

Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS)

Air Force Priorities for a New Strategy with Constrained Budgets

Moderator:

Anthony H. Cordesman
Arleigh A. Burke Chair in Strategy

Speaker:

General Norton A. Schwartz
Chief of Staff of the U.S. Air Force

Location: Washington, D.C.

Date: Thursday, February 9, 2012

*Transcript by
Federal News Service
Washington, D.C.*

MR. CORDESMAN: Ladies and gentlemen, some of you who've been in Washington for a few years may realize that every meeting in the Hill does not end promptly on time, but thank you very much. The general has been kind enough to say that he will give us a full hour, which should give us time for him to make his presentation and get to the questions. I do not think he needs a long introduction from me. He has a background in special forces, in transport command, dealing with long-range strike; four years as chief of staff. That's about as many credentials as anyone can have.

But I do want to give a brief commercial for the Air Force, if you'll excuse one; that is, it is the first service to put on the web at its website both an explanation of how its plans fit into the new strategy and how it will be dealing with the budget. I know the general's going to get into a lot of these details in his speech, but I really thought this was a very impressive act on the part of the Air Force, one you should be aware of and one you can easily find on the website.

And General, why don't we get to the substance of things?

GENERAL NORTON SCHWARTZ: Thank you. (Applause.) Thanks, everybody. Ladies and gentlemen, again, thank you for waiting. Much appreciated. And I apologize for being late. Two congressional delegations had extensive interests in the proposal, the – you know, the budget drop next week, and so I had to pay due deference. But thank you for waiting here.

It is a pleasure to be here. And again, you know, our kids serve – our airmen, soldiers, sailors, Marines, Coast Guardsmen serve – with tremendous distinction. And I would argue that we had a landmark year in 2011. It's a year that began here in – you know, just with the advent of the Arab Awakening, and in a few months emerged into the – what the occurrences in Tunis and then subsequently in Cairo; and in a few days, actually, President Mubarak stepped down from his nearly 30-year reign. And after observing these events unfold across North Africa and the Levant and then the Arabian Peninsula, we were called upon, the Air Force and the Joint Team, called into action – (coughs) – pardon – called into action on March 19th to help enforce the U.N. sanctioned no-fly zone over Libya.

And we should not forget that the Air Force and the armed forces were already participating in surge operations some 5,500 miles away with a humanitarian relief effort given the concurrent disasters that occurred in Japan at the same time. And performing magnificently, airmen, among others, were responsible for evacuating 7,500 American citizens, and delivering 60 percent, some 5 million pounds of relief supplies, providing the vital intelligence, surveillance and – (coughs) – pardon me – reconnaissance of the incident location from our remotely piloted aircraft and ultimately providing much-needed measure of comfort for those who suffered so dearly from those disasters.

And when you consider all that, the Air Force remained fully engaged in Afghanistan, and Iraq, in the latter days of the Iraq mission, and commenced yet another theater-level operation all at the same time. And I might just add that you – if you recall the president was also traveling on state visits in South America at the time, which consumes not a trivial amount of (aluminum ?). And so this was our definition of March madness.

Can I – Chris (sp), are you in the room? Can I get a throat lozenge, do you mind? I've been fighting a little bit of a cold. I need that, please.

So all considered, I think these concurrent operations constituted, as I said, our version of March Madness, and I think demonstrate the Air Force ability to provide full-spectrum airpower that ranges across intercontinental distances – Japan to Libya to Iraq and Afghanistan – with unmatched speed and certainly a range of capability that spans the operational continuum. And it reaffirms, I think, the Air Force's capacity to surge in a matter of hours to meet the wide-ranging airpower requirements – something that our joint teammates and our international partners have come to rely upon.

But given the future security environment that continues to unfold with greater ambiguity, and along clearly with the budget pressures that I just discussed at length with two delegations on the Hill, it's appropriate to ask ourselves what options must we have for meeting these future challenges. And so the department's been engaged for the better part of the last six months in a comprehensive reevaluation of our national interests and the role that the U.S. military will play in achieving these interests. And in the new defense strategic guidance, we recognize the broad contours of the national security interests that will endure, but that many specific geographic and technological and security dimensions of our global – globalized world will clearly continue to evolve.

And so from a geopolitical perspective, the U.S. will – is rebalancing its resources and our focus toward the Indo- and the Asia-Pacific, where many economic and diplomatic opportunities have become increasingly vital to our core national interests. The nation clearly will sustain its hard-earned foothold in and around the primary locus of violent extremism in the broader Middle East and in South Asia, and will tailor our commitments in Europe, strengthening the trans-Atlantic alliance in the 20th century that clearly prevented the Cold War from becoming hot, and which, as we venture now until clearly well into this century, will remain, I think, a key partnership for ensuring stability in an uncertain world.

So to prepare, we as an Air Force had to make hard choices, both to reshape and to resize our Air Force. And we realized that no matter how tremendous our service men and women are, simply physics will limit the number of places that a smaller Air Force can perform – certainly concurrently. And so, with preservation of a highly responsive and effective force as our paramount consideration – in other words, a ready force, not a hollow one – we determined that careful reductions in equipment and personnel were necessary.

We essentially traded some size for sustained quality so that, although smaller, we will still be an unmatched Air Force with agility, flexibility and a readiness to engage in rapid succession across the full range of threats and contingencies. In short, this is about maintaining our status, I think fairly earned – and some of the international partners here can comment on this – as the best air force on the planet and certainly the one that's the most feared.

So the new strategy also calls for rebalancing our surface forces from a land-intensive focus to a broader more maritime strategic posture. But we must not forget, ladies and gentlemen, that what covers a hundred percent of the land and the maritime is air and space. And so from a capabilities point of view, the new defense strategy emphasizes air power as

fundamental to its major priorities, such as deterring and defeating aggression, projecting power in anti-access and area-of-denial environments, preventing the spread of weapons of mass destruction, conducting space and cyber operations and maintaining the preponderance of the nation's nuclear deterrent.

And toward a broader cross-domain posture, initiatives such as Air-Sea Battle will ensure an enhanced and more strategically oriented partnership between the nation's air and sea services. We will assure America's freedom of navigation and action wherever we have national interests, and ensure the – that the nation has access to the global commons, in particular the vital lines of communications and transit that are beyond any national jurisdiction.

In providing the nation's ability to project global power, we also ensure the nation's global access for diplomatic and development access and our ability to conduct nonmilitary missions, such as humanitarian and disaster relief efforts. Therefore, the Air Force, with its global responsibilities, remains committed to providing the nation with four core capabilities – and they are enduring capabilities – air and space control, global intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance, global mobility and global strike – plus the unique ability to provide high-capacity command and control of air, space and cybersystems, integrating these capabilities across the spectrum of operations.

While air power will enable us to repeat scenarios similar to the enforcement of the no-fly zone over Libya – that is, Operation Unified Protectorate – it is not necessarily the template for all future conflicts. But it did facilitate the nation's contribution for seven months in Libya, at approximately the operating cost of one week in Afghanistan and with no loss of coalition lives. And all the while, we retained the ability to withdraw quickly, as a – as quickly as the coalition was assembled.

This operation demonstrated, I think, in a very compelling fashion air power's versatility, its rapidity, its reversibility – all attributes that the new defense strategic guidance suggests are the future for our armed forces. But during this time of belt tightening, we had to make some very difficult choices in order to remain superb, even as we become leaner and shed some capacity. And considering that our budget, excluding contingency funding, has been flat since 2004, with a 12 percent real decline since 2009, we fully expect that we will be required to make yet additional tough calls.

In the broadest sense we pursued a strategy of balancing risk to include the deliberate acceptance of additional risk in order to align with the new strategies' requirements for the joint force being able to conduct one large-scale, combined arms campaign in one region while denying the objectives of, or imposing unacceptable costs on an, opportunistic aggressor in a second region.

And in order to achieve maximum savings and an acceptable level of risk, the Air Force has identified, in the fiscal year 2013 budget submission which we'll make next week formally, 200 fighter mobility ISR aircraft for divestiture in fiscal '13 toward a total of 286 aircraft through the program period.

And as a general principle, we favored multirole systems over those that are more specialized and emphasized more efficient common configuration of those systems that are retained, such as our modified C-5Ms, the upgraded C-17s, F-22s, F-15Cs and Es and of course F-16s.

Retiring – how are you? Got something for me here?

STAFF: Yes, sir.

GEN. SCHWARTZ: I appreciate it.

STAFF: Thank you, sir.

GEN. SCHWARTZ: Thank you.

Retiring entire aircraft types where possible generally has the benefit of enabling elimination of entire support and training infrastructures, thus producing greater efficiency. But if fleet retirement was not viable or economical, then we evaluated options for eliminating the least capable or the highest cost aircraft, in terms of cost of operations and sustainment.

In total, we estimate the divestiture will likely save a bit under \$9 billion over the five year defense plan. And specifically, this divestiture includes retiring or reclassifying 123 fighters, 102 A-10s and 21 F-16s, amounting to about a seven squadron reduction. This leaves 54 combat-coded fighter squadrons that maintain, with acceptable risk, the requisite level of fighter capability and capacity while providing a bridge – an important bridge to the delivery of the fifth-generation F-35 fighter.

On the mobility side we plan on divestiture of some 130 aircraft that exceed requirements, due to the new nations – the nation's new driven strategic guidance that reduces the ground forces. This enables retiring 27 C-5As because of their historically lower mission-capable rates relative to 223 C-17s and 52 C-5Ms that will remain; also divesting the niche C-27 force structure of 38 aircraft in favor of the more versatile C-130 platform but retiring 65 of the oldest C-130s to streamline operations and maintenance activities.

So in addition to retaining 275 C-17 and C-5M strategic airlifters, we will continue to operate 318 C-130 H- and J-model aircraft. And as a bridge to the initial deliveries starting in FY '16 of new KC-46 tanker, our aerial refueling fleet will be 453 aircraft strong after the planned retirement in '13 of 20 KC-35 aircraft.

Finally, we will adjust the numbers in the ISR fleet, beginning with the divestiture of 18 Block 30 RQ-4 Global Hawk aircraft in favor of the more mature and proven U-2 sensors and aircraft. This specific initiative – that is, the trade space between U-2 and the Global Hawk Block 30 – generates savings in the neighborhood of \$2 1/2 billion over the program period. We will also divest 11 C-26s – RC-26s, and retire a single E-8 J-STARS aircraft that is damaged beyond economical repair.

And in order to ensure maximum versatility and effectiveness of current and future weapons systems, our modernization strategy will focus on those areas that we deem most critical. For example, we have minimized reductions – and in some cases, even increased our investments – in our top acquisition priorities, such as the KC-46 tanker; our variant of the Joint Strike Fighter; the long-range strike family of systems; the GPS III satellite system; and, of course, remotely-piloted aircraft. Overall, that has meant slowing, in some cases even terminating, lower-priority programs like the C-130 avionics modernization program as well as the Defense Weather Satellite System.

The other critical element of force structure, of course, is people – adjustments from which naturally flow changes driven by the aircraft numbers I just described. Therefore, personnel reductions, however painful, will be necessary; and they are on the order of 10,000 Guard, Reserve and active airmen. But the rub is not only in sheer numbers; it is also in maintaining the right and proper active-to-reserve component ratio.

And there is no doubt – none – absolutely none – that our investment in the Reserve components have been and will remain smart investments. Through the creative use of active, Guard and Reserve associations, we have integrated our collective capabilities in all major Air Force mission areas. And the return on investments there has quite simply been invaluable, and surely it will remain so.

As a total force, we now are more ready, more sustainable and more capable of meeting many surge and rotational requirements, such as those that have evolved over the last decade. But through two decades of military end-strength and force-structure reductions, the active/reserve mix has shifted. In 1990, the Reserve component represented 25 percent of the total force end strength. Today it is 35 percent. And in the same period, the reserve component ownership of iron increased from 23 (percent) to 28 percent.

In relation to requirements, these numbers represent the reality that the active component has been reduced to the point at which capacity cannot be reduced further without harmful effects to the benefits that I just mentioned: readiness, sustainability and the ability to surge at a – and rotate at a sustainable tempo. Additionally, there are some functions for which the entire total force relies on the active component to address predominantly – for example: recruiting, training, experiencing and equipping of the future force. So in order to sustain the total force capabilities and effectiveness, we must restore and maintain an appropriate active and reserve balance that is consistent with current realities and likely future trends.

It therefore follows that the Air National Guard and the Air Force Reserve will necessarily be involved in all the analyses and decisions involving and affecting the total force. Together, we made tough calls – admittedly not with complete unanimity – to ensure that the total force remains viable to fulfill the surge and rotational requirements of the new strategic guidance; to ensure that the active component retained the recruiting, the training and experiential base to sustain the total force; and to ensure that the reserve component remains relevant and engaged in both enduring and evolving missions.

I stand by what Chief of the Air Force Reserve Charlie Stenner and the chief of the Air National Guard, Bud Wyatt, and I wrote last week in an the Air Force Times op-ed piece: that the active component, Guard, and Reserve have worked and will continue to work closely together charting the total force's future.

And even more important than force structure alone, of course, is our readiness. Already, we have assumed risk that we deemed acceptable and manageable, with a strategy for weapon system and facility sustainment and modernization that avoids a hollow force. A \$487 billion defense spending reduction over 10 years is something for which the department has spent a(n) extensive amount of time and effort. And it is best reflected in the new strategic guidance and certainly the budget that will be formally released next week.

But we have no illusions that the road ahead is going to be easy, and – as I discovered this morning on the Hill. (Laughter.) But I do think it's manageable if – if – we all deal with this in an unemotional fashion. I would add that I think further reductions – for example, as a result of sequestration – in my view, are untenable, that such reductions would clearly send us back to the strategic drawing board, particularly if the cuts are executed across the board and without respect for the defense strategy we just unveiled.

And so, in the end, as Secretary Panetta has been saying since he took office, any further salami slicing of the budget beyond the \$500 billion in cuts for which we've been planning will have severe impacts on our ability to maintain our force structure, our readiness, and ultimately our combat effectiveness. So, in any foreseeable circumstance, the road ahead won't be easy.

I harken back to observing the leadership of the Air Force during the Reagan buildup. I was a relative youngster then. And this is a different setting, but we're up to it just as they were. And as an Air Force we are focused on maintaining an agile, a flexible and effective force that remains prepared to defend America and her interests across a range of contingencies. And it is worth noting that although we have withdrawn ground forces from Iraq, and continue to work toward a drawdown in similar fashion in Afghanistan, we should expect that the Air Force and probably the Navy presence will remain to a significant degree long after significant U.S. ground forces presence has diminished in the region.

In fact, historically, as land forces withdraw from active combat, the relative requirement for airpower typically increases. And so when our unmatched joint team fought a brilliant and decisive campaign in Operation Desert Storm, for example, the land forces returned home weeks and months later. Meanwhile, America's airmen – that is, of any service affiliation – continued flying in operations Northern Watch and Southern Watch over Iraq for a few dozen years afterwards, thereby maintaining America's toehold until ground troops were ordered back into Iraq for Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2003.

The decades-long combat operation in the skies over Iraq demonstrates that American airpower is most certainly not a birthright. Rather, it is the result of dedicated and unrelenting work of America's airmen. And so although we achieved a magnificent milestone on December 17th – the first time in twenty years that the Air Force did not fly a mission over some portion of

Iraq – some U.S. airmen will remain and interact in Afghanistan in order to assist our partners with their requests for airpower training and for other operational support.

You can expect highest level of energy, and commitment, and professionalism as we proceed now into this new geostrategic environment. And you can expect airmen who will continue to innovate, adapt and to do whatever is necessary to safeguard the hard-fought gains and lessons of the past 10 years in counterinsurgency operations, even while we remain vigilant for full-spectrum threats on the horizon and even amidst the intensifying budget pressures and resource constraints that we face.

Ladies and gentlemen, again, I appreciate your time today. I appreciate your patience in waiting for my arrival, and also for CSIS – a magnificent organization in this town for many years – for hosting this event. Many thanks for your continuing support of our airmen, of our joint teammates, and very importantly, our families. Thank you very much. (Applause.)

MR. CORDESMAN: Ladies and gentlemen, I'm going to apologize in advance. We can't answer every question. Let me again note that the Air Force has answered at least some of them in the two white papers that it has on its website.

But there are a number of questions that people have asked in several different forms that focus on the key issues that the general has just raised. I think one of them is: Could you define in, I guess, more precise terms what changes the focus on the Air-Sea battle will mean for the Air Force?

GEN. SCHWARTZ: It occurs at three levels. The first level is, rather than ad hoc, episodic or occasional collaboration between the two services that have a global perspective and operate, as I indicated earlier, in the commons and elsewhere, it will – what Air-Sea battle has done and will do is establish and maintain a regular, normalized level of collaboration and interaction between the two services – not the exception, but the rule.

At the operational level, the question is not for the future, but the question: With the inventories we currently possess, how can the two services leverage each other in order to better perform the missions that we are assigned? And there – you know, a – you might argue a far-fetched example, but all of you know that essentially there are two stealth platforms in the Department of Defense portfolio. One is the B-2 and the other is the submarine fleet. Now, has anybody ever given any thought to whether these two stealth platforms can reinforce one another's mission effectiveness? Maybe that's fanciful. But I would argue had we not pursued this line of effort with the Navy, such a question would never get any attention at all.

And thirdly, at the materiel level, clearly there are opportunities for us in the Navy to do things that are prudent, economic. And perhaps the Global Hawk-BAMS collaboration is a very good example. Why base these two assets at different locations? Why should we use two different depots? And perhaps, you know, why should we have two different training pipelines? This is the materiel aspect of Air-Sea battle, and I think also offers substantial promise.

MR. CORDESMAN: I know you've already touched on the happy word "sequestration." There is a question here – and several of them: Have you examined what would happen if you

really were suddenly confronted with either sequestration or major new cuts in terms of specific impacts on the Air Force?

GEN. SCHWARTZ: Clearly, what we have – what we have done with this program proposal is reduce capacity. And we took care to avoid, to the extent that we could, reducing capability. In other words, we have less depth, but not a less versatile force. It is absolutely clear that, if we go further, we will not only be required to reduce capacity, but capabilities. We will be able to do fewer things, not just fewer things at the same time. Additionally, the reality is, is that – is that the strategy that we spent several months putting together as the prelude to the program, and the – and the logic behind the choices that we made, would have to be re-opened. And so, you know, my shorthand for sequestration is surgery performed by a plumber – extremely high-risk, and something I hope that there is a way ahead to avoid.

MR. CORDESMAN: I wonder if you could provide perhaps a clearer picture of what an emphasis on Asia means, in terms of changes in the Air Force posture in Asia and CONUS, and the extent to which moving forces from Europe might affect this.

GEN. SCHWARTZ: Clearly the tilt toward the Asia-Pacific does a couple of things. It clearly emphasizes what I would refer to as our lily pads in the Asia-Pacific region: those installations that we have access to in – you know, in host nations of traditional allies and potential other coalition partners that might evolve over time. So that – the footprint that America has in the Western Pacific – most recently reflected by the Marine re-allocation, relocation in part to Australia – reflects this larger effort that clearly is under way and needs to be sustained for all of the services.

The Navy is proposing to homeport several assets in Singapore. We clearly are keeping an eye on our major operational platforms as well: Guam, Kadena – (inaudible) – in Japan, South Korea, so on. With respect to systems, Tony, I think clearly the vast distances of the Asia Pacific underwrite the logic behind our pursuit of a – of a long-range-strike family of systems, and it – and it – as it very visibly appears in the new strategy, and in something I think that clearly is important to the Air Force and the larger joint team as we go forward.

MR. CORDESMAN: There are two aircraft that people have asked a lot of questions about (I generally ?) have heard of. One is the F-22, and the other is the F-35. The F-22 questions range from, I guess, accident investigation down to the status and deployment of the force. The F-35 questions begin at the IOC date and go onwards. And I just wonder if you could bring us up to date.

GEN. SCHWARTZ: OK. Hundred eighty-six F-22s – it is – it is the current fifth-generation platform in our fleet. Tier two, we are looking for versatility. While it is the premier air-to-air platform on the planet – the premier air superiority machine – we, through an improvement program, seek to increase its multirole capability to do both suppression of enemy air defenses and distraction of enemy air defense missions.

We have experienced an issue with the on-board oxygen system on the airplane over the last number of months. An extensive study, an effort – engineering effort – and one done by the

Air Force Scientific Advisory Board, has just concluded, and the report will be available shortly. And through that effort, we have not identified a specific engineering fault, but a number of ways that we can assure that adequate oxygen, in a very high-performance airplane that operates over a very extensive altitude band, protects the operators and maintains their physiological capacity to rock and roll.

In terms of the F-22 inquiry by the DOD inspector general, quite simply this is something that actually is fairly routine. They – the DOD IG has a mandate to assure that accident investigations comply with service instructions – in our case, 51-503 – and that the findings of a particular accident investigation reflect back on the evidence that was collected. And again, this is not specific to this weapons system. They simply chose to pursue this inquiry, and naturally we will – we will support that completely.

With respect to F-35: F-35, ladies and gentlemen, is the future of tactical aviation for the United States Air Force, for the Marine Corps, in large measure for the Navy, and for at least 10 and perhaps more other international partners. Yeah, we're committed to the F-35. At the same time, it's not at any price. And so we clearly have expectations on the part of the manufacturer to help us, in a budget-constrained environment, buy more airplanes. So if airplanes are cheaper, we buy more. If they are more expensive, we buy less.

This is – this is the reality: There ain't no more money. And so the emphasis here is on government side to perform exquisite program management, to be transparent with our industry partners. And on the industry side, we would expect to have the production lines normalized, to reduce the time it takes from discovery of anomalies in test until they are incorporated in the active production line to well less than two years, and of course to control cost. We all succeed together if we follow that basic formula.

MR. CORDESMAN: You mentioned our withdrawal from Iraq. There is a question too about, what is our posture going to be? What is our level of cooperation with our Gulf allies going to be in the Gulf, now that we have withdrawn from Iraq and we face a growing challenge from Iran?

GEN. SCHWARTZ: We have about 50 airmen that are currently a part of the Office of Security Cooperation-Iraq. And certainly the Air Force is prepared to expand that contribution of trainers and to assist our partners in the Iraqi Air Force who we know well. In fact, General Anwar's son is in pilot training at Laughlin Air Force Base as we speak and will graduate in March. And General Anwar and I are going to go down and give remarks at the graduation ceremony together.

We want them to be an air force that can serve Iraqis' national security interests and maintain sovereignty of Iraqi airspace, among other missions. And so clearly we're prepared – as soon as the two governments agree – to provide training and assistance to the Iraqi Air Force in any form that they choose. And as you're aware, they have already come to the table for procurement of F-16 Block 50 class airplanes as a beginning.

MR. CORDESMAN: And Iran?

GEN. SCHWARTZ: Iran clearly is a national security interest for many nations – certainly ours. Their pursuit of nuclear capability is a strategic concern. And their – the potential for misbehavior in the – in the Straits of Hormuz is clearly another strategic concern. And, if called upon, I have no doubt that the armed forces of the United States will deal with whatever contingencies might unfold there.

MR. CORDESMAN: We have two sets of questions about the new systems. One is the timetable, the nature of the new bomber. Someone from industry might be asking this question, whether you could have time for a competitive buy-off or sole source. I don't know if you'd care to comment on –

GEN. SCHWARTZ: Sure, sure. Here's the deal: The independent variable for the long-range-strike family of systems, and the bomber in particular, is cost. And so the – we are going to make our best effort not to design – overdesign an airplane. We're going to deliver a bird that provides the essential capabilities that we need; improve it over time, no doubt; but we are not intent on delivering a capability that is extravagant, that is excess to our absolute need.

And the idea here is to produce an airplane in the mid-'20s that would begin delivering in the mid-'20s; that would connect both with intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance capabilities – all right, electronic warfare capabilities, other (sensors ?) of off-board capabilities; that will allow us to produce a penetrating platform that is sufficiently affordable that we can buy in the numbers. We are not going to do the B-2 again. That is not in the cards.

MR. CORDESMAN: There are similar questions which really come down to the future of unmanned aerial vehicles. And I notice that in your white paper, the increase in the number of UAVs is roughly equivalent to the number of combat aircraft you've cut during the same period. But this is a pretty open-ended set of questions.

GEN. SCHWARTZ: Remotely piloted aircraft have a – in my view a permanent place in our Air Force. And we have postured ourselves accordingly, both in terms of the force structure itself, establishing a career path for remotely-piloted-aircraft operators and support personnel and so on. But at least in the near term – certainly the next 10 years, 20 perhaps, maybe more – we should not take the example of Iraq and Afghanistan, which were essentially benign airspace, to suggest that remotely piloted aircraft are any-time any-place machines. They are not.

Contested airspace is a different place for a remotely piloted aircraft. And so it's my conviction that, while the balance clearly is shifting toward remotely piloted aircraft, that there will continue to be at least – my estimate is for the next 30 years – a place for a manned tactical aircraft. And I would ask you candidly, would you be comfortable with a nuclear-laden remotely piloted aircraft? I wouldn't be.

And this is just but one example of why we need not to be too doctrinaire or too ideological about this. We need to look at the missions; we need to understand the environments; we need to respect that – the technology that exists today and how it may advance; and then make the best of all that.

MR. CORDESMAN: There's another set of broad questions which relate to, what are the strategies and priorities in this kind of budget environment, in two areas. One is information technology and the other is space systems.

GEN. SCHWARTZ: IT, and cyber specifically, clearly is a growth area. And collectively, we are struggling to get our arms around this. The nascent U.S. Cyber Command, Keith Alexander's organization, our 24th Air Force counterpart organizations and the other services are deliberately working ahead. There are a multitude of policy and jurisdictional and statutory issues here as well. But from an Air Force point of view, we are increasingly dependent on our networks to execute the missions that were assigned the way they need to be executed. And so defending those networks is a profoundly important mission for our cyberoperators.

There are places for more offensive use of cyber. And in those areas where it would support traditional Air Force missions, we are – we are pursuing that kind of capability as well. What am I talking about? Clearly, you could try to mitigate the risk associated, let's say, with an SA-20 kinetically; or perhaps you could do it nonkinetically, with electrons. In any case, that's the focus of our Air Force in the IT area or the – this cyber area.

With respect to space, we're actually in pretty good shape there. We are – we are embarking on the recapitalization of our major space constellations. We've finally got the first advanced extremely high frequency satellite into its geosync orbit – which, by the way, was a real act of rocket science. As you may know, the kick-motor failed, and in over nine months we maneuvered this thing with thrusters that offer about a half a pound of thrust – about the same as blowing on a piece of paper. And over nine months our space operators got that \$2 billion satellite into operating orbit – not a trivial achievement.

CYBRS (ph). I know it's got history, but there's one on board, another to be launched in the not-too-distant future. We just launched the fourth Wideband Global system to succeed the discus constellation of satellites. The bottom line – and GPS III is moving as we speak. And so the nature of space, we're not predominate there. It's becoming both congested and contested. But we will – we will continue to support the various missions we have there with a very robust space capability.

MR. CORDESMAN: One of the key elements of the strategy is to improve our cooperation with regional and coalition partners in terms of interoperability, planning, the rest. And I wonder if you could highlight the Air Force priorities in these areas.

GEN. SCHWARTZ: It goes from the tactical to the strategic. But in the – in the broadest sense, we're not talking about mature partners here – although certainly we have long-term relationships underwritten by foreign military sales activities, training, professional military education, liaison at many levels and so on. But with respect to nascent air forces in particular, we have a capability not just to talk about platforms and instruction and offering specific machines, but more broadly, what is it that's required to operate an Air Force, to operate an airfield? Pavement expertise and air traffic control and security of the air drone and airfield operations these – are skills that one can transfer that a nascent Air Force require. And that is one area that we are not reducing. We have that capacity, and we'll continue to maintain that

broader constellation of liaison with skills that—and maintenance, logistics and so on—that will produce more competent air forces as partners. The one thing we were unable to do in this program was to sustain dedicated force structure associated with building partner capacity, specifically the light lift and the light strike initiatives. There simply wasn't enough head space to pursue those as dedicated Air Force force structure.

MR. CORDESMAN: I have an unsigned offer to reduce your budget problems by paying \$150 for an A-10. (Chuckles.) And there are some other A-10 questions as well.

GEN. SCHWARTZ: Sure. Here's the deal. You know, if you accept the philosophy that in a smaller force versatility becomes all the more important, that those assets that are more multi-role are – have greater value—and so the reduction in A-10s—and by the way, there are still 236 A-10s remaining in the force structure; it's not like they're going away – that we opted to move toward a more multi-role mix emphasizing F-16s.

So the A-10 is a noble airplane, but one should not accept the hype that the Air Force is walking away from close air support because we're reducing the A-10 force structure. Nothing could be further from the truth. And believe me, our youngsters on the ground in Afghanistan know that a weapon delivered from a B-1 is as meaningful as a 30 millimeter delivered from an A-10, properly done.

MR. CORDESMAN: OK. General, I know that you have been very generous with your time and that you're pressed by it. I haven't seen any gestures from your staff, but they are looking mildly disapprovingly.

GEN. SCHWARTZ: We're doing fine.

MR. CORDESMAN: Question, really—today DOD is recommending to Congress that women may be able to broaden their roles in combat. And what is the impact this is going to have on the Air Force?

GEN. SCHWARTZ: Modest, because we already—99 percent of our skills are open to females as it stands today. Those that are limited right now are primarily the battlefield airman skills that are involved in close combat kinds of situations. But we will be opening, for example, our air liaison officer opportunities at the battalion level to females. That is an example of one area that the new department policy will permit.

The bottom line, though, for our Air Force—and I think this is true certainly for the other services—is you've got to go where the talent is. And 20 percent of our Air Force is female, and that's where the talent is.

MR. CORDESMAN: In another completely different area, do you see the gradual emergence of something approaching a peer threat from the Chinese air force?

GEN. SCHWARTZ: They are striving to arrive at a broad-based multiple-mission capability in airspace and cyberspace. So the short answer is it's clear to me that, you know, the

Chinese are in pursuit of that objective. And it suggests to me that we need to be cognizant of that and responsive to that reality with respect to our own capabilities.

MR. CORDESMAN: You know, we have a host of highly technical questions, but General, I think you've been extraordinary generous with your time. Let me again note that a lot of what the general has said is supplemented in these two Air Force documents at airforce.mil. And may I ask all of you to suggest—or rather, thank the general in the usual manner. (Applause.)

GEN. SCHWARTZ: Thank you for your time.

(END)