for separating.

#### *Air Reserve Component (ARC) Athena*

ARC Athena is a proactive effort by the Air Force Reserve and Air National Guard to increase readiness of female Airmen and their families. ARC Athena focuses on addressing administrative barriers, outdated policies and lack of consolidated resources which inhibit access to specialized equipment, treatment and information for female ARC members. The program is supported by 162 volunteers who serve on nine different lines of effort. These lines of effort include Childcare Programs and Policy, Pregnancy Discrimination and Maternal Bias, Aircraft Sanitization, Female Fitment, Countering Sexual Assault and Harassment, Lactation and In- vitro fertilization, Maternal Fitness, Female Specialized Healthcare and the Exceptional Family Member Program.

At the national level, there is a core group of personnel who volunteer as the Air Force Reserve Command and Air National Guard co-leads. These leads facilitate cross talk between the nine ARC Athena efforts and coordinate with the DAF Women's Initiative Team (WIT), Women's Peace and Security and other MAJCOM

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Athena programs. In April 2023, the first annual ARC Athena conference was hosted by AFRC's 911th Airlift Wing, Pittsburgh ARS, PA.

ARC Athena helps uncover previously unidentified barriers to service which directly impacts readiness and retention. As the Air Force Reserve focuses on how best to posture for GPC, we must mitigate barriers to service to promote professional development and longevity in service.

#### *The Yellow Ribbon Program*

The Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program provides pre- and post-deployment education to Reservists and their families on resource, benefit and entitlement eligibility. Historically, the feedback for these events has been overwhelmingly positive. In FY 2023, Yellow Ribbon approved registration for 1,175 deployers and 1,932 family members to attend seven events in Orlando, Florida and one in Dallas, Texas supported by 405 Resource Providers. With the funding provided by Congress, the Air Force Reserve can achieve a target of at least 50 percent of AFRC first-time deployers attending future events, to increase preparedness and resiliency through Yellow Ribbon.

#### Health and Wellbeing

The health and wellbeing of our members is important since they cannot be ready if they are not healthy in mind, body, and soul. To that end, the Air Force Reserve is committed to supporting programs that ensure their physical, mental, and spiritual fitness.

#### *Mental Health*

Timely, high-quality access to Mental Health care is a challenge facing our Nation. The Air Force Reserve promotes mental health through early intervention, identifying and supporting members at elevated risk and managing crisis response. While TRs are not eligible for active-duty benefits, there are Reserve specific resources available. This includes 37 mental health providers in the Director of Psychological Health (DPH) Program, who are embedded throughout the Reserve Wings to advise leadership. DPHs provide non-clinical services to Reservists and their families to include training and education, consultations and referrals, needs assessments, suicide prevention, resiliency building, crisis intervention and command advisement on psychological and mental health issues. Reserve Airmen can also access the Military Family Life Consultants, who are licensed contract counselors that work outside of Military Treatment Facilities to provide anonymous and confidential assistance to all military members in problem solving issues resulting from deployment, reunions, reintegration, and/or other times of change.

#### *Spiritual Health*

Total force fitness includes spiritual health. The Air Force Reserve is seeing a substantial increase in pre- and post-accession religious accommodation requests as members express their sincerely held beliefs. Our Chaplain Corps provides support and spiritual care through Yellow Ribbon and Strong Bonds courses. The Chaplain Corps also hosts spiritual fitness training courses and religious services on drill weekends to maintain the spiritual health of our Reserve Airmen. Additionally, Chaplains offer the privileged and confidential counseling to Airmen in distress and guide them to agencies for additional support such as mental health or financial and family readiness. This includes 10 AGR Religious Support

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Team members at our host bases, who also coordinate Chaplain Corps lines of effort across our NAFs and tenant wings. Through our AGR program our Reserve Airmen can access an on-duty chaplain 24 hours a day.

#### *Sexual Assault Prevention and Response*

Aligning with the Independent Review Commission on Sexual Assault in the Military as approved by the Secretary of Defense, the Air Force Reserve is expanding our Integrated Primary Prevention Workforce (IPPW) by adding 75 new positions at host wings and headquarters to boost the effectiveness of our prevention programs. Additionally, we are on track to hire 23 Sexual Assault/Sexual Harassment Victim Advocates by the end of FY 2025. Our experts are focused on developing proactive and informed action plans that address sexual assault and harassment, ensuring a safer environment for all personnel.

#### *Suicide Prevention*

During calendar year 2023, the nine confirmed deaths by suicide in the Air Force Reserve is a decrease from 2022. However, a decrease is not enough—we are taking proactive measures to eliminate suicide across our workforce. As part of our ongoing efforts to support the health and wellbeing of our Airmen, the expanded IPPW incorporates suicide prevention as a core component of its mission. We allocated \$860 thousand in O&M funding to ensure new IPPW positions had workspace, and continued congressional support will ensure we are able to foster an environment that addresses the safety of our members and further strengthen our fight against suicides in the Air Force Reserve.

## AIR FORCE'S ROLE IN SUCCEEDING THROUGH TEAMWORK

Teamwork begins within the DAF, where the Air Force Reserve is an indispensable part of the Total Force. We provide an experienced and accessible Title 10 surge capacity to the Regular Component of the U.S. Air Force and the U.S. Space Force. We work to maintain a Ready Now posture that can support every core function. Maintaining this readiness and teamwork with the Regular Component and the Joint Force requires consistent training. We also play a critical role as the DAF builds ties with partners and allies. Reserve special missions are a unique capability that integrates the DAF with Federal agencies and civilian organizations within the United States and abroad. As the DAF prepares for GPC and determines how forces will be presented to Joint Force Commanders, the Air Force Reserve stands ready to ensure that the DAF can meet its requirements.

#### Building Ties and Support to Allies and Partners

The 2022 NDS calls for the defense enterprise to incorporate Allies and partners at every stage of defense planning. Close collaboration with Allies and partners is foundational for U.S. national security interests and as part of its efforts to support the Joint Force the DAF strives to improve those ties. The Air Force Reserve also plays in developing ties with U.S Allies and partners and supporting them.

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*Support to Allies and Partners*

In FY 2023 the Air Force Reserve supported taskings to U.S. European Command and U.S. Central Command. This support came in the form of voluntary and involuntary activations. In FY 2023, 270 Reservists volunteered to support the U.S. European Command. The support included 10 Russian and Ukrainian language linguists as well as Reserve ISR Airmen who provided 18,954 man-days in direct support of Ukraine. Air Force Reserve aircrews also airlifted 2,134 tons of cargo and 570 passengers. Support to U.S. European Command's Ukraine efforts have been strictly voluntary. However, the Air Force Reserve volunteers exceeded the Secretary of Defense Orders Book (SDOB) requirements.

Recent Levant operations prove that the Air Force Reserve is accessible as aircrew and aircraft activated within 72 hours to fill critical airlift and aerial refueling missions. Since October 7, 2023, the Air Force Reserve activated C-5 and C-17 Force Elements under Title 10 U.S. Code § 12302 – to support U.S. Transportation Command (USTRANSCOM) requirements. The activation start date was November 28, 2023, for 90 days and members activated within seven and eleven days of SDOB signature, an approval that is typically an 18-to-24-month cycle. These crews executed the Air Force Reserve's first involuntary activations in over 20 years. Air Force Reserve C-17s from the 445th Airlift Wing at Wright-Patterson AFB, Ohio supported Levant operations within 72 hours to meet U.S. Central Command requirements and seamlessly assumed mission responsibilities from Regular Air Force mission partners. Additionally, unit-equipped C-5s from the 337th Airlift Squadron, Westover ARB, Massachusetts in support of USTRANSCOM missions joined with the 709th Airlift Squadron, a Classic Association C-5 unit from Dover AFB, Delaware to support Levant requirements. Total support has included 779 Reserve volunteers and 557 who were activated for over 68,000 man-days. Having Air Force Reserve aircrews share taskings over the winter holidays allowed the Regular Component aircrews to prepare for a potential surge in 2024.

*Training with Allies and Partners*

Building ties to Allies and partners also occurs during training events. One recent example occurred during RESOLUTE SENTINEL '23 – a Combined, Joint and Total Force (CJTF) exercise in South America. Over 750 U.S. service members took part working closely with partners from the Americas. The Air Force Reserve represented half of all U.S. participants and led the Air Component portion, PATRIOT FURY. Twenty-five Air Force Reservists served in key roles in the CJTF including the Vice Commander and several key staff positions. Working closely with members of the Air National Guard and Air Force Special Operations Command, Reservists enabled ACE operations in planned and unplanned scenarios from multiple locations. They worked around late cargo flow, delayed Peruvian approvals and retrograde airlift to execute missions on time without delaying the exercise.

In addition to offering Reserve Airmen realistic training, Rally in the Pacific offered a chance to work closely with the Philippine Air Force. At the request of our Philippine partners, U.S. Air Force Reservists demonstrated a Joint Precision Airdrop System airdrop to their Air Force. This was a priority task for the Pacific Air Forces Commander and the Commander of the Philippine Air Force.



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### Reserve Special Missions

In addition to supporting the Space Force and the Regular Component of the Air Force, the Air Force Reserve expands the DAF teamwork efforts by partnering with and supporting multiple federal and civil organizations. We routinely participate in humanitarian aid, disaster relief and scientific research efforts. The Air Force Reserve provides direct support to civil authorities through the execution of Modular Aerial Spray System (MASS), Modular Airborne Firefighting System (MAFFS) and Weather Reconnaissance missions which use specially modified C-130 aircraft.

#### *Modular Aerial Spray System*

The 910th Airlift Wing's (AW) 757th Airlift Squadron (AS) from Youngstown ARS, Ohio, operates the Department of Defense's only aerial spray capability. In FY 2023, the 757 AS conducted 8 MASS missions for a combined total of 89 operational, positioning and support sorties, treating 138,397 acres and applying 33,766 gallons of product. These missions control insect populations, eliminate undesired and invasive vegetation, and disperse oil spills in large bodies of water. The 910 AW was selected for conversion to the C-130J from FY 2024 to FY 2026. The first aircraft is expected to arrive in July 2024.

In FY 2022, acceptance testing of the first Electronic Modular Aerial Spray System (EMASS) was completed. It represents a decade long acquisition project to insure the sustainability of the Aerial Spray program. EMASS provides additional capacity and more accurate calibration for precise application of products when compared to our aging legacy MASS. Military Type Certification (MTC) for the EMASS on the C-130H was completed in January of 2024, ensuring final certification for EMASS to be used on the C-130H. A full spray season is planned for the C-130Hs using both the MASS and EMASS systems. EMASS has not been approved for the C-130J. Military Flight Release (MFR) for EMASS on the C-130J was completed in February 2024 and testing is scheduled between 18 and 29 March 2024. The approval process for testing EMASS on the C-130J remains ongoing and we expect completion in FY 2027. Pending a successful test of the EMASS on the C-130J, we would have the ability to fly spray missions under the MFR until the MTC is complete. Reserve Aircrew flew EMASS on the C-130H under MFR for almost two years before the MTC was complete. If testing is successful, procurement of 4 additional EMASS units will take place in the next 18 to 24 months. In 2025, we project a full spray season, with both MASS and EMASS on C-130H and EMASS only on the C-130J. In 2026, a limited spray season will occur with EMASS on C-130Js only. In 2027, we project a truncated spray schedule as additional EMASS units arrive and a full and normal spray schedule in 2028.

#### *Modular Airborne Firefighting System*

The MAFFS is another specialty mission the Air Force Reserve supports, conducted by the 302d Airlift Wing from Peterson Space Force Base, Colorado. As the only Title 10 Aerial Firefighting asset available for direct tasking, the 302 AW's MAFFS mission supports U.S. Northern Command's Defense Support to Civil Authorities and represents 25 percent of MAFFS assets in the Department of Defense. The Air Force Reserve's MAFFS capability mobilized between 3 August and 6 September 2023 and represented 90.3 employment hours and over 185.2 thousand gallons of retardant delivered during Pacific Northwest, Northern California, Northern Rockies and the Northern Great Basin wildfires. FY 2023 was the second year of limited MAFFS use in the Continental United States causing proficiency and currency to decline within the MAFFS community. The 302 AW has explored options to operate overseas in support of Allies

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and partners experiencing wildfires, which would help crews maintain proficiency and currency while also building ties. EMASS has been procured with National Guard and Reserve Equipment Appropriation (NGREA) funds.

### *Weather Reconnaissance*

The United States military has been flying into hurricanes since the Second World War. Today, the Air Force Reserve maintains the only operational military weather reconnaissance unit in the United States. The 53d Weather Reconnaissance Squadron (WRS) is the only Department of Defense unit that conducts aircraft reconnaissance missions into severe tropical weather during hurricane season and flies winter storm missions off both coasts of the United States. Stationed in Keesler AFB, Mississippi, their WC-130Js fly out of bases throughout the U.S. Gulf coast, California, Hawaii and the Caribbean to conduct operations which improve forecast accuracy up to 30 percent, enabling commanders and civil authorities to make informed, fiscally responsible decisions to protect personnel and assets during extreme weather events year-round. This is a low-density, high demand capability.

In FY 2023, the 53 WRS flew 135 missions with 1,577 flight hours, the highest in the past 9 fiscal years. This included 469.2 hours in support of 35 West Coast Atmospheric Rivers and East and Gulf Coast requirements. The 53 WRS also flew 1107.9 hours of hurricane reconnaissance across 18 storms in the Atlantic, Caribbean, Gulf of Mexico and East Pacific Ocean, supporting 151 Lead Federal Agency requirements and safeguarding of forces throughout the Western hemisphere.

Mission modernization and resourcing is essential to the expanding weather reconnaissance mission sets that support our military and civilian population across the United States. The Air Force Reserve using a combination of Weapons System Sustainment and NGREA funds to sustain and provide for hardware and software upgrades, some of which are still in progress. With requested funding from Congress in the FY 2025 budget, the Air Force Reserve can continue supporting weather reconnaissance as well as aerial spray and aerial firefighting missions, ensuring that the Air Force Reserve can defend and protect the Nation through teamwork with the Total Force, as well as federal, state and local agencies.

## Summary

Our FY 2025 budget request is carefully crafted to ensure interoperability with the Regular Component and the Joint Force. This request will continue weapon system modernization, positioning our force to be more capable, survivable and lethal, while also enhancing support to our Reserve Airmen and their families. In an era of GPC and increased resource constraints, we will continue to provide strategic depth and operational surge capacity to meet pacing threats in the most cost-effective manner. Reserve Airmen will continue to leverage our unique blend of military and civilian experience to bring outsized impact to the DAF's Operational Imperatives. For this to occur, we need to take care of our Airmen—the FY 2025 Presidential Budget request allows the Air Force Reserve to do just that. With your continued support, we are confident the Air Force Reserve will remain prepared to deliver effects anytime, anywhere to fly, fight and win in air, space and cyberspace.