Land-Based Tactical Aviation

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CURRENT TAC AIR PROBLEMS

Force Size

We are currently spending more for fighter (both land and sea-based) investment than in any previous peacetime period: about $12 billion per year as compared to $6 billion in the mid-fifties in constant FY 80 dollars. Despite this, we are buying only one-seventh as many fighters as in the mid-fifties—400 per year today versus 3,000 then. U.S. fighter forces have shrunk from 18,000 to 7,000 over the same period and would have shrunk far more if the Services had not grossly underfunded operating expenses and stretched the operational life of their fighters to 20+ years.

Readiness

Our first line land-based fighter, the Air Force's F-15, is currently ready (fully mission capable) about 35 percent of the time. Deploying a squadron of them usually requires stripping 2 or 3 other squadrons of their spares and test equipment. In fact, in a 1980 inspection, the USAF's prestigious 1st Fighter Wing (F-15s) was found incapable of deploying with 3 weeks of prior notice.

The radar early warning aircraft which is intended to control these fighters, the E-3 AWACS, shows only about 15 percent readiness. And our tactical all-weather bomber, the F-111 is only slightly more ready. The only Air Force tactical aircraft in current inventory which approaches 70 percent readiness is the A-10, our least complex attack jet.

In the even more important area of personnel readiness, our pilots are averaging about one-third as many flights per month as Israeli pilots average. It is widely known that both pilots and maintenance crews in the air reserves and Air National Guard are noticeably superior to those in the regular forces. Retention of active fighter pilots has dropped to an all-time low, primarily because of inadequate flying time and lack of confidence in Service leadership and only secondarily because of low pay. The retention of skilled maintenance NCOs, though less publicized, is in an even more critical state.
force effectiveness after the war
WHAT SHOULD BE DONE

The following recommendations should be considered for implementation:

1. A wide variety of new NMD programs should be pursued to replace the A-10.

2. The development of an improved version of the A-10 should proceed. This improved version should be designed to perform better against advanced cruise missiles and other high-speed targets.

3. The use of laser-guided weapons should be increased, and the development of new laser-guided weapons should be accelerated.

4. The use of electronic warfare systems should be increased, and the development of new electronic warfare systems should be accelerated.

5. The use of strategic bombers should be increased, and the development of new strategic bombers should be accelerated.

6. The use of manned aircraft should be increased, and the development of new manned aircraft should be accelerated.

7. The use of unmanned aircraft should be increased, and the development of new unmanned aircraft should be accelerated.

8. The use of space-based sensors should be increased, and the development of new space-based sensors should be accelerated.

9. The use of ground-based sensors should be increased, and the development of new ground-based sensors should be accelerated.

10. The use of cyber warfare systems should be increased, and the development of new cyber warfare systems should be accelerated.

11. The use of biological warfare systems should be increased, and the development of new biological warfare systems should be accelerated.

12. The use of nuclear warfare systems should be increased, and the development of new nuclear warfare systems should be accelerated.

13. The use of chemical warfare systems should be increased, and the development of new chemical warfare systems should be accelerated.

14. The use of environmental warfare systems should be increased, and the development of new environmental warfare systems should be accelerated.

15. The use of psychological warfare systems should be increased, and the development of new psychological warfare systems should be accelerated.

16. The use of economic warfare systems should be increased, and the development of new economic warfare systems should be accelerated.

17. The use of political warfare systems should be increased, and the development of new political warfare systems should be accelerated.

18. The use of legal warfare systems should be increased, and the development of new legal warfare systems should be accelerated.

19. The use of religious warfare systems should be increased, and the development of new religious warfare systems should be accelerated.

20. The use of cultural warfare systems should be increased, and the development of new cultural warfare systems should be accelerated.

21. The use of technological warfare systems should be increased, and the development of new technological warfare systems should be accelerated.

22. The use of scientific warfare systems should be increased, and the development of new scientific warfare systems should be accelerated.

23. The use of educational warfare systems should be increased, and the development of new educational warfare systems should be accelerated.

24. The use of sports warfare systems should be increased, and the development of new sports warfare systems should be accelerated.

25. The use of media warfare systems should be increased, and the development of new media warfare systems should be accelerated.

26. The use of entertainment warfare systems should be increased, and the development of new entertainment warfare systems should be accelerated.

27. The use of tourism warfare systems should be increased, and the development of new tourism warfare systems should be accelerated.

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