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COMBAT AIR POWER

Joint Mission Assessments
Could Enhance Investment
Decisions

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Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee:

I am pleased to be here today to discuss the combat air power capabilities of the United States. There has been considerable discussion in recent months about the Department of Defense's (DOD) aircraft modernization programs. Much of the discussion has focused on whether DOD will be able to "afford" the large number of new combat aircraft it currently plans to buy. Today, I would like to focus more on joint warfighting requirements, the aggregate capabilities of U.S. combat air power forces to meet those requirements, and DOD efforts to place greater emphasis on joint considerations in program and budget decisions.

My testimony is based on a comprehensive report of the major issues related to U.S. combat air power.¹ This report synthesized the findings from our reviews of six key air power mission areas² and other recent reviews of individual weapon systems. The overall objective of our work was to determine whether sufficient information is being developed from a joint perspective to help the Secretary of Defense decide whether new air power investments should be made, whether programmed investments should continue to be funded, and what priority should be given to competing programs. To provide context for this assessment, we examined major changes in U.S. air power capabilities since the Persian Gulf War in relation to those of potential adversaries.

Today, I would like to make three points based on our work:

1. The United States possesses a larger inventory of modern high-performance fighter and attack aircraft than any other country. The capabilities of these aircraft continue to be enhanced through key improvements in the aircraft, the weapons they use, and the targeting information they are provided. Conversely, the air defense forces of potential adversaries have not been substantially improved and, for the foreseeable future, are not likely to pose a serious threat to U.S. air power's successful execution of its missions.
2. Long-range bombers and missiles and attack helicopters are increasingly supplementing fighter and attack aircraft in providing the capability to attack ground targets. The result is an extensive inventory of

¹Combat Air Power: Joint Mission Assessments Needed Before Making Program and Budget Decisions (GAO/NSIAD-96-177, Sept. 1996).

²These include interdiction, air superiority, close support, air refueling, suppression of enemy air defenses, and surveillance and reconnaissance.

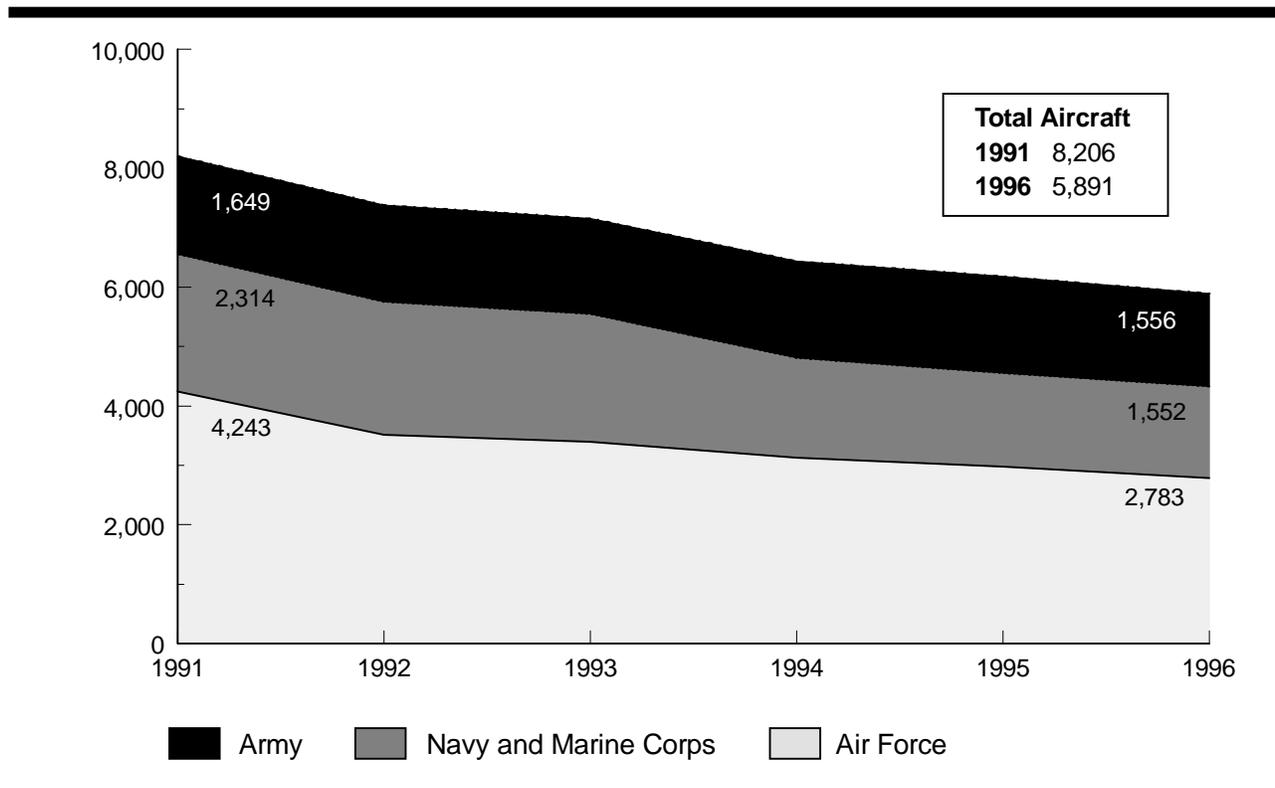
capabilities to accomplish many of the same missions. Yet, the services are modifying current systems and developing new systems at substantial costs, even though they have not compared aggregate capabilities with joint mission needs.

3. Comprehensive assessments of requirements and capabilities from a joint mission perspective would aid the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to carry out his responsibilities as the senior military advisor to the Secretary of Defense on the requirements, programs, and budgets of the military services. While progress has been made in achieving a stronger joint orientation in DOD, ongoing cross-service mission studies should allow DOD to identify unnecessary duplications in capabilities and make difficult program tradeoff decisions so defense resources can be used more efficiently.

Although Smaller, Current U.S. Air Power Forces Remain Highly Capable

Despite downsizing, U.S. forces remain highly capable. While DOD has reduced its number of combat aircraft, it has retired older aircraft while adding new aircraft and enhancing the capabilities of existing aircraft. These actions have yielded a force that, in many areas, is more capable than the larger Cold War force. DOD's total inventory of combat aircraft has declined from about 8,200 in 1991 to about 5,900 in 1996, as shown in the following chart. The quantities shown include aircraft designated for operational missions as well as aircraft set aside for testing and training.

GAO Changes in Inventory of Attack and Fighter Aircraft, Attack Helicopters and Bombers



Source: Departments of the Army, the Navy, and the Air Force.

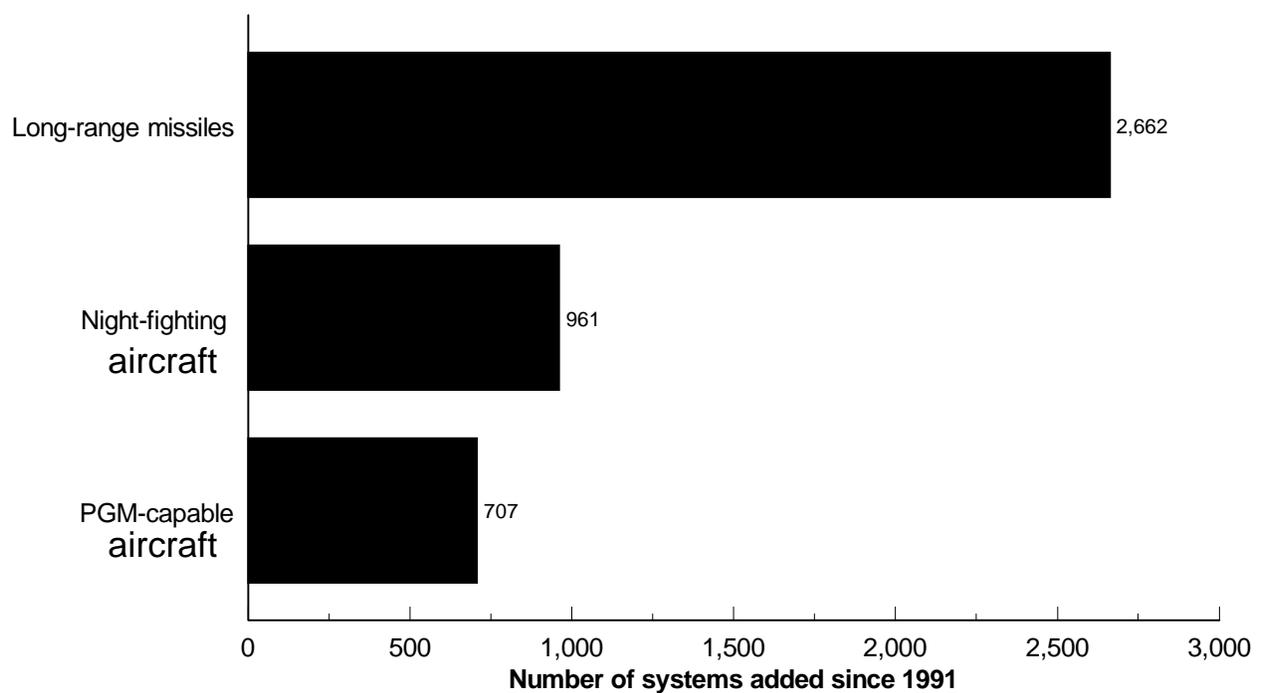
Air Force, Navy, and Marine Corps fixed-wing fighter and attack aircraft and Air Force bombers have been reduced the most—from about 6,400 in 1991 to about 4,100 in 1996. The services have achieved these reductions primarily by retiring older aircraft that have been costly to operate and maintain. At the same time, they have added many newer model aircraft—about 70 F-15E strike fighters, about 250 F-16 multimission

fighters, and about 200 F/A-18 fighter and attack aircraft. These assets have bolstered U.S. combat air capabilities.

The total number of attack helicopters has only declined by 79. Although 600 older AH-1 Cobras were retired between 1991 and 1996, both the Army and the Marine Corps have added newer more capable helicopters. These include about 150 Apache attack helicopters and 300 OH-58D Kiowa Warrior armed reconnaissance helicopters in the Army and about 70 Cobras in the Marine Corps.

Although DOD now has fewer aircraft, many of the aircraft being retained have been qualitatively improved. For example, DOD has improved the navigation, night fighting, target acquisition, and self-protection capabilities of many aircraft and has made more aircraft capable of delivering advanced munitions. These capabilities contributed significantly to the effectiveness of tactical aircraft in the Gulf War. DOD is also substantially increasing its inventory of long-range missiles and precision-guided munitions (PGM). It is presumed that the growth in PGMS could reduce the number of flights and aircraft needed to destroy designated targets. The following chart shows the added capabilities in these areas since 1991.

GAO Increases in Key Air Power Capabilities Since 1991



Note: Long-range missiles include the Tomahawk cruise missile and the Army Tactical Missile System. Night-fighting aircraft includes those designed to permit use of night-vision goggles and/or those equipped with infrared detection devices. PGM capability refers to the ability of aircraft to autonomously employ PGMs using laser designators.

Source: Departments of the Army, the Navy, and the Air Force.

Threats to U.S. Air Power Are Limited

Potential regional adversaries currently possess defensive and offensive weapons that are considered technologically inferior to U.S. forces.

Improvements in these capabilities are dependent on the acquisition of weapons and technology from outside sources.

The current air defense capabilities of potential adversaries have limitations. Regarding aircraft, these nations have only small quantities of modern fighters for air defense. The bulk of their air forces are older and less capable, and their fleets are not expected to be bolstered by many modern aircraft. Similarly, for their surface-to-air defense forces, these nations tend to rely on older systems for high-altitude long-range defense and to use the more modern and effective systems, when available, at low altitudes and short ranges. The most prevalent threats are assessed to be overcome by U.S. aircraft with the use of tactics and countermeasures. Furthermore, the location of the most threatening air defense assets tends to be known.

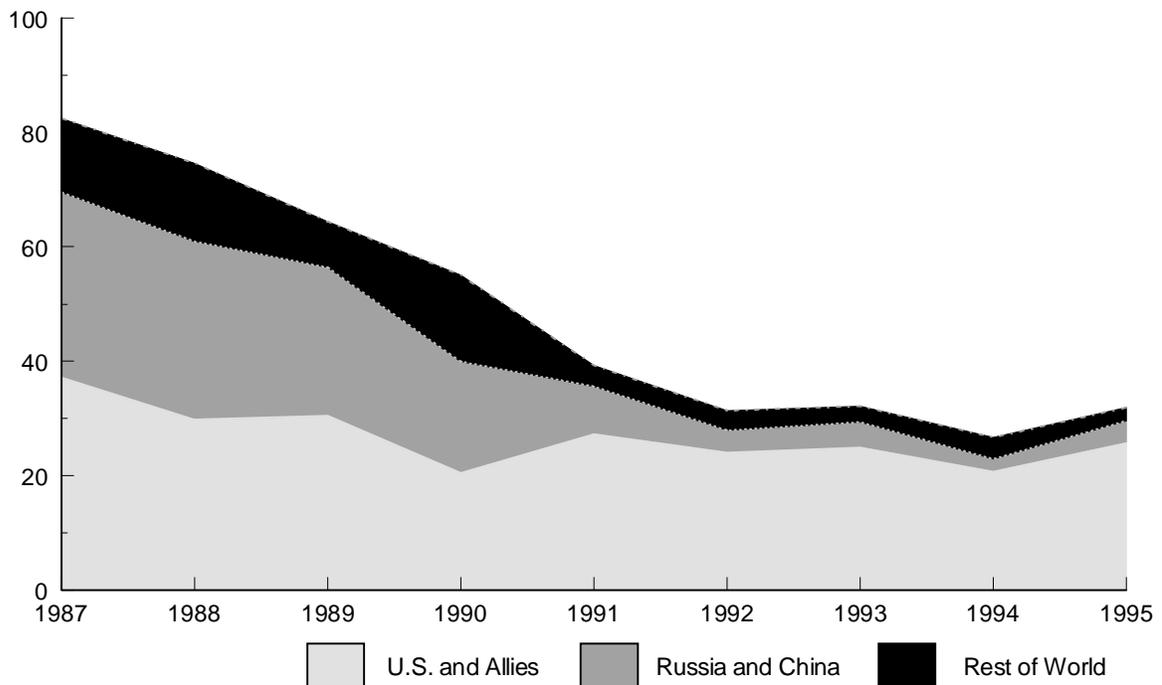
For offensive operations, like defense forces, the bulk of potential adversaries' aviation forces, which may comprise significant numbers, are older and less capable aircraft. The same assessment applies to long-range missile capabilities. Some potential adversaries possess significant quantities of ballistic missiles, but they tend to be of low technology and of limited military use. The potential land-attack cruise missile capabilities of these nations are low and are not expected to increase in sophistication until the middle of the next decade, if at all. Though the threat to military forces from conventionally armed missiles is low, the possibility that such weapons could be used for political purposes—and possibly armed with nuclear, biological, or chemical warheads—may affect the employment of U.S. forces.

Air defense is a high priority of potential adversaries, and it is believed most potential adversaries are trying to improve their effectiveness and survivability by upgrading existing systems, purchasing more modern weapons, and using camouflage and decoys. These improvements, if achieved, could delay U.S. combat air power from achieving air superiority quickly and cause higher U.S. and allied casualties. These nations would also like to improve their aviation and ballistic and cruise missile capabilities.

Several factors are likely to inhibit these nations from improving their capabilities quickly. First, they lack the indigenous capability to develop and produce the advanced systems that would permit them to significantly enhance their capabilities. Therefore, advances will likely be confined to upgrades of existing equipment and the possible acquisition of advanced

systems from outside sources. Second, worldwide arms transfers have fallen significantly in recent years and are not expected to reach former levels any time soon. The following chart illustrates both the decline in the international arms market between 1987 and 1995 and the dominance of Western suppliers.

GAO Trend in the Worldwide Transfers of Conventional Arms, 1987-1995



Source: World Military Expenditures and Arms Transfers, 1996, (preliminary data) Arms Control and Disarmament Agency.

Third, the United States and its allies are cooperating to limit conventional arms transfers to certain nations. For example, the United Nations imposed sanctions on several nations in the 1990s. These sanctions prohibited the transfer of weapons or commercial technology that could

be used for military purposes to these nations. No measurable arms transfers were made to these nations after the sanctions were imposed.

Fourth, the high technology weapons that could seriously threaten U.S. air power are expensive, no matter what the source. For example, an advanced air defense system like the Patriot PAC-3 costs over \$100 million for each battery. Given the state of the economies of potential adversaries, it would be difficult for them to purchase many high-cost systems.

To summarize, available information suggests that no potential adversary possesses sufficient capabilities to prevent U.S. forces from achieving their objectives in a military engagement. This was perhaps best captured recently by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff when he said: “the delta between us and anyone who could possibly wish us ill today is greater than it certainly has ever been in my lifetime.” This advantage is expected to carry into the next century, according to the Congressional Budget Office (CBO). In a January 1997 report,³ CBO, using Office of Naval Intelligence data, estimated that in 2005, the United States would have about twice as many of the latest generation fighters as Russia, and about 15 times as many as China, North Korea, Iran, and Iraq combined. Efforts by potential adversaries to narrow this delta will likely continue to be inhibited by declines in the post-Cold War arms market, national and international efforts to limit the proliferation of conventional arms, and the high cost of advanced weapons.

Extensive Capabilities Exist Among U.S. Forces to Accomplish the Same Missions

During the Cold War, the military services invested hundreds of billions of dollars to develop largely autonomous combat air power capabilities, primarily to prepare for a global war with the Soviet Union. The Air Force acquired bombers to deliver massive nuclear strikes against the Soviets and fighter and attack aircraft for conventional and theater-nuclear missions in the major land theaters, principally Europe. The Navy built an extensive carrier-based aviation force focused on controlling the seas and projecting power into the maritime flanks of the Soviet Union. The Army developed attack helicopters to provide air support to its ground troops. The Marine Corps acquired fighter and attack aircraft and attack helicopters to support its ground forces in their areas of operation. The United States ended up with four essentially autonomous air forces with many similar capabilities, but each largely operated within its own warfighting domains.

³A CBO Study, *A Look at Tomorrow's Tactical Air Forces*, January 1997.

Today, there is no longer a clear division of labor among aviation forces based on where they operate or what functions they carry out. The air power components of the four services are now focused on joint conventional operations in regional conflicts with many of the assets having the same missions. Most of the likely theaters of operation are small enough that all types of aircraft can reach most targets. And while the number of combat aircraft has been reduced, the reductions have been largely offset by an expansion in the types of assets and capabilities available to the combatant commanders.

The overlapping air power capabilities of the current force structure do provide combatant commanders with operational flexibility to respond to any circumstance. The question is whether maintaining the current levels of duplication, in the post-Cold War era, is necessary and is the most efficient use of resources. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff said recently that, in his judgment, unnecessary duplications exist. From our reviews of the interdiction, air-to-air combat, and close support of ground forces mission areas, it is evident that U.S. capabilities are overlapping and substantial. Planned investments in new weapons may, in some cases, be adding little needed military capability at a very high cost.

The total inventory of assets that can be used to interdict enemy ground targets illustrates the condition that exist. As shown by table 1, each of the services have extensive inventories of weapons that can be used to attack ground targets.

Table 1: DOD's Multiple Assets to Interdict Enemy Ground Targets

Service	Category	Asset	1996 Inventory	
Air Force	Fixed-wing aircraft	F-15E	203	
		F-16	1,450	
		F-117	54	
		A/OA-10	369	
		B-1B	95	
		B-2	17	
		B-52	66	
Navy and Marine Corps	Fixed-wing aircraft	A-6E	63	
		AV-8B	184	
		F-14A/D	323	
		F/A-18	806	
		Helicopters	Cobra	176
		Missiles	Tomahawk	2,339
		Army	Helicopters	Apache
Cobra/Kiowa Warrior	758			
Missiles	Army Tactical Missile System			1,456

Source: Departments of the Army, the Navy, and the Air Force.

Based on our analysis of DOD's targeting data, the services collectively have at least 10 ways to hit 65 percent of the thousands of expected ground targets in two major regional conflicts. In addition, interdiction assets can provide 140 to 160 percent coverage for many types of targets. Despite this level of capability, the services are modifying current platforms and developing new systems that will provide new and enhanced interdiction capabilities over the next 15 to 20 years at a total estimated cost of over \$200 billion. This figure excludes the Joint Strike Fighter program, which will also provide interdiction capabilities.

In the area of air-to-air combat—a critical mission to achieve and retain air superiority—over 600 combat-designated F-14 and F-15 fighter aircraft are initially dedicated to this mission. This number far exceeds the quantity and quality of fighter aircraft potential adversaries are projected to have. In addition, about 1,900 other combat-designated multirole fighter aircraft, such as F-16s and F/A-18C/Ds, while not dedicated to air superiority missions, are very capable air superiority fighters. These aircraft could assist F-14s and F-15s to defeat enemy fighters before being used for other

missions such as interdiction and close support. The capabilities of these fighter aircraft have also been enhanced extensively with the procurement of advanced weapons—particularly over 7,400 advanced medium range air-to-air missiles—and through continuing improvements to these weapons and to support platforms, such as airborne warning and control system aircraft, that help the fighters locate, identify, track, and attack enemy aircraft at great distances. Despite these unparalleled capabilities, the Air Force plans to begin to replace its F-15s with 438 F-22 fighters in 2004, at an estimated average unit procurement cost of about \$111 million, and to design and develop the multirole Joint Strike Fighter, which will have air-to-air combat capabilities.

Decisions on Air Power Programs and Priorities Require Comprehensive Joint Assessments

Through key legislation, Congress has sought to better integrate the capabilities of the military forces, provide for improved military advice to the Secretary of Defense apart from that provided by the military services, and strengthen the joint orientation of DOD. Although DOD has improved its joint orientation in many respects, the services continue to heavily influence defense decisions, particularly those related to investments in weapons. Stronger military advice from a joint perspective is needed if the Secretary is to objectively weigh the merits not only of combat air power but also of other defense capabilities and programs.

The Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986 made the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, responsible for providing military advice from a joint perspective to the Secretary of Defense. As senior military advisor to the Secretary, the Chairman is expected to advise the Secretary on the requirements, programs, and budgets of the military services. The act directs the Chairman to (1) provide advice on the priorities of requirements identified by the regional commanders, (2) determine the extent to which service program recommendations and budget proposals conform with the regional commanders' priorities, (3) submit alternative program recommendations and budget proposals within projected resource levels to achieve greater conformance with these priorities, and (4) assess the military requirements for defense acquisition programs. The National Defense Authorization Acts for Fiscal Years 1993 and 1996 further directed the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to examine how DOD might eliminate or reduce duplicative capabilities and authorized him, through the Joint Requirements Oversight Council (JROC), to assess military needs from a joint warfighting perspective.

Although progress is being made, we believe that the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff needs to do more to effectively carry out these responsibilities. For example, DOD established a joint warfighting capabilities assessment (JWCA) process, under which assessment teams are examining issues related to 10 selected mission areas. Established in 1994 to support the JROC, these assessment teams have identified ways to improve joint warfighting and have proposed other operational improvements. However, the teams so far have had little impact in reducing unneeded overlaps and duplication in existing capabilities. Also, they have not been directed to delve into more controversial issues related to U.S. air power, such as assessing alternative ways to modernize U.S. air power capabilities.

Additionally, we found little evidence that the JROC, with the support of the JWCA process, has developed specific proposals to transfer resources from one service to another to meet higher priority needs. A review of Future Years Defense Program data also indicated no notable shifts in acquisition funding among the services between fiscal year 1994 and 2001. A key goal in expanding the JROC's role in 1994 was, according to the Office of the Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, to enhance force capability by assisting the Chairman in proposing cross-service transfers of resources. Additionally, Joint Staff officials told us that funding has not been shifted from one program to another as a result of the JWCA team assessments to reflect higher priorities from a joint perspective.

In assessing the impact of the JROC and the JWCA process on combat air power, we examined two important ultimate outputs of the process—the Chairman's Program Assessment and Program Recommendations to the Secretary of Defense. Under its broadened mandate, the JROC has been made a focal point for addressing joint warfighting needs. It is expected to support the Chairman in advising the Secretary by making specific programmatic recommendations that will, among other things, lead to increased joint warfighting capability and reduce unnecessary redundancies and marginally effective systems, within existing budget levels. However, in reviewing the Chairman's 1994 and 1995 program assessments and 1995 program recommendations, we found little to suggest that this type of advice is being provided. The documents did not offer specific substantive proposals to reduce or eliminate duplication among existing service systems or otherwise aid in addressing the problem of funding recapitalization. In fact, the Chairman's 1995 Program Assessment indicated a reluctance on the Chairman's part, at least at that point, to propose changes in service programs and budgets. While the

Chairman expressed serious concerns in his assessment about the need for and cost of recapitalizing warfighting capabilities and said that the power of joint operations allows for the identification of programs to be canceled or reduced, his advice was to defer to the services to make such choices.

DOD Must Overcome Certain Obstacles to Achieve a Stronger Joint Orientation

DOD must overcome several obstacles that have inhibited JWCA teams and others that try to assess joint mission requirements and the services' aggregate capabilities to fulfill combat missions. Major impediments include (1) a dearth of information on joint mission requirements and the aggregate capabilities of the services to meet those requirements, (2) weak analytical tools and databases to assist in-depth joint mission area analyses, and (3) the services' resistance to changes affecting their programs.

Comprehensive Joint Mission Area Analyses Have Not Been Performed

DOD has done little analysis to establish joint mission area requirements for specific combat air power missions or to plan the aggregate capabilities needed by each of the services to meet those requirements. Studies that may provide such information on several key air power missions have been initiated but have not yet been completed. Without such analyses, decisions on the need for new weapon systems, major modifications, and added capabilities evolve from requirements generation and weapons acquisition processes that encourage each service to maintain its own view of how its own capabilities should be enhanced to meet warfighting needs.

In its May 1995 report, the Commission on Roles and Missions of the Armed Forces substantiated what our reviews of defense programs have found, that "each Service is fully engaged in trying to deliver to the CINCS (regional commanders) what the Service views as the best possible set of its specific capabilities—without taking into account the similar capabilities provided by the other Services." The analyses used to generate weapon system requirements for new acquisition programs are most often narrowly focused. They do not fully consider whether the capabilities of the other services to perform a given mission mitigate the need for a new acquisition or major modification.

Significant limitations in study methodologies and the use of questionable assumptions that can result in overstated requirements are apparent in three DOD bomber requirements studies we examined. None of the studies

assessed whether fighters or long-range missiles could accomplish the non-nuclear mission more cost-effectively than bombers. One of the studies, done by the Air Force and used by it to estimate and justify bomber requirements, assumed that only bombers would be available to strike time-critical targets during the first 5 days of a major regional conflict. This assumption seems to conflict with DOD planning guidance, which assumes that Air Force and Navy combat aircraft would arrive early enough in theater to attack targets at the outset of a major regional conflict.

The services' analyses of alternatives to meet mission needs can also be limited. A 1995 study done at the request of the Chairman of the JROC identified this as a problem. The study team found that analyses done to support JROC deliberations frequently concentrate only on the capability of the DOD component's proposed system to fill stated gaps in warfighter needs. Potential alternatives are given little consideration.

Thus, while DOD has decision support systems to assist senior officials in making critical decisions, reviews like those done by the JROC and by the staff of the Office of the Secretary of Defense are very dependent on the services for analytical support. They do not have the benefit of information on joint mission requirements and the aggregate capabilities of the services to meet those requirements to aid them in their oversight and review role. They are heavily dependent on the services to provide much of the supporting analyses. Therefore, such oversight reviews can provide little assurance that there is a valid mission need, that force capabilities are being properly sized to meet requirements, and that the more cost-effective alternative has been identified.

Better Analytical Tools and Data Are Needed to Improve Joint Assessments

DOD officials acknowledge that current analytical tools, such as computer models and war games used in warfighting analyses, need to be improved if they are to be effectively used to analyze joint warfighting. They told us these tools often do not accurately represent all aspects of a truly joint force, frequently focus on either land or naval aspects, and often do not consider the contribution of surveillance and reconnaissance and command and control assets to the warfighter. Some models are grounded in Cold War theory and must be augmented with other evaluations to minimize their inherent deficiencies.

DOD representatives and analysts from the military operations research community also observe that there are serious limitations in the data to

support analyses of joint capabilities and requirements. Presently, anytime DOD wants to study joint requirements, a database must be developed. Concerns then arise over whether the databases developed and used are consistent, valid, and accurate. Efforts have been made in the past to collect joint data and develop appropriate models for analyzing joint warfare. These efforts, however, fell short, as there was not a consistent, compelling need across enough of the analytic community to do the job adequately.

A current major initiative aimed at improving analytical support is the design and development of a new model—JWARS—that will simulate joint warfare. JWARS will seek to overcome past shortcomings and will include the contributions of surveillance and reconnaissance and command, control, and communication assets to the warfighter. This initiative was developed as part of DOD's joint analytic model improvement program because of the Secretary of Defense's concern that current models used for warfare analysis are no longer adequate to deal with the complex issues confronting senior decisionmakers. Under this program, DOD will upgrade and refine current warfighting models to keep them usable until a new generation of models to address joint warfare issues can be developed. The new models are intended to help decisionmakers assess the value of various force structure mixes. As part of this broad initiative, DOD also intends to develop a central database for use in mission area studies and analyses.

Desire to Have Consensus Can Inhibit Needed Changes

DOD has reduced its force structure and terminated some weapon programs to reflect changes in the National Military Strategy and reduced defense budgets. But further attempts to cancel weapon programs and reduce unnecessary overlaps and duplications among forces are likely to generate considerable debate and resistance within DOD. Because such initiatives can threaten service plans and budgets, the tendency has been to avoid debates involving tradeoffs among the services' systems. The potential effects of program reductions or cancellations on careers, the distribution of funds to localities, jobs, and the industrial base also serve as disincentives for comprehensive assessments and dialogue on program alternatives.

The Chairman's 1995 Program Assessment indicates the difficulty the Chairman has had in identifying programs and capabilities to cancel or reduce. While the Chairman recognized that the increasing jointness of military operations should permit additional program cancellations or

reductions, he noted that the Joint Chiefs—despite the added support of the JROC and the JWCA process—had been unable to define with sufficient detail what should not be funded. The Chairman recommended that the Secretary of Defense look to the military services to identify programs that can be slowed or terminated. He said for this to happen, however, the services would have to be provided incentives. The Chairman recommended that the Secretary return to the services any savings they identify for application toward priority recapitalization or readiness and personnel programs.

Joint Staff officials indicated that the Chairman’s reluctance to propose changes to major service programs may be attributable to the need for the Chairman to be a team builder and not be at odds with the service chiefs over their modernization programs. Adoption of the Chairman’s proposal could lead the services to reduce or eliminate programs and otherwise more efficiently operate their agencies, including reducing infrastructure costs. However, it is difficult to appreciate how these unilateral decisions by the services will provide for the most efficient and effective use of defense resources.

Conclusion

Air power plays a pivotal role in national military strategy. The United States’ dominant air power capabilities provide combatant commanders the capability to seize and control the skies, to hold vital enemy capabilities at risk, and to help destroy the enemy’s ability to wage war. To maintain this dominance and ensure a combat-ready force in the future within likely defense budgets, the Secretary of Defense will need to make difficult decisions in at least two critical areas—how best to reduce unneeded duplication and overlap in existing capabilities and how to modernize the force in the most cost-effective manner. To aid the Secretary in making such decisions, DOD needs to conduct broader, more comprehensive joint assessments.

To be of most value, such assessments should be done on a continuing basis and should, at a minimum, (1) assess total joint warfighting requirements in each mission area; (2) inventory aggregate service capabilities, including the full range of assets available to carry out each mission; (3) compare aggregate capabilities to joint requirements to identify shortages or excesses, considering existing and projected capabilities of potential adversaries and the adequacy of existing capabilities to meet joint requirements; (4) determine the most cost-effective means to satisfy any shortages; and (5) where excesses

exist, assess the relative merits of retiring alternative assets, reducing procurement quantities, or canceling acquisition programs.

These assessments, while very demanding, should provide insights into how best to scale back air power modernization plans, reduce duplicative capabilities, and otherwise make more efficient use of defense resources. An example of such an assessment is the ongoing deep attack weapons mix study which was recommended by the 1995 Commission on Roles and Missions. The objective of the first phase of the study is to identify the appropriate mix of different munitions, focusing on tradeoffs between standoff and direct attack weapons and the needed inventories of different munitions. The second phase will focus on the potential that the growing inventory and the increasing capabilities of weapons could allow some consolidation of the ships, aircraft, and missiles that deliver the weapons. The results of this study should aid the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to advise the Secretary on the requirements, programs, and budgets of the military services. The services could also draw upon the study's database to broaden their analyses of mission needs. Similar studies need to be completed in other mission areas.

One concluding thought. Last month the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, in his 1997 posture statement, said

“With all of the talk about today’s dangerous world and the difficulties Americans have faced, it is easy to overlook the fact that today the United States and its Allies are much safer than they were in the dark days of the Cold War. This ‘strategic pause,’ where the United States has no adversaries who are global powers, is providing us with the time to regroup, reflect on the challenges ahead, and prepare America’s forces for the next millennium.”

To take full advantage of this opportunity—“strategic pause”—and make the most efficient use of defense resources to prepare U.S. forces for the next century, DOD needs to proceed with the type of comprehensive assessments I have described. Such assessments will provide the type of information required to make the hard tradeoff decisions that will be needed.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my prepared statement. I would be happy to respond to any questions you or other members of the Subcommittee may have.

Selected GAO Reports Related to This Testimony

Combat Air Power: Joint Assessment of Air Superiority Can Be Improved (GAO/NSIAD-97-77, Feb. 1997).

Combat Air Power: Joint Mission Assessments Needed Before Making Program and Budget Decisions (GAO/NSIAD-96-177, Sept. 1996).

U.S. Combat Air Power: Aging Refueling Aircraft Are Costly to Maintain and Operate (GAO/NSIAD-96-160, Aug. 1996).

Navy Aviation: F/A-18E/F Will Provide Marginal Operational Improvement at High Cost (GAO/NSIAD-96-98, June 1996).

Combat Air Power: Assessment of Joint Close Support Requirements and Capabilities Is Needed (GAO/NSIAD-96-45, June 1996).

Combat Air Power: Reassessing Plans to Modernize Interdiction Capabilities Could Save Billions (GAO/NSIAD-96-72, May 1996).

Defense Infrastructure: Budget Estimates for 1996-2001 Offer Little Savings for Modernization (GAO/NSIAD-96-131, Apr. 1996).

Combat Air Power: Funding Priority for Suppression of Enemy Air Defenses May Be Too Low (GAO/NSIAD-96-128, Apr. 1996).

Navy Aviation: AV-8B Harrier Remanufacture Strategy Is Not the Most Cost-Effective Option (GAO/NSIAD-96-49, Feb. 1996).

Aircraft Requirements: Air Force and Navy Need to Establish Realistic Criteria for Backup Aircraft (GAO/NSIAD-95-180, Sept. 1995).

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Tactical Aircraft: Concurrency in Development and Production of F-22 Aircraft Should Be Reduced (GAO/NSIAD-95-59, Apr. 1995).

Cruise Missiles: Proven Capability Should Affect Aircraft and Force Structure Requirements (GAO/NSIAD-95-116, Apr. 1995).

Army Aviation: Modernization Strategy Needs to Be Reassessed (GAO/NSIAD-95-9, Nov. 1994).

**Selected GAO Reports Related to This
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Tactical Aircraft: F-15 Replacement Is Premature as Currently Planned
(GAO/NSIAD-94-118, Mar. 1994).

Strategic Bomber: Issues Relating to the B-1B's Availability to Perform
Conventional Missions (GAO/NSIAD-94-81, Jan. 1994).

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