

The 2015 Statement of Policy

The strategic interests of the United States stretch across the globe. As our Armed Forces continue to shrink in an era of fiscal constraint, the capabilities of airpower to deter our adversaries and, when necessary, respond rapidly and forcefully are increasingly the principal options for our nation to protect our interests.

Our United States Air Force remains the tip of the spear for this vital capability.

With the Air Force struggling to cope with historic challenges, this Association has focused on several critical issues.

I. AIR FORCE PEOPLE

AFA believes it is imperative to recognize that military and veteran benefits are earned through years of sacrifice, service, and in many cases, grievous personal injury and disability. Any changes to the military compensation structure should be based on a holistic assessment of the total compensation package, rather than piecemeal cuts. Any changes to the current compensation and retirement system should include grandfathering the current force. The all-volunteer force has served this nation very well and any new compensation package must continue to attract quality recruits and retain them.

DOD now seeks to slow the growth of various pay and benefit categories. Officials propose to raise TRICARE fees, tighten the calculations of cost of living adjustments, limit retiree pay, and cap annual raises.

AFA is working with the Secretary of Defense's office to continue the dialogue about changes to the current system, and has testified before the Congressionally-mandated Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission. It is the nation's duty to honor commitments to those serving today and to those who have served in the past.

II. VETERANS

AFA supports sufficient funding to permit the VA to support our veterans by providing expedient and accurate disability compensation processing, community-based education, employ-

ment assistance, timely access to healthcare, and greater assistance to combat homelessness during and after their transition to civilian life. We will engage to assure that pending legislation will support veterans' needs but not negatively impact the Air Force Medical Service's primary mission. AFA will also be diligent in advocating for the restoration and sustainment of the Air Force Medical Service's infrastructure to assure access to care, operational mission support, and wartime capability.

AFA believes our veterans have earned access to quality and timely

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healthcare, whether in the VA system or elsewhere.

III. FORCE STRUCTURE

Our USAF is to the point where it does not have the force structure to meet wartime requirements. AFA believes the services must be allowed to manage force structure within their means as they see fit.

AFA also supports measures such as a Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) Commission to align installations with force structure.

IV. MODERNIZATION AND RECAPITALIZATION

AFA believes that the Air Force should not be forced to mortgage its future—not to mention the security of the nation—by relying on the aircraft of yesteryear. Recapitalization is a firm requirement if the Air Force is to prevail in future combat.

We cannot afford to bandage old airplanes as potential adversaries roll new ones off the assembly line. AFA urges the Administration and Congress to commit to keeping the F-35 program on track and, if possible, to move to

faster production to bring it into service sooner. The F-35 is a "must-have," essential in any future conflict with a foe with modern defenses.

AFA believes the KC-46A will revolutionize the air mobility mission. If anything, the number of KC-46As should be increased, given the large number of old tankers that need to be replaced.

The Air Force remains on course to acquire 179 advanced KC-46A Pegasus tankers as a first installment to replace some aged KC-135s—all of which are more than 50 years old.

AFA applauds the Administration's decision to move forward expeditiously with the bomber program and give it adequate funding even in the face of sequestration. We call on Congress to likewise support this effort.

The Air Force has the duty to maintain a modern, reliable, and highly capable strategic nuclear force to deter aggression, promote stability, and provide extended protection to our allies and friends. The new long-range strike bomber will have the ability to launch stand-off weapons as well.

AFA applauds the Air Force's effort to hold down costs while maintaining strong space capabilities. However, this Association believes it is important for the Air Force to carefully assess the use of commercial satellites for some military payloads, tapping industrial firms for space launch, and any and all other means for lowering the high cost of space power. Space capabilities are essential to the Joint Force Commander's ability to deter aggression and to execute globally the entire range of military operations.

It expects to meet these needs with the continued production of the Space-Based Infrared System and Advanced Extremely High Frequency satellites. The Air Force has now had more than 100 consecutive successful national security launches—an extraordinary achievement.

AFA believes the Air Force must continue to enhance its ISR capabilities for operations in the contested environments it will face. This will require updating the current mix of ISR assets, giving significant and sustained attention to modernizing Air Force systems and capabilities.