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An Independent Nonprofit Aerospace Organization

Madam Chairwoman and Ranking Member Graham,

The Air Force Association thanks you and the Subcommittee for your support of our Active Duty, Guard, Reserve, retirees, and veterans of the Air Force, their families and survivors and the concern you have shown for our national security.

We are grateful for your unwavering commitment to the men and women who defend our nation, and appreciate the priority Congress has given personnel issues in the past decade. We also acknowledge the increasingly difficult choices before you in these budgetary times.

Sequestration:

AFA believes the sequestration provision of the Budget Control Act of 2011 is destroying military readiness and endangering national security. It has normalized a dangerously low level of defense spending, constrained defense decision-makers and this new normal has created an unhealthy competition for resources within DOD's base budget.

Sequestration, due to kick back into gear in FY16, will compel an even greater hollowing of the military as we strive to meet national security needs in a very dangerous security environment. In short, our means will not support our stated ends.

A critical issue to AFA is to end sequestration-level defense budgets. We urge lawmakers to end the political stalemate over taxes and entitlement spending and agree to a compromise resolution that will replace sequestration. Otherwise we will be forced to endure: further end strength cuts; aircraft reductions; fewer new aircraft to replace the aging fleet; dangerously low readiness levels; and a diminished ability to recover a quality state of readiness.

Therefore AFA strongly urges Congress to end sequestration and fund our military to levels enabling all components of the Armed Forces to be adequately manned, trained and equipped to effectively address the nation's security challenges today and tomorrow.

Keeping Faith:

We must honor our commitments to those serving today and to those who have served this great nation.

We oppose major erosions to the compensation system, but acknowledge the nation's debt and deficit are a major threat to a healthy United States Air Force and to national security. Military members must be competitively compensated to retain the all-voluntary force. Thanks to increases in compensation and benefits since 2001, our military members are currently adequately-compensated in comparison with their civilian counterparts, when all benefits are included, (healthcare, commissary, education assistance, housing allowances and family support programs). Current USAF retention and recruiting numbers reflect this.

AFA believes any changes in the military compensation structure should be based on a holistic assessment of the total compensation package rather than piecemeal cuts. AFA advocates waiting for the Congressionally-mandated Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission to issue its report before making changes to the compensation structure.

As members of this subcommittee, I urge you to do everything you can to end sequestration and its devastating effects on our national security.

Thank you again for your support of our force, and for the opportunity to offer this testimony from the Air Force Association.

Craig McKinley
President