



Air Force Association

1501 Lee Highway, Arlington, Virginia 22209-1198 (703) 247-5800
An Independent Nonprofit Aerospace Organization

Robert E. (Bob) Largent
Chairman of the Board

April 25, 2007

The Honorable X
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Washington, DC 205XX

Dear Congressman/Senator:

On behalf of the Air Force Association, I want to share with you four significant concerns about our military and, in particular, our United States Air Force.

This is a very difficult time for our country as we seek meaningful policy solutions for the immediate future and pursue appropriate investments for a continued strong national defense. Our brave men and women serving in the Armed Forces are facing increasingly dangerous challenges every day as they represent our Nation's interests around the world and we must ensure that they have the materiel resources and support needed to successfully accomplish their mission -- now and in the future.

The Air Force went to war some sixteen years ago and has yet to return home. And the Air Force and its sister services have been heavily engaged in the Global War on Terrorism for almost six years. Because of the increased worldwide operations tempo, equipment is wearing out much earlier than its planned lifespan and modernization programs have been extended or cancelled due to resource constraints. Couple that with the fact that all of the military services face serious budget shortfalls and it leaves all of the Services at great risk. Let me highlight these four specific Air Force concerns:

1. The average age of Air Force aircraft is now over 24 years old...in some cases, aircraft are over 50 years old...making it the oldest fleet the Air force has flown in its 60-plus year history. We must increase the rate of replacement weapon systems and retire those older, more costly systems in order to maintain current operations tempo and to meet our national security commitments.

2. Demonstrating how serious the overall resource shortfalls are -- just in order to maintain current operations with today's funding levels -- the Air Force has been forced to reduce 40,000 personnel from its ranks over the next four years...while continuing to provide over 5000 Airmen to execute tasks normally performed by Army and Marine Corps personnel on the battlefield. The reductions taken to date are already adding more pressures on operations tempo. Growing our Army and Marine

Corps by 92,000 personnel will require significant Air Force resource plus-ups to support this increase.

3. We're very alarmed about the potential \$1.6B reprogramming request from OSD that proposes to shift \$800M from both the Air Force and Navy military personnel accounts to the Army operations and maintenance account as they await the outcome of the Defense Supplemental Bill. We urge you to pass this legislation now to avoid more adverse impacts on the Services.

4. Today the Air Force unfunded priority list totals over \$16B -- which clearly impacts the Air Force's ability to meet the challenges ahead. You must fund these shortfalls now to ensure the Air Force can sustain its current combat capabilities while building toward future defense needs.

With those immediate needs identified, and considering the significant challenges that our military services face today, the Air Force Association believes our nation is not allocating a sufficient percent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) to support our military. We're currently committing the smallest percentage of GDP to Defense needs since the end of the Vietnam War. In fact, our Nation's commitment of approximately 3.8% of GDP ranked us no better than 29th among world nations. Our Nation can -- and must -- do more to support our Defense requirements. Only then will we be able provide the future security that our Nation demands and deserves.

That said, clearly, the Defense topline will have to be increased substantially to accommodate the current shortfalls and to support the force growth dictated by an uncertain, yet threat-driven future.

We strongly urge you to focus on the four immediate Air Force issues noted above and continue to work closely with the Administration in increasing the needed resources for the Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines and Coast Guardsmen who so gallantly protect our Nation. It is their duty...and so it is for you to adequately provide for their needs.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bob Largent", written in a cursive style.

Robert E. "Bob" Largent