

**Tuesday, 27 March 2012**

U.S. Air Force

Morning Report

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**BUDGET**

1. [**Moore sees good, bad news for Joint STARS**](#B1)

(*Warner Robins Patriot, 26 Mar 12*) … Gene Rector

Maj. Gen. Tom Moore, commander of the Georgia Air National Guard, saw some good Joint STARS news and some bad news coming out of Washington last week.

**CONTINUE TO STRENGTHEN THE NUCLEAR ENTERPRISE**

1. [**Obama Seeks Additional Nuke Cuts With Russia**](#N1)

(*Global Security Newswire, 26 Mar 12*) … Unattributed

The United States intends to seek additional reductions to its nuclear arsenal in exchange for potential comparable curbs by Russia, President Obama said on Monday.

1. [**Danger of Nuclear-Armed Extremists Persists, U.S. President Says**](#N2)

(*Global Security Newswire, 26 Mar 12*) … Unattributed

The potential for extremists to detonate a nuclear weapon or radiological "dirty bomb" is still among the most significant dangers facing the international community, President Obama said on Monday in comments reported by Agence France-Presse.

**PARTNER WITH JOINT AND COALITION TEAM TO WIN TODAY’S FIGHT**

1. [**General warns rogue Afghan attacks on US troops will continue**](#P1)

(*The Hill, 26 Mar 12*) … Carlo Munoz

American and NATO troops will continue to face the threat of attacks from their Afghan counterparts for the duration of their mission, Afghanistan commander Gen. John Allen warned on Monday.

1. [**Singapore, Thailand and US Conclude Trilateral Air Exercise**](#P2)

(*Defence Professionals, 26 Mar 12*) … Unattributed

Exercise Cope Tiger, an annual trilateral air exercise conducted by Singapore, Thailand and the United States, came to a close at Korat Air Base, Thailand Mar. 23. The closing ceremony was officiated by Singapore's Chief of Air Force, Major-General Ng Chee Meng; Commander-in-Chief of the Royal Thai Air Force, Air Chief Marshal Itthaporn Subhawong; and Commander of the United States 13th Air Force, Lieutenant-General Stanley Kresge.

1. [**Speeding the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan a mistake, analysts say**](#P3)

(*Washington Examiner, 26 Mar 12*) … Unattributed

The American mission in Afghanistan, beset by a series of setbacks and tragedies, has reached perhaps the lowest level of support in the U.S., and in Afghanistan and Pakistan, since the war started after the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001.

1. [**3 NATO troops killed by Afghan forces**](#P4)

*2 British troops, 1 American identified as casualties*

(*AP, 26 Mar 12*) … Deb Riechmann

KABUL, Afghanistan - Afghan security forces shot and killed three international troops Monday, one of them an American, in two attacks. They were the latest in a rising number of attacks in which Afghan forces have turned their weapons on their foreign partners.

**DEVELOP AND CARE FOR AIRMEN AND THEIR FAMILIES**

1. [**Air Force to offer third round of buyouts**](#D1)

(*Government Executive, 26 Mar 12*) … Caitlin Fairchild

The Air Force is trimming its civilian workforce again, offering the third round of buyouts and early outs in the past six months, Federal News Radio has reported.

1. [**Study: Military service makes men grumpier**](#D2)

(*Air Force Times, 26 Mar 12*) … Patricia Kime

A new study appears to support what recruiters have known for years: Military service transforms people.

**Modernize our Air, Space and Cyberspace Inventories, Orgs and Training**

1. [**Will the $55 billion bomber program fly?**](#M1)

(*Center for Public Integrity, 26 Mar 12*) … David Axe

When the Obama administration dispatched three B-2 bombers from a Missouri air base on March 19 last year to cross the ocean and reach Libya, it put roughly $9 billion worth of America's most prized military assets into the air. The bat-shaped black bombers, finely machined to elude radar and equipped with bombs weighing a ton apiece, easily demolished dozens of concrete aircraft shelters near Libya's northern coast.

1. [**Sat Operators Team For Situational Awareness**](#M2)

(*Aviation Week, 26 Mar 12*) … Frank Morring, Jr.

A half-century-plus after Sputnik, the swirling mass of operational spacecraft and space junk that has grown up around the planet is overwhelming mankind’s ability to keep track of it, much less clean it up.

1. [**Air Force awash in ISR data**](#M3)

(*Warner Robings Patriot, 26 Mar 12*) … Gene Rector

The Air Force's problem with overhead information gathering is not too little data. It's too much and the capacity to gainfully process all of it.

1. [**US developing nuke-powered drones**](#M4)

(*Press TV, 26 Mar 12*) … Unattributed

Scientists at a leading defense contractor and government research laboratory have been working on developing a new generation of drone aircraft that utilizes nuclear power.

1. [**Air Force, Navy collaborate to find answers on hypoxia**](#M5)

*Units are working to solve a ‘common issue’ for military pilots.*

(*Dayton Daily News, 26 Mar 12*) *…* Barrie Barber

WRIGHT-PATTERSON AIR FORCE BASE - The Air Force and the Navy have combined research into a perplexing problem that may have vexed both services in the skies.

1. [**$2 billion update for Whiteman’s B-2 bomber**](#M6)

*A 10-year plan to enhance the fleet at Missouri base will be “biggest and most complex” in its history.*

(*AP, 26 Mar 12*) … Rick Montgomery

Say you own a 20-year-old car and intend to drive it beyond the year 2050. It will need some fixing. A challenge similar to that continually faces Whiteman Air Force Base, home to the B-2 stealth bomber. Many aircraft parts made in the 1980s, when the first of 21 B-2s rolled out of a Northrop Grumman Corp. hangar, are as obsolete today as the floppy disk.

**RECAPTURE ACQUISITION EXCELLENCE**

1. [**USAF, Boeing Deny GAO Warning on Tanker Program Test Schedule**](#A1)

(*Defense News, 26 Mar 12*) … Marcus Weisgerber

The Government Accountability Office said the U.S. Air Force’s KC-46A tanker program test schedule is too aggressive, a claim the service claims is being overblown.

1. [**Embraer Expects U.S. to Rebid Light Attack Plane Within Weeks**](#A2)

(*Bloomberg: Businessweek, 26 Mar 12*) … Jose Sergio Osse

Embraer SA, the world’s fourth- biggest airplane maker, said it expects the U.S. government to seek new bids within weeks on a contract for light attack aircraft that was taken from the company in February.

1. [**China Does Nothing to Stop Counterfeit Defense Parts; Findings 'Should Outrage Every American'**](#A3)

(*AOL Defense, 26 Mar 12*) … Colin Clark

CAPITOL HILL: "These findings should outrage every American." Sen. Carl Levin, chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, is a tough former prosecutor but he rarely offers such sweeping condemnations as he did today when releasing the findings of a congressional sting operation designed to test whether China had changed its ways and had started combating counterfeit defense parts.

1. [**F-35 Fighter Costs: Six Ways To Make A Bargain Seem Unaffordable**](#A5)

(*Forbes, 26 Mar 12*) … Loren Thompson

The tortured path of the Pentagon’s biggest weapon program is beginning to look like a case study in poor management. The problem isn’t the F-35 fighter, which is making steady progress towards becoming the best tactical aircraft ever built. The problem is a federal acquisition culture that has grown so risk-averse it no longer cares about long-term consequences.

1. [**F-35 Reaches Critical Juncture After Strong Year, Official Says**](#A6)

(*AvStop, 26 Mar 12*) … Tyrone C. Marshall

The F-35 Lightning II joint strike fighter program the centerpiece of future tactical aviation and a key to implementing new military strategic guidance made strong progress in its development last year, a defense official said.

**GLOBAL AIR, SPACE, and CYBERSPACE ENVIRONMENT**

1. [**ASDF command now at Yokota base**](#G1)

(*Japan Times, 26 Mar 12*) … Unattributed

The Air Self-Defense Force's top command post began operating Monday at U.S. Yokota Air Base after being transferred from a nearby city under a bilateral agreement signed in 2006.

1. [**Newest Japan-US alliance could get early test from North Korea**](#G2)

(*Stars and Stripes, 26 Mar 12*) … Charlie Reed

YOKOTA AIR BASE, Japan - Japan might not have to wait long to test its new Air Defense Command if neighboring North Korea goes ahead with plans to launch a satellite-toting rocket in the coming weeks.

**ITEMS OF INTEREST**

1. [**Report: AF has most whistle-blower complaints**](#I1)

(*Air Force Times, 26 Mar 12*) … Kristin Davis

In the wake of controversy over whistle-blowers being punished at the Dover Port Mortuary office for airing their complaints to supervisors, a new report says the Defense Department has kept poor records of military whistle-blower reprisal complaints, used outdated investigation guidelines and was often slow to handle cases, with some dragging on for years.

1. [**Engineers transform sugars into jet fuel**](#I2)

(*Knovel: Engineering News, 26 Mar 12*) … Unattributed

Researchers from one organization recently said they had successfully created jet fuel from cellulosic sugars.

1. [**Officials: White House offers to curtail drones**](#I3)

(*AP, 26 Mar 12*) … Kimberly Dozier

WASHINGTON - In a bid to save the CIA’s drone campaign against al-Qaida in Pakistan, U.S. officials offered key concessions to Pakistan’s spy chief that included advance notice and limits on the types of targets. But the offers were flatly rejected, leaving U.S.-Pakistani relations strained as President Barack Obama prepares to meet Tuesday with Pakistan’s prime minister.

**HEADLINES**

CNN at 0530

North Korea refuses to halt launch plan despite Obama's warnings

Kofi Annan visits China to discuss Syrian crisis as reports of deaths mount

Pope to visit Cuban capital of Havana on Tuesday

FOX News at 0530

Soldier, ex-soldier accused of hired murder plot

North Korea Pushes Back at US Criticism of Planned Rocket Launch

Air Travelers May Face Fines For Using Phones?

NPR at 0530

For U.S. Analysts, Rethinking The Terror Threat

Justices Tackle: Can Congress Force You To Buy Insurance?

In Haiti, Bureaucratic Delays Stall Mass Cholera Vaccinations

USA Today at 0530

North Korea pushes back at U.S. criticism of launch

Fla. teen shooter fears for life

Obama sees progress toward securing loose nukes

Washington Post at 0530

U.S., Australia plan expansion of military ties

Health-care law ruling likely as court seems to dismiss procedural obstacle

Obama, allies at odds over ‘jobs bill’ set to pass Congress on Tuesday

FULL TEXT

**BUDGET**

**B1**

**Moore sees good, bad news for Joint STARS**

(*Warner Robins Patriot, 26 Mar 12*) … Gene Rector

<http://warnerrobinspatriot.com/bookmark/18005580-Moore-sees-good-bad-news-for-Joint-STARS>

Maj. Gen. Tom Moore, commander of the Georgia Air National Guard, saw some good Joint STARS news and some bad news coming out of Washington last week.

Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Norton Schwartz told the Senate Armed Forces Committee that Joint STARS and the unmanned Global Hawk Block 40s would be the primary systems going forward for tracking ground moving targets.

The decision was made following an extensive study by the Air Force to evaluate options for the critical GMTI mission.

Joint STARS, based exclusively at Robins Air Force Base, employs a Boeing 707 airframe, a 24-foot, belly-mounted radar and sophisticated on-board computers and communications gear to provide real-time, precise targeting information to airborne and ground commanders. The 18-person mission crew uses the equipment to detect, identify and track moving ground targets over a 150-mile area.

The Joint STARS contingent at Robins is an "active associate" arrangement between the 116th Air Control Wing -- a Georgia ANG unit -- and the active duty 461st ACW. In this case, the Georgia guard owns the aircraft.

Retaining Joint STARS was the good news, Moore pointed out. The bad news was that Schwartz dismissed as too costly the transfer to a modern, business jet platform and he said nothing about continuing the sorely needed re-engining program for the aging Boeing jets.

The 40-year-old power plants on the aircraft are the source of most maintenance problems and prevent Joint STARS from optimum utility in accomplishing its mission.

"At this time, it does not look like the Air Force is funding any improvements to JSTARS in the near future," said Moore, who spent much of last week in Washington D.C. working Joint STARS issues.

"We will continue to fight for engines and modernization and upgrades," Moore added. "The good news is we are still seen as a force multiplier and absolutely essential to the current world environment."

Read more: The Warner Robins Patriot - Moore sees good bad news for Joint STARS

[**RETURN**](#Budget)

**CONTINUE TO STRENGTHEN THE NUCLEAR ENTERPRISE**

**N1**

**Obama Seeks Additional Nuke Cuts With Russia**

(*Global Security Newswire, 26 Mar 12*) … Unattributed

<http://www.nti.org/gsn/article/obama-seeks-new-us-russian-nuclear-arms-reductions/>

The United States intends to seek additional reductions to its nuclear arsenal in exchange for potential comparable curbs by Russia, President Obama said on Monday (see GSN, Feb. 16).

"We can already say with confidence that we have more nuclear weapons than we need," Reuters quoted Obama as saying in South Korea on Monday, hours before the opening of the Nuclear Security Summit in Seoul (see related GSN story, today).

The U.S. president vowed to seek bilateral curbs on quantities of atomic armaments at a meeting planned in May with Russian President-elect Vladimir Putin.

Republican lawmakers have already charged Obama with undermining the nation's capacity to discourage aggression by other states, and they would mount significant resistance to nuclear-weapon cuts he might propose during this year's presidential campaign, according to Reuters. Defense hawks would respond skeptically to such a proposal, as they contend the president has failed to follow through with adequate speed on a nuclear arms complex modernization commitment he made while seeking GOP backing of a Russian-U.S. strategic nuclear arms control treaty that entered into force last year (see GSN, March 15).

Washington and Moscow "can continue to make progress and reduce our nuclear stockpiles," Obama said. "I firmly believe that we can ensure the security of the United States and our allies, maintain a strong deterrent against any threat, and still pursue further reductions in our nuclear arsenal."

"Going forward, we'll continue to seek discussions with Russia on a step we have never taken before -- reducing not only our strategic nuclear warheads, but also tactical weapons and warheads in reserve," the president said.

The U.S. and Russian nuclear stockpiles are unrivaled in size, together comprising thousands of weapons that nonproliferation backers contend are multiple times the quantity necessary to eviscerate life on the planet.

The New START pact, which entered into force on Feb. 5, 2011, requires the two nations by 2018 to each reduce deployment of strategic nuclear warheads to 1,550, down from a cap of 2,200 mandated by this year under an older treaty. It also limits the number of fielded strategic warhead delivery platforms to 700, with an additional 100 systems permitted in reserve. The treaty calls for the nations to regularly share quantities, siting and schematics of armament equipment and sites (see GSN, March 9).

Obama also addressed China's increasing nuclear arms effort, saying he had called on Beijing "to join us in a dialogue on nuclear issues, and that offer remains open" (Spetalnick/Laurence, Reuters, March 26).

The U.S. nuclear force was built to stave off Soviet aggression and is “poorly suited to today’s threats including nuclear terrorism,” Obama said in remarks reported by Bloomberg. That characteristic, he said, prompted his mid-2011 call for a White House reassessment of the arsenal (see GSN, Feb. 15; Talev/Goldman, Bloomberg, March 26).

"I believe the United States has a unique responsibility to act -- indeed, we have a moral obligation," USA Today quoted Obama as saying. "I say this as president of the only nation ever to use nuclear weapons. I say it as a commander in chief who knows that our nuclear codes are never far from my side. Most of all, I say it as a father, who wants my two young daughters to grow up in a world where everything they know and love can't be instantly wiped out" (Aamer Madhani, USA Today, March 26).

[**RETURN**](#Nuclear)

**N2**

**Danger of Nuclear-Armed Extremists Persists, U.S. President Says**

(*Global Security Newswire, 26 Mar 12*) … Unattributed

<http://www.nti.org/gsn/article/danger-nuclear-armed-extremists-persists-us-president/>

The potential for extremists to detonate a nuclear weapon or radiological "dirty bomb" is still among the most significant dangers facing the international community, President Obama said on Monday in comments reported by Agence France-Presse (see GSN, March 26).

Nations have achieved large strides since 2010 in securing potential nuclear-weapon fuel against extremists, the U.S. leader said prior to the start of this week's Nuclear Security Summit in Seoul, South Korea.

"But we're under no illusions. We know that nuclear material -- enough for many weapons -- is still being stored without adequate protection," Obama said. "We know that terrorists and criminal gangs are still trying to get their hands on it, as well as the radioactive material for a dirty bomb ... the danger of nuclear terrorism remains one of the greatest threats to global security."

State participants in the summit must "keep at it" and pursue substantive actions to lock down atomic substances, he said in remarks to heads of government or senior delegates for 53 countries.

A significant number of governments appeared set to describe their completion of commitments articulated at the inaugural atomic summit nearly 24 months ago in Washington, and additional nations looked poised to issue further vows on the protection or elimination of sensitive substances, the president said.

"This is the serious and sustained global effort we need. This is an example of more nations bearing the responsibility and the costs of meeting global challenges," Obama said (Agence France-Presse/Botswana Gazette, March 26).

Maintaining medical isotope production using uranium unsuitable for use in weapons is one goal of a deal brokered between by United States, Belgium, France and the Netherlands, the Associated Press quoted the president as saying on Monday. Weapon-usable uranium is in some cases used to manufacture such isotopes, which are employed widely in various medical procedures (see GSN, March 21; Associated Press/Google News, March 26).

The four nations issued a "joint statement" in Seoul that "provides a framework for cooperation on minimizing for the future the use of [highly enriched uranium] in the production of the medical isotope molybdenum 99 (Mo-99) while still ensuring a reliable supply of this lifesaving radioisotope," the U.S. National Nuclear Security Administration said in a press release. "Mo-99 is used to produce a medical isotope that is used in more than 100,000 medical procedures every day. This crucial medial isotope is currently produced at aging facilities primarily using HEU" (U.S. National Nuclear Security Administration release, March 26).

Separately, an Italian-U.S. initiative unveiled by at the summit is intended to remove unneeded plutonium and highly enriched uranium from the European state, the White House announced on Monday.

Italy's Società Gestione Impianti Nucleari has collaborated over the last 12 months with the Global Threat Reduction Initiative, a program overseen by the National Nuclear Security Administration, to locate substances suited for potential transit to the United States for disposal. A bilateral effort linked to the planned 2014 Nuclear Security Summit would seek to achieve the full removal of the substances (White House release, March 26).

Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev conferred with Obama at the Seoul summit on Monday, and he received a commendation from the U.S. leader for moving to protect atomic assets, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty reported..

Countries including Kazakhstan and Ukraine have relinquished atomic substances for transport to sites in other nations with better protections, Obama said (see related GSN story, today).

"Thousands of pounds of nuclear material have been removed from vulnerable sites around the world," reducing their vulnerability to seizure by extremists or governments pursuing a nuclear-armament capacity, the U.S. president added (Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, March 25).

Russia through multilateral atomic security efforts has taken control of a quantity of highly enriched uranium potentially sufficient to power 100 nuclear bombs, Interfax quoted Sergei Kiriyenko, head of the Russian atomic energy firm Rosatom, as saying on Friday.

"Overall, Russia has taken back [3,527 pounds] of highly enriched uranium from abroad, which can be used to make about 100 nuclear warheads as a maximum and 65 as a minimum," Kiriyenko said (Interfax, March 23).

Russia's top diplomat on Friday reiterated his country's support for nuclear security priorities outlined in the 2010 summit communique.

"Russia has signed and ratified the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material and its amendment, as well as the Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism, adopted by the international community at Russia’s initiative," Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov wrote in a commentary published by the Washington Times on Friday. "We call on other states that have not yet done so to expedite the completion of the necessary internal procedures for accession to these key international instruments" (see GSN, March 12).

The U.S.-Russian Material Consolidation and Conversion program since 2010 has eliminated 2,910 pounds of surplus highly enriched uranium, Lavrov wrote (see GSN, April 25, 2008).

"We decided to export only low-enriched uranium fuel for research reactors," he added. "The Russian-made research reactor fuel repatriation program is being implemented. Since the start of this program, the total of [1,332 pounds] of fresh HEU and [2,174 pounds] of irradiated HEU has been repatriated from 14 countries. We also plan to repatriate the fuel from Vietnam, Ukraine and Uzbekistan" (Sergei Lavrov, Washington Times, March 23).

The number of verified illicit nuclear and radiological incidents, including smuggling cases, since 1994 now exceeds 2,000, International Atomic Energy Agency Director General Yukiya Amano wrote in a commentary published by the Washington Post on Sunday. Moldovan authorities last year netted an illicit HEU cache that one person had sought to trade away, Amano noted (see GSN, Sept. 27, 2011).

"Progress has been made since President Obama hosted the first such summit two years ago," he wrote. "But nuclear and other radioactive material is still inadequately secured in some countries. There is a real risk of terrorists acquiring and using such material. This global threat requires a global response. Criminals do not respect national borders. Neither does ionizing radiation."

The U.N. nuclear watchdog chief also urged governments to formally adopt the 2005 amendment to the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material, calling the agreement a "a crucial antiterrorism instrument."

"The amendment makes it legally binding for countries to protect nuclear material when it is being used or stored, not just when it is being transported -- as the convention currently stipulates -- and would require them to protect nuclear facilities against acts of sabotage that could have consequences similar to nuclear accidents.

"Agreement was reached on the amendment in 2005, but it has not entered into force because not enough countries have ratified it. More than 20 countries attending the Seoul summit have not taken this indispensable step. That needs to change," Amano wrote.

The health risks posed by atomic substances were previously assumed to deter potential smugglers, but "individuals and groups engage in illicit trafficking despite risk to their own and others’ health," the IAEA chief added.

"The fact that the smugglers in Moldova had tried to evade detection by building a shielded container represents a worrying level of sophistication. Fortunately, Moldovan authorities had the capabilities to detect the materials; the uranium was seized and arrests were made" (Yukiya Amano, Washington Post, March 25).

An effort announced by Obama in 2009 to lock down the world's loose atomic substances within four years will leave significant steps unfinished in 2013, though the initiative has achieved progress toward the goal, according to a new report by Harvard University's Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs (see GSN, Feb. 22, 2011).

“At the end of four years, the global risks of nuclear theft will be significantly lower than they were before,” said Matthew Bunn, a Harvard University nuclear weapons expert who co-wrote the assessment. “But there will still be a great deal left to do to make sure that all the world’s stocks of nuclear weapons and the materials needed to make them are protected from the full range of plausible terrorist and criminal threats -- in a way that will last.”

Roughly 2,200 pounds of weapon-grade uranium has been taken out of research reactor sites and six countries no longer hold any highly enriched material. However, while 14 reactors across the globe no longer use such enriched uranium, the material is remains in place at about 120 research and training sites. Global oversight of atomic protections "is still weak" and the number of countries that have made significant advancements in this sector is limited, a press release cites the report as stating.

Talks on nuclear security collaboration are among the measures needed after this week's summit ends, according to the report (Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs release, March 2012).

Meanwhile, the United Kingdom has undertaken a new National Counterproliferation Strategy aimed at preventing extremists from obtaining WMD components and knowledge; containing development of WMD and "advanced conventional" defense systems by nations including Iran and North Korea; and bolstering multilateral agreements and institutions intended to promote global stability, the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office announced on Friday (British Foreign and Commonwealth Office release, March 23).

[**RETURN**](#Nuclear)

**PARTNER WITH JOINT AND COALITION TEAM TO WIN TODAY’S FIGHT**

**P1**

**General warns rogue Afghan attacks on US troops will continue**

(*The Hill, 26 Mar 12*) … Carlo Munoz

<http://thehill.com/blogs/defcon-hill/operations/218139-afghan-military-attacks-on-us-troops-will-persist-until-2014-withdrawal>

American and NATO troops will continue to face the threat of attacks from their Afghan counterparts for the duration of their mission, Afghanistan commander Gen. John Allen warned on Monday.

So-called "green on blue" violence on American soldiers is simply "a characteristic of counterinsurgency [operations]," Allen told reporters during a briefing at the Pentagon.

He predicted that continued attacks will likely be a fact of life for U.S. forces until they hand over control to Afghan forces and leave the country in 2014.

Allen's comments come amid new reports of Afghan soldiers turning their fire on foreign service members.

A rogue Afghan army officer shot and killed one British soldier and a Royal Marine and wounded a third early Monday morning at the unit's outpost in Lashkar Gah, the capitol of Afghanistan's restive Helmund province, reports said.

The shootings come weeks after two U.S. officers were killed by an Afghan security official inside the country's Ministry of the Interior, after the accidental burnings of the Quran by American troops sparked a week of violent protests in the country.

Last April, a colonel with the Afghan Air Force shot several U.S. Air Force officers at Bagram Air Base in Kandahar.

Those officers were reportedly investigating a drug-smuggling ring allegedly run by Afghan airmen at the time they were shot.

While the Taliban has claimed responsibility for a majority of these incidents, many of the attacks "are not a direct result" of Taliban infiltration into the Afghan military, said Allen.

The commander, though, declined to comment on whether recent murder charges brought against U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Robert Bales would result in an uptick of violence against American soldiers by Afghan troops.

However, the four-star general did call the need for revenge "prevalent" within Afghan culture, especially in incidents like the Bales case.

Bales has been charged with 17 counts of murder for allegedly killing 17 Afghan civilians on March 11. He is being held at a prison at Fort Leavenworth in Kansas.

While American officials have paid restitution to the families of victims in the Bales incident, Allen said U.S. and coalition leaders "will keep an eye on" the situation as the Pentagon investigation continues.

[**RETURN**](#PARTNER)

**P2**

**Singapore, Thailand and US Conclude Trilateral Air Exercise**

(*Defence Professionals, 26 Mar 12*) … Unattributed

<http://www.defpro.com/news/details/33747/?SID=4b0a73f3a56b7617548d328df7c59bae>

Exercise Cope Tiger, an annual trilateral air exercise conducted by Singapore, Thailand and the United States, came to a close at Korat Air Base, Thailand Mar. 23. The closing ceremony was officiated by Singapore's Chief of Air Force, Major-General Ng Chee Meng; Commander-in-Chief of the Royal Thai Air Force, Air Chief Marshal Itthaporn Subhawong; and Commander of the United States 13th Air Force, Lieutenant-General Stanley Kresge.

The exercise, the 18th in its series, was conducted in two phases - the first phase, a command post exercise, was held at Paya Lebar Air Base in Singapore from 19 to 23 Dec 2011, while the second phase, a flying training exercise, was conducted at Korat Air Base from 12 to 23 Mar 2012. This year's exercise saw the deployment of about 100 aircraft, 34 ground-based air defence systems and more than 2,000 personnel from the participating nations. The Republic of Singapore Air Force's F-15SG fighter aircraft also participated in Exercise Cope Tiger for the first time. Besides the exercise, the participants also provided basic health and dental services to the local community in the vicinity of Korat Air Base and Chandy Range as part of a three-day joint socio-civic programme.

Established in 1994, Exercise Cope Tiger seeks to enhance professionalism and interoperability among the participating forces, and foster closer rapport and mutual understanding among their personnel.

[**RETURN**](#PARTNER)

**P3**

**Speeding the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan a mistake, analysts say**

(*Washington Examiner, 26 Mar 12*) … Unattributed

<http://washingtonexaminer.com/news/world/2012/03/speeding-us-withdrawal-afghanistan-mistake-analysts-say/409996>

The American mission in Afghanistan, beset by a series of setbacks and tragedies, has reached perhaps the lowest level of support in the U.S., and in Afghanistan and Pakistan, since the war started after the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001.

The latest New York Times/CBS News poll, released Monday, found that a staggering 69 percent of Americans thought the country should not be at war in Afghanistan. Backing for the war plummeted among both Democrats and Republicans in recent months.

And leaders in Afghanistan and Pakistan appear equally sick of the war. Afghan President Hamid Karzai, America's erstwhile ally, has been using increasingly incendiary language to describe American troops, calling them "demons" recently as he demanded an accelerated withdrawal after the killing of 17 Afghan civilians which has been charged to a U.S. Army sergeant. Those deaths were just the latest in a cycle of violence that grew worse when Americans at the base in Bagram accidently disposed of several Qurans. Killings of U.S. and NATO troops that had been occurring for years increased after the Quran burnings, with three more NATO troops slain Monday.

American relations have also reached a nadir with Pakistan, with the legislature of that country meeting this week to create a harsh list of demands to be met by the U.S. in order to maintain a military presence there.

But if "the bottom is out of the tub," as Abraham Lincoln said during the darkest days of the American Civil War as defeat and disaster accumulated around his government, there are important reasons to stick to an orderly timetable of withdrawal from Afghanistan, and to pursue the goals of making the country secure and the government stable, according to experts.

Bruce Riedel, a former CIA official who headed the Obama administration's Afghanistan-Pakistan review in 2010, concedes that the growing divide between U.S. and Afghan officials is jeopardizing chances to leave a functioning state and viable economy behind there when America completes its withdrawal.

"The nascent political process with the Taliban has been suspended and the gap between Obama and [President Hamid] Karzai is wider than ever," said Riedel, who is now a senior analyst with the Brookings Institution.

"But the stakes have not changed," he said. "If we give up in Afghanistan, the jihadists will win and gain a huge victory that will resonate around the Islamic world and especially next door in Pakistan."

There are roughly 90,000 U.S. troops in Afghanistan. The commander of the U.S.-led coalition, Gen. John Allen, told Congress late last week that he does not expect troops to be withdrawn more rapidly than announced targets to get the number down to 68,000 by 2014.

Allen said many of the problems festering between the U.S. and Afghanistan had their root in Pakistan, where insurgents are allowed to operate with impunity.

James Carafano, a senior analyst with the Heritage Foundation said a quick withdrawal from the region would compound the mistake of announcing a withdrawal date in the first place.

"Right now the two greatest impediments to progress are the Taliban and the strategy being followed by the U.S. president. Karzai is a distant third in the our list of problems," Carafano said.

Despite war fatigue, many military and intelligence officials, stress that Afghan security forces are improving -- but are not yet prepared to take complete control from NATO.

"It's a problem for the administration because the situation is so precarious," said a U.S. official who works closely with Afghan officials. "Pakistan U.S. relations are deteriorating. Pakistan seems to have the upper hand and President Obama wants this war over, particularly in an election year."

George Little, spokesman for Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta, told The Washington Examiner that Panetta's most recent meeting with Karzai was "productive."

Little said the pair discussed how Afghanistan could eventually be secured entirely by Afghan forces.

"About 50 percent of the country's security is now under Afghan leadership, and we share the goal of increasing that percentage," Little added.

Staying the course and allowing Afghan security forces to grow in strength appears to be the best of the options still available, anaylsts said.

Arturo Munoz, a senior analyst at RAND Corp., said "I don't see a value in a speedy withdrawal. There is a lot of anxiety about the future of the country." Munoz, formerly with the CIA, said the Taliban would call a swift withdrawal "a victory against NATO, and it would give credence to Afghan allies who warned that we would desert them."

[**RETURN**](#PARTNER)

**P4**

**3 NATO troops killed by Afghan forces**

*2 British troops, 1 American identified as casualties*

(*AP, 26 Mar 12*) … Deb Riechmann

<http://www.airforcetimes.com/news/2012/03/ap-3-nato-troops-killed-by-afghan-forces-032612/>

KABUL, Afghanistan - Afghan security forces shot and killed three international troops Monday, one of them an American, in two attacks. They were the latest in a rising number of attacks in which Afghan forces have turned their weapons on their foreign partners.

The killings reflect a spike in tensions between Afghan and international forces that follow an American soldier’s alleged massacre of Afghan civilians, the burning of Muslim holy books at a U.S. base, and uncertainty about Afghanistan’s fate as foreign troops prepare to pull out.

They also come at a time when international troops have stepped up training and mentoring of Afghan soldiers, police and government workers so that Afghans can take the lead and the foreign forces can go home. The success of that partnership is key to the U.S.-led coalition’s strategy to withdraw most foreign combat forces by the end of 2014.

U.S. Marine Gen. John Allen, the top commander of U.S. and NATO forces in Afghanistan, told reporters at the Pentagon that these types of attacks are characteristic of any warfare involving insurgents.

“We experienced these in Iraq. We experienced them in Vietnam,” Allen said. “On any occasion where you’re dealing with an insurgency and where you’re also growing an indigenous force ... the enemy’s going to do all that they can to disrupt both the counterinsurgency operations” and the developing nation’s security forces.

Since 2007, an estimated 80 NATO service members were killed by Afghan security forces, according to an Associated Press tally, which is based on Pentagon figures released in February. More than 75 percent of the attacks have occurred in the past two years.

Sixteen NATO service members — 18 percent of the 84 foreign troops killed so far this year — have been shot and killed by Afghan soldiers and policemen or militants disguised in their uniforms, according to the AP tally.

In one incident Monday, two British service members were killed by an Afghan soldier in front of the main gate of a joint civilian-military base in southern Afghanistan, the coalition said. Another NATO service member was shot and killed at a checkpoint in eastern Afghanistan by a man who was believed to be a member of a village-level fighting force the U.S. is fostering in hopes of countering the Taliban insurgency. The Pentagon confirmed Monday that the dead soldier was American but did not release further details.

Maj. Ian Lawrence, a British military spokesman for Task Force Helmand, said one of the British troops was a Royal Marine and the other was a soldier from the British Adjutant General’s Corps. They were killed in front of the base in Lashkar Gah, the provincial capital of Helmand province.

The soldier, who had been in the Afghan National Army for four years, arrived at the gate in an army vehicle, said Ghulam Farooq Parwani, deputy commander of the Afghan army in Helmand. He was able to get close to the British troops by claiming that he had been assigned to provide security for a delegation of government officials from Kabul who were visiting the base Monday, Parwani added.

“He got close to the foreign troops — three or four meters (yards) — and he opened fire,” Parwani said. “Then the foreign troops killed him.”

It is not the first time that Afghan security forces have killed their British counterparts. On Nov. 3, 2009, a rogue Afghan policeman killed five British soldiers who had been advising Afghan police at a checkpoint in Helmand province.

Taliban spokesman Qari Yousef Ahmadi said the shooter was an Afghan soldier who was in close contact with insurgents and had notified the Taliban of his planned attack before carrying it out.

However, Wahid Muzhda, a former Taliban foreign ministry official and an analyst on issues related to the group, said the Taliban were not behind most of the latest killings.

“All these killings are not linked to the Taliban,” Muzhda said. “The recent Koran burnings and the shooting spree — the killing of children— are affecting the minds of the Afghan soldiers. They think the foreigners are looking out for their own interests. They think if the foreigners are coming here to defend Afghanistan, why are they killing children?”

The trust between the Afghan forces and their international mentors is being undermined, he said.

“How is the mentor supposed to teach if he is afraid of the Afghan soldiers? They have weapons. How can he relax?”

While they acknowledge that these type of attacks are on the rise, coalition officials say they must be viewed in context. They say there are about 100,000 coalition troops working side-by-side with more than 300,000 Afghan troops.

“In most cases, the relationship is very strong. They know each other well,” Allen said. “We have taken steps necessary on our side to protect ourselves with respect to, in fact, sleeping arrangements, internal defenses associated with those small bases in which we operate, the posture of our forces, to have someone always overwatching our forces.

“On the Afghan side, they are doing the same thing. I mean, they’re helping the troops to understand how to recognize radicalization or the emergence of extremism in ... individuals who may in fact be suspect.”

Monday’s attack came two weeks after a U.S. soldier allegedly went on a pre-dawn shooting rampage in neighboring Kandahar province, killing 17 Afghan civilians — four men, four women and nine children.

That incident followed the burning of Korans at a U.S. base north of Kabul last month. The U.S. apologized for the burning, saying the Islamic texts were mistakenly sent to a garbage burn pit Feb. 20 at Bagram Air Field. But the incident raised to a full boil what had been simmering animosity toward outsiders.

Deadly protests raged around the nation for six days — the most visible example of a deep-seated resentment bred by what Afghans view is a general lack of respect for their culture and religion.

During the protests, Afghan soldiers killed six American troops. Two were killed in Kandahar province, two in Nangarhar province in the east and the other two were found dead with shots to the back of the head inside the Interior Ministry in Kabul.

Associated Press writers Amir Shah in Kabul, Mirwais Khan in Kandahar, and David Stringer and Cassandra Vinograd in London and Lolita C. Baldor in Washington contributed to this report.

[**RETURN**](#PARTNER)

**DEVELOP AND CARE FOR AIRMEN AND THEIR FAMILIES**

**D1**

**Air Force to offer third round of buyouts**

(*Government Executive, 26 Mar 12*) … Caitlin Fairchild

<http://www.govexec.com/pay-benefits/2012/03/air-force-offer-third-round-buyouts/41569/?oref=skybox>

The Air Force is trimming its civilian workforce again, offering the third round of buyouts and early outs in the past six months, Federal News Radio has reported.

As part of an overall effort to return civilian staffing to 2010 levels, the Air Force offered buyouts in January, 6,000 buyouts in September 2011, and implemented a 90-day hiring freeze in August.

"The Air Force recognizes the invaluable contributions of our civilian workforce, but also recognizes the fiscal constraints under which the Department of Defense and the government as a whole are operating," said Maj. Gen. Sharon Dunbar, director of force management policy. "Our civilian workforce is near required target levels, and we're focused on fine-tuning the force while taking care to minimize the effect on our current permanent civilian workforce and their families."

Employees will receive eligibility surveys by May 1 and applications will be due May 15. If approved, employees must leave by Aug. 31.

"We are committed to maximizing voluntary separation measures to preclude involuntary actions," Dunbar said. "However, as we progress toward the end of the fiscal year, it is apparent some bases will need to rebalance the skills of their workforce into other enduring positions."

[**RETURN**](#Develop)

**D2**

**Study: Military service makes men grumpier**

(*Air Force Times, 26 Mar 12*) … Patricia Kime

<http://www.airforcetimes.com/news/2012/03/military-service-makes-men-less-agreeable-032612w/>

A new study appears to support what recruiters have known for years: Military service transforms people.

But for friends, family and future co-workers of recruits, the transformation may not be for the better.

The study from Washington University in St. Louis found that military service — combat excluded — seems to make men less “agreeable.” And the effects appear to linger long after troops hang up their uniforms.

U.S. and German researchers looked at two groups of German male students, all of whom were required to join the military or choose civilian volunteer service programs after high school. The subjects were given personality tests before their service and were followed for nearly six years after, receiving three additional tests.

According to the results, students who elected military service were less agreeable and less neurotic to begin with than their civilian counterparts. But they were even less agreeable — a measure of the subjects’ ability to be pleasant and accommodating in social situations — after serving.

In short, military service made them grumpier.

“Military recruits are a little less warm and friendly to begin with and the military experience seems to reinforce this — as after service, men score even lower on agreeableness when compared to individuals who did not go into the military,” said lead study author Joshua Jackson. “This influence appears to linger long after the soldier has re-entered the workforce or returned to college.”

A low level of “agreeableness” corresponds to personalities that are less likely to worry, more prone to aggression and favor competition over cooperation — traits that may be great for waging war or conducting business but not so terrific for personal relationships.

A separate study conducted in 2006 at University of California-Riverside showed that lower levels of agreeableness correspond with higher levels of conflict in romantic relationships and difficulties getting along with friends.

Still, there is an upside, Jackson added. “People with lower levels of agreeableness are often more likely to fight their way up the corporate ladder and make the sometimes unpopular decisions that can be necessary for business success,” he said.

The new study, “Military Training and Personality Trait Development: Does the Military Make the Man or Does the Man Make the Military?” was published in the journal Psychological Science.

[**RETURN**](#Develop)

**Modernize our Air, Space and Cyberspace Inventories, Orgs and Training**

**M1**

**Will the $55 billion bomber program fly?**

(*Center for Public Integrity, 26 Mar 12*) … David Axe

<http://www.tucsonsentinel.com/nationworld/report/032612_bomber_program/will-55-billion-bomber-program-fly/>

When the Obama administration dispatched three B-2 bombers from a Missouri air base on March 19 last year to cross the ocean and reach Libya, it put roughly $9 billion worth of America's most prized military assets into the air. The bat-shaped black bombers, finely machined to elude radar and equipped with bombs weighing a ton apiece, easily demolished dozens of concrete aircraft shelters near Libya's northern coast.

The Air Force points to that successful mission, and thousands of others against insurgents in Afghanistan conducted by older B-1 bombers, while arguing that long-distance, pinpoint expressions of U.S. military power are best carried out by strategic bombers. As a result, th­­e Air Force says, the country needs more and newer versions of them, at the cost of tens of billions of dollars.

Its claims over the last year have impressed Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta, who called the idea "critical" to national security in February budget testimony. They also charmed Congress, which in December slipped an extra hundred million dollars into the defense budget to speed the creation of a top-secret new "Long-Range Strike Bomber." Only that bomber — among the dozens of major new weapons systems now in development — was honored with a specific endorsement in the Pentagon's new strategic review, released on Jan. 5.

But the new bomber's future is not assured. While Libyan and Afghan gunners may be no match, the new planes seem likely to encounter major turbulence at home, as a climate of financial austerity begins to afflict the Pentagon for the first time in a decade and other weapons compete to serve its military role.

Critics have expressed concerns that the Air Force will not fit the bombers into its budget; that their preliminary design is too technically ambitious; and that a key potential mission — conducting bombing raids over China — is implausible. They also have asked why new planes are needed when old ones are undergoing multi-billion-dollar upgrades.

By all accounts, the Air Force's track record of making bombers the country can afford is dismal. The B-1 program was cancelled mid-stream by the Carter administration after its cost doubled, then revived under President Reagan. The B-2 grew so costly in the early 1990s that the Pentagon ended up buying just a fifth of the aircraft originally planned. The B-2s are actually not used much now, partly because few targets justify risking aircraft that cost $3 billion apiece in today's dollars, and partly because their flights by some estimates cost $135,000 per hour — almost double that of any other military airplane.

The Air Force says the new bomber is slated to cost roughly $55 billion, or about $550 million a plane — less than a quarter of the price of the B-2. If costs rise, "we don't get a program," Air Force chief of staff Gen. Norton Schwartz recently told reporters, citing a 2009 warning by then-Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, an airpower skeptic, as Gates cancelled an earlier attempt to build a new bomber.

One of the skeptics is Tom Christie, the Pentagon's chief weapons tester from 2001 until his retirement in 2005. He says that if $550 million per copy is the target, "you're talking $2 billion by the time they build the damn thing …. How many times [have] we been through this with bombers? And look where we end up."

"Besides, what do we need it for?" adds Christie, a sardonic scientist who in his three decades working for the military contributed to the design of many of today's most successful warplanes. A jowly man with snow-white hair, Christie has devoted his retirement to highlighting and criticizing what he sees as wasteful Pentagon practices.

The new bomber program has been accelerated at a particularly risky moment, when its design — by the accounts of several top officials — remains up for grabs. The Air Force has said, for example, that it may or may not be given a nuclear mission at some point in the future, a feature that would add to its price tag. The Air Force has also said it is to be "optionally manned," meaning it conceivably could be flown from a ground station, without a pilot in the cockpit. Nothing similar, involving unmanned, armed aircraft that must survive in a hostile environment, has ever been attempted.

That kind of technological ambition has doomed many weapons program — a reality the Air Force says it recognizes. In 2009, for example, the Obama administration ordered cancellation of an advanced fighter called the F-22 after its costs ballooned and it began to suffer technological and maintenance problems.

Besides Gates, no critic has been more vocal and posed more of an obstacle to the Air Force's bomber efforts than Marine Corps Gen. James Cartwright, a former fighter pilot who served as the vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff from 2007 until retiring in August 2011. The charismatic Cartwright was instrumental in persuading Gates to kill off the Air Force's earlier effort to develop a new bomber. It wasn't until Cartwright's influence waned that the Air Force succeeded in advancing its revived bomber scheme through the Pentagon bureaucracy and Congress.

Cartwright says the nation does need several hundred new "trucks" or inexpensive bomb haulers, without fancy sensors, capable of penetrating advanced air defenses to drop guided bombs. Such weapons can cost around $20,000 apiece, or about a fifth what modern cruise missiles cost.

But Cartwright says he doubts that the Air Force can develop an effective bomber cheap enough to be bought in adequate numbers. He predicts cost increases will result in the Air Force again buying less than two dozen new bombers — around a quarter of what the service says it needs. Cartwright adds that he is not sure why the Air Force feels a new bomber is needed now and, equally importantly, why the service believes it can afford it. "Those are the right questions," Cartwright says.

A record of cost overruns and shifting timetables

The Air Force's bomber troubles stretch a long way back. The last bomber to be developed and purchased without huge cost overruns was the B-52, which began development in the late 1940s. Twice in subsequent decades the Air Force launched a new bomber program in order to replace the now-classic B-52, only to see costs rise and production terminated early. Seventy years after its design was conceived, the B-52 remains America's most numerous strategic bomber.

The Air Force now says it wants between 80 and 100 Long-Range Strike Bombers, the number planners say is required to carry out a sustained bombing campaign against a well-armed foe such as China or Iran. It has said repeatedly that the new planes, which it claims will use "off-the-shelf" technologies, will be ready for flying in the mid-2020's — when America's list of friends and foes might be different.

Between now and then, the Air Force intends to hide the plane's design, missions, operating costs, and basing plans in an enveloping shroud of secrecy, much as it did with the B-2. "There's a competition. The program is underway. The requirements, the cost parameters have been set by the secretary of defense and we're executing in that direction," Air Force Secretary Michael Donley said at a conference in February. "That's about all we're saying." Northrop, Boeing and Lockheed Martin all said they would compete for the contract, but likewise declined comment about it.

The program's current timetable represents a shift. A decade ago, the Air Force believed it could wait until 2037 for a new bomber. But in 2001, a Defense Department strategy review warned that another world power could launch a surprise attack on a U.S. ally that U.S. ground and naval forces could not prevent — an obvious reference to a sudden amphibious assault by China on Taiwan. It called for a robust capability to strike and maneuver "within denied areas."

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"What is this but a new stealth bomber?" says David Deptula, a retired Air Force lieutenant general and former deputy chief of staff for intelligence who helped plan bomber operations over Afghanistan and the Pacific and now teaches at the Air Force Academy in Colorado and is CEO of a defense and aerospace contractor, Mav6.

In 2006, under then-Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, the Pentagon blessed the Air Force's plan to produce a new bomber by 2018 — and began channeling money into design efforts. The new plane was supposed to include cutting-edge sensors, communications and weapons, potentially including the world's first operational air-to-air laser cannon — all of which added to its pricetag.

But after Gates replaced Rumsfeld in late 2006 and Cartwright joined the Joint Chiefs of Staff the following year, Gates canceled the new bomber initiative, citing the same out-of-control technological ambitions that caused the B-2 to cost $3 billion per copy. "It makes little sense to pursue a future bomber … in a way that repeats this history," Gates said.

"Gates was listening to Cartwright at this point in time," says Barry Watts, a bookish former Air Force and Northrop Grumman program evaluator now working for the Washington, D.C.-based Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments.

To lower the cost, Gates proposed the Air Force return to the drawing board and look at an unmanned design, echoing Cartwright's own preference. A strictly pilotless bomber could dispense with the cockpit, ejection seats and onboard oxygen systems, thereby reducing cost, Cartwright claims. "Today's weapons and platform technologies allow an aircraft to stay airborne far longer than a human can maintain peak mental and physical performance."

The White House Office of Management and Budget, which vets all federal spending, endorsed Gates' decision at the time. "Current aircraft will be able to meet the threats expected in the foreseeable future," OMB said of the bomber fleet in 2009.

"The OMB statement was actually something of an anomaly," counters Deptula, a former fighter pilot and air power champion. "OMB has no military competence and should not be attributed any."

Last spring, the House Armed Services Committee promised to give the Air Force $100 million more than the $197 million it requested for new bomber work for the 2012 fiscal year. The committee is chaired by Rep. Buck McKeon (R-Cal.), who district includes a secretive Air Force research and testing facility in Palmdale, outside Los Angeles, where the B-1s and B-2s were built and where the new bomber will most likely be assembled, regardless of which company wins the contract.

Paul Meyer, a Northrop Grumman vice president, says the extra funding was not a surprise when it was officially appropriated last fall. "I'm proud of how both the Air Force and my committee are approaching the [bomber] development," McKeon said in a May 5 speech at the Heritage Foundation in Washington, D.C.

McKeon's staff did not respond to multiple requests for interviews. But his plan attracted bipartisan House support: George Behan, a staffer for Rep. Norm Dicks, D-Wash., the House Armed Services Committee's ranking member and a longstanding supporter of Boeing — a potential bomber contractor — says the unrequested, extra funding "was needed to keep it on schedule."

In May last year, Ashton Carter, the deputy secretary of defense, met with executives from Northrop Grumman, Boeing and Lockheed Martin to discuss the bomber and its technologies in Palmdale. "His intent was to understand what was resident in various contractors' capabilities," a source at the meeting said of Carter. Details of the meeting have not been disclosed, but when Panetta left as head of the CIA to replace Gates and Carter became the deputy defense secretary, both embraced the bomber enthusiastically.

"Rebalancing our global posture and presence to emphasize the Asia-Pacific and Middle East areas … requires an Air Force that is able to penetrate sophisticated enemy defenses and strike over long distances," Panetta said in a February press briefing. "So we will be funding the next-generation bomber."

At the same time, Panetta required that senior Defense Department officials jointly oversee its development. He also opted to defer efforts to certify it for carrying nuclear weapons — a task that requires special communications and costly hardening against radiation effects and other consequences of nearby nuclear explosions.

That decision reverses the development course of the B-1 and B-2, which were designed to be nuclear-capable from the outset and then re-engineered to carry largely nonnuclear weaponry. That change cost around $4.5 billion for the B-1 fleet alone, in 2001. The Air Force has declined to say what the cost will be of "certifying" the planes later as nuclear-capable.

A cockpit without a pilot

While meant to be at least as stealthy as the B-2, the new bomber is not meant to fly mostly alone into battle, using its own sensors to spot targets and its own electronic defenses to defeat enemy radar. It "won't be a Swiss Army knife" like the B-2, explains Air Force spokesman Lt. Col. Tadd Sholtis, "Instead, it will rely on its integration with other systems" — such as satellites, spy drones and radar-jamming planes.

But one challenging requirement has already crept into the design: It is supposed to be flown as a pilotless drone with only minor tweaks. "It could be manned; it could be unmanned," Meyer says. On some missions, in short, it might look like a ghost-plane, flying perfectly with no crewmembers in the installed seats.

The Air Force is no stranger to drones — even large ones. The Northrop Grumman-built Global Hawk, with a wingspan greater than the ubiquitous Boeing 737 passenger jet, can stay aloft for 35 hours. Even the Air Force's standard Predator and Reaper, each around the size of a Cessna, routinely fly for 14 hours or more over Afghanistan.

But the Global Hawk is unarmed, and the propeller-driven Predators and Reapers are loud, slow and intended only for patrols in undefended airspace. The Air Force has never fielded a large, high-performance, armed drone warplane — much less one that can switch between manned and unmanned modes with minimal changes.

From the mid-1990s until 2006, the Pentagon started to develop such a drone under a contract with Boeing and Northrop Grumman. Flying prototypes, known as the X-47 and X-45, were built under the $1-billion effort, called the Joint Unmanned Combat Air Systems initiative. But the program has not produced a combat-ready copy.

Cartwright and Gates said they favored a purely drone bomber — a sort of pilotless B-52 priced to buy in large numbers. But the Air Force, with a senior leadership dominated by traditional pilots, pushed back; it insisted that a drone would not save money.

"By the time you look at a payload of 40,000 pounds, onboard fuel and the airframe itself, adding a crew and cockpit module aren't that big a deal," Rebecca Grant, a consultant to major aerospace firms, told Aviation Week, a trade magazine. "We want the value of a manned crew compartment" — principally, a diminished need to ensure good communications back to a control center." Even highly autonomous drones such as the Global Hawk require a steady satellite link to operators on the ground, which enemies might try to degrade.

In January, the Pentagon canceled one variant of the Global Hawk, admitting that the spy drone was actually more expensive to operate than the 60-year old, manned U-2 it was meant to replace. "Cost savings have not materialized," the Defense Department reported. A pilotless bomber could incur the same unexpected expense.

The Air Force also refuses to accept the notion of a pilotless bomber with a possible nuclear mission. "Could you be comfortable with a nuclear-laden RPA? I wouldn't," Air Force chief of staff Schwartz said in a recent speech, using the acronym for "Remotely Piloted Aircraft." As a drone advocate, Cartwright wanted to change that policy. "I don't remember the last time I manned an ICBM," he told a group of Washington, D.C., defense reporters last July.

But with Cartwright out of the picture, the Air Force is not about to shift positions. That means that the new bomber will retain all the risks incumbent in drone design, without the benefit of the potential cost savings that attracted Gates and Cartwright.

A mission to bomb China?

In late 2011, Capt. James Perkins, a U.S. Army infantry commander in the eastern province of Paktika, saw bombs dropping from an unseen B-1 through thick cloud cover, striking Taliban fighters with precision. "It was pretty amazing," he told the Center for Public Integrity. But that type of mission — against an undefended foe — is not what the Air Force has in mind for the new bomber.

Deptula explains that since 2004, the United States has been stationing B-52s at its air base in Guam, just outside the range of most Chinese weapons. In November of that year, he organized tests to see if the planes could find and sink a Chinese invasion fleet steaming towards Taiwan. Two B-52s flew from Louisiana to the Pacific and hunted for the decommissioned U.S. Navy landing ship Schenectady, which had been deliberately abandoned off the Hawaiian coast.

Spotting the Schenectady with their sensors, the bombers dropped four tons of explosives on the 522-foot vessel, pulverizing it.

The continuing presence of B-52s and B-2s on the tarmac in Guam deters China, according to Bob Elder, a retired Air Force lieutenant general who commanded the 8th Air Force, the main bomber unit. "When we want them to be seen — when we're trying to send a signal — they're capable of doing that," Elder says of bombers.

This signal is less and less credible, Air Force officials say, because China hasn't been standing still. Their military budget tripled between 2000 and 2010, and the military acquired new jet fighters, radars and long-range HQ-10 surface-to-air missiles, representing what Schwartz calls "one of the world's best air defense environments." And the Obama administration — which announced a "strategic pivot" towards Asia in recent months — has expressed concern that a failure to provide a U.S. military riposte might loosen America's political ties to its closest allies in the region.

Lately Iran, too, has been investing in air defenses that could challenge U.S. forces, Schwartz added. Technologies meant to keep out U.S. military planes "are proliferating very rapidly," Jamie Morin, an Air Force assistant secretary and comptroller, told the nonprofit Stimson Center in Washington, D.C., this month. "The technology is widely available and comparatively inexpensive."

Against the best defenses, the Air Force can use only the radar-evading B-2s, and only half of these are ready for combat on short notice, analysts say. The non-stealthy B-1s and B-52s are too vulnerable, and fighters including the F-22 lack the range to hit Chinese targets from secure U.S. bases.

But some experts have said that using any American plane to conduct bombing raids over China is a remote possibility, given that Beijing has a stockpile of missiles tipped with nuclear warheads that can reach major cities in the United States. The idea is both unnecessary and dangerous, said Wayne Hughes, a retired Navy captain now teaching at the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, Calif.

"We should not adopt an air-sea strike plan against the [Chinese] mainland, because that is a sure way to start World War IV," Hughes told an informal gathering of naval strategists in Washington in February 2011. "We need only enough access to threaten a war at sea that destroys Chinese trade and curtails energy imports." That more limited deterrent capability does not necessarily require a new stealth bomber, he said, because inexpensive ships and planes firing guided missiles could pose enough threat to Chinese trade to prevent any conflict.

If Hughes is correct, bomber upgrades already in the works could render the new bomber redundant. The B-52, B-1 and B-2 are all being fitted with a new cruise missile with some of the same stealth qualities as the B-2, and can hit targets up to 600 miles away. For the cost of the new bomber fleet, the Air Force could buy 50,000 of these missiles. It has fired just 2,000 cruise missiles since it began using the long-range weapons in combat in 1991.

All three existing bombers are also getting new sensors, new radios and structural enhancements. The Air Force has acknowledged the B-1 and B-52 will be structurally sound for at least another 29 years — and the B-2 potentially for another 50 or more. The bill for the B-2 upgrades alone is projected to be $2 billion. Even the B-52 has vast potential, Boeing officials say. "Every aspect of the aircraft — structurally, the capability to hold weapons and avionics, the power — has large margins in it," explains Scot Oathout, Boeing's B-52 program manager.

Air Force spokesman Sholtis responds that "continued modernization of existing aircraft at the expense of any larger leap in technology comes with serious risk. To the extent that we may be required to put our existing, upgraded forces up against more fundamentally advanced air-to-air or surface-to-air threats, we're looking at more airmen potentially dying and more battlefield targets not being hit."

But Christie, a veteran observer of the military services' budgetary stratagems, speculates that other factors are at play besides military need. "You have new [Asia-centered] strategy which, on the surface, would seem indicate some rationale for something like this [bomber]," Christie says. But he says it's really an effort to "take advantage of things and jump in there while we can."

Christie says the service might be acting now to prop up its budget and thus protect itself from financial ruin in the early 2020s, when two other major Air Force programs — a new tanker and the stealthy Joint Strike Fighter — will also begin full-rate production, potentially under a flat or falling overall defense budget.

By starting a major program now — any major program — the service can keep its spending high enough to fend off Pentagon planners seeking funds for the Army, Navy and Marine Corps "You strike while the iron is hot and look at where you are five to 10 years from now," Christie says. Officials think that "hopefully nirvana will come and we'll have double the budgets we had. We'll have a new war which will cause budgets to increase or we'll have allies on [Capitol] Hill to cause them to take money away from the other services."

[**RETURN**](#Mod)

**M2**

**Sat Operators Team For Situational Awareness**

(*Aviation Week, 26 Mar 12*) … Frank Morring, Jr.

<http://www.aviationweek.com/aw/generic/story_channel.jsp?channel=space&id=news/awst/2012/03/19/AW_03_19_2012_p32-436474.xml&headline=Sat%20Operators%20Team%20For%20Situational%20Awareness>

A half-century-plus after Sputnik, the swirling mass of operational spacecraft and space junk that has grown up around the planet is overwhelming mankind’s ability to keep track of it, much less clean it up.

Some of the world’s biggest commercial satellite operators have teamed up to help each other with their space situational awareness (SSA), spurred by the 2009 collision between an active Iridium low-Earth-orbit (LEO) spacecraft and a defunct Russian military bird.

The U.S. Air Force, which has handled SSA for most of the spaceflight era, is struggling to keep up, hampered by “sources-and-methods” security concerns, aging equipment and outmoded software, and stingy budgets.

The problem is only going to get worse, both from high-speed “conjunctions” like the 7-mi./sec. smashup that turned Iridium 33 and Cosmos 2251 into a new debris swarm, and from radio-frequency interference (RFI) between ever-more-powerful satellites and radio sources on the ground.

In the wake of the collision, Intelsat, SES and Inmarsat formed the Space Data Association (SDA) to develop techniques for merging and disseminating their satellite-control data to improve collective SSA. Later, Eutelsat and about a dozen other operators joined, and the “not-for-profit” organization hired Analytical Graphics Inc. to develop the computer tools needed to make it work.

So far the operators—who say their SSA system is more accurate because it takes into account satellite maneuvers as they happen and uses common formats to ensure everyone in the system is reading the same information—believe they have been stymied in their offers to fuse their data with the Air Force ephemera, even as an “experiment.”

“We believe [the Air Force] process is unreliable, and it’s insufficient in and of itself,” says Stewart Sanders of SES, who is the SDA chairman. “That is why we set up the SDA in the first place. We’ve believed this for a long time, and I think a lot of that information is now coming into the public domain.”

For its part, the Air Force says it continues to support the national space policy requirement of providing radar tracks of objects in space, and publishing “conjunction summary messages” (CSMs) when it projects that two objects are headed for a dangerously close pass. Those messages have improved since the collision, according to Lt. Gen. Susan J. Helms, who commands the 14th Air Force (Air Forces Strategic) and the Joint Functional Command for Space.

“In order to be good stewards of the sustainability of space, in the last couple of years we’ve established some data-sharing processes that are new, and it seems to us to be quite productive in the way that we interface with not only government entities, but commercial entities as well, and I am talking about international commercial entities,” says Helms, a former space shuttle astronaut and International Space Station flight engineer.

In a pitch last week to prospective operator-members, SDA officials—who also hold day jobs at their companies—outlined the advantages of using their system to keep track of threats to expensive satellites. Comparing their data with CSM data provided by the Joint Space Operations Center (JSpOC) in Helms’s command, they demonstrated that it may take the Air Force four or five days to catch up with a satellite maneuver in geostationary orbit (GEO), leaving its computer-generated orbital track out of sync until it is updated again.

They also showed examples of Air Force data “cross-tagging” spacecraft in GEO when they pass near each other while one is maneuvering to another orbital slot or suffering a loss of control. In that case, the radar tracks wind up misidentified, further obscuring SSA.

“Unmodeled maneuvers are really just one instance of a broader thing, which is unmodeled perturbations, anything that affects a vehicle, be it outgassing, be it your solar radiation pressure and the way you tilt your solar arrays as you fly the vehicle,” says Don Oltrogge, who manages the Space Data Center program run by the SDA. “All those things affect where you’re at, and any one of those has the potential to invalidate or degrade your SSA.”

The Space Data Center takes up-to-date information from SDA operator-members, who typically update ranging data hourly when maneuvering a satellite, and puts it in a standard format that controllers can use to work out conjunction-avoidance maneuvers without revealing proprietary data to competitors. Of course, that does not help when the object is not maneuverable, so the Air Force CSMs are useful to the extent that they predict where those objects are. The need, says Oltrogge, is to fuse the data to get the best picture of where all types of objects are and the threats they pose to each other.

Not everyone is dissatisfied with the service provided by JSpOC. Iridium Communications Inc. is a member of the SDA, but John H. Campbell—the company’s vice president for government programs—says he believes SDA has overstated its case again the Air Force conjunction data. In its LEO operating zone, he says, the CSMs have become much more useful since the collision.

“Our real concern is debris and avoiding all that, and the LEO environment is a lot more dynamic environment, and as we understand it SDA doesn’t really provide any conjunction assessment against the 20,000 or so pieces of debris that are in the LEO environment,” says Campbell, a retired Air Force lieutenant general. “That’s where JSpOC has really made great strides over the last three years, and we don’t know that there’s any other source of that information.”

Among the changes that made the Air Force data more accurate in the wake of the collision was the inclusion of “special perturbation” (SP) data that had previously been withheld for military-security reasons, says Campbell. Since then, Iridium has maneuvered its satellites about 60 times to avoid conjunctions, he says. But the full SP data catalogue is not released.

“What we don’t share is specific information related to the sensors, in terms of their biases and their performance,” says Helms. “That would be information that we would keep within government channels, obviously, because you don’t want to reveal sources and methods. But we do give information to the commercial entities that gives them a sense of the freshness of the data, as well as our best possible accuracy, relative between the two bodies of interest.”

Normally that information does not include the data generated by the SDA system, Helms says, because the process for taking it in is “manually intensive” rather than machine to machine.

“We don’t have the wherewithal at this point in time to take in all the ephemera of all the commercial satellites,” she adds. “For some of the military networks such as GPS, it’s not quite the same. We do end up getting the ephemera of the GPS satellites and have that dialogue with them.”

There is a fix in the works for that situation called the JSpOC Mission System, but for now it has been “pulled back” for another look at the procurement strategy. Once it is settled, Helms says, the “evolutionary” JSpOC upgrades should boost the power of the service’s analysis systems.

“The huge power of that upgrade will provide us the ability to have an open architecture whereby we can develop automatic interfaces between sensors and the analytical processes by which we would do the orbit determination,” she says. “And in effect that will be revolutionary from the standpoint of the resources that we have today and the needs that we have in order to maintain the catalogue and provide a series of services by which we can propagate that catalogue.”

Another area of concern to commercial operators is RFI, which can hamper their ability to serve their customers. Better SSA is also a help in identifying interference sources and working out how to stop it. The Space Data Center presentations illustrated how it has improved operators’ ability to pinpoint sources of interference originating on the ground by shrinking the geographic footprint that includes the source. While there is a growing concern in military circles over deliberate interference with space assets, commercial operators say most of the problems they have encountered are caused by human error or faulty equipment.

“There’s a lot of focus on deliberate jamming,” says Stewart, who manages satellite-service delivery at SES. “Our experience at SES is in fact we’re just not subject to it. We’ve seen almost nothing. . . . For us it’s less than 1%, very much less than 1%.”

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**M3**

**Air Force awash in ISR data**

(*Warner Robings Patriot, 26 Mar 12*) … Gene Rector

<http://warnerrobinspatriot.com/bookmark/18005407-Air-Force-awash-in-ISR-data>

The Air Force's problem with overhead information gathering is not too little data. It's too much and the capacity to gainfully process all of it.

U.S. forces receive mountains of information from unmanned and manned systems. How to deal with it is a major issue, according to Lt. Gen. Larry James, deputy chief of staff for intelligence-surveillance-reconnaissance.

Speaking at an Air Force Association conference last week, James said, "The amount of information flowing into the ISR enterprise is absolutely staggering."

He noted that a RAND study concluded that Air Force would need more than 100,000 analysts by 2016 just to process the information gathered by various ISR sources.

"Obviously, we can't do that," AFA quoted James, "so we have to create the tools that will allow us to handle all this data so humans are not looking at full-motion video 24/7. We have to let the machine do all of this."

Read more: The Warner Robins Patriot - Air Force awash in ISR data

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**M4**

**US developing nuke-powered drones**

(*Press TV, 26 Mar 12*) … Unattributed

<http://www.presstv.ir/usdetail/233259.html>

Scientists at a leading defense contractor and government research laboratory have been working on developing a new generation of drone aircraft that utilizes nuclear power.

Based on a vaguely worded report out of Sandia National Laboratories, Steven Aftergood at Secrecy News surmised that the unnamed “technology” was fission-oriented. The lead investigator for the research was a nuclear propulsion expert, Aftergood noted, and the report included references to “propulsion and power technologies that [go] well beyond existing hydrocarbon technologies,” “safeguards” and “decommissioning and disposal.”

Interest in making unmanned aircraft nuclear-powered stems from the desire to extend the length of missions from “days to months” at a time.

The U.S. Air Force has been studying the feasibility of nuclear-powered drones since at least 2002, when it funded two studies to consider the possibility of converting Northrop-Grumman Global Hawk UAVs to nuclear power.

For the time being at least, the government does not appear to be moving forward with the new kind of drone because “current political conditions will not allow use of the results,” reads the report. AllGov

The U.S. government is known to have used drones to carry out lethal attacks in at least six countries: Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Pakistan, Somalia and Yemen. Washington Post

The United States was identified in June 2010 as the world's No. 1 user of targeted killings -- largely as a result of its dependence on unmanned drone attacks in Pakistan and Afghanistan. CNN

The Pentagon now has some 7,000 aerial drones, compared with fewer than 50 a decade ago, and has asked Congress for nearly $5 billion for drones in 2012. NY Times

The lion's share of U.S. drone missions are flown by Air Force pilots stationed at Creech, a tiny outpost in the barren Nevada desert, 20 miles north of a state prison and adjacent to a one-story casino. CNN

A miniature "kamikaze" drone designed to quietly hover in the sky before dive-bombing and slamming into a human target will soon be part of the U.S. Army's arsenal.

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**M5**

**Air Force, Navy collaborate to find answers on hypoxia**

*Units are working to solve a ‘common issue’ for military pilots.*

(*Dayton Daily News, 26 Mar 12*) *…* Barrie Barber

<http://www.springfieldnewssun.com/news/springfield-news/air-force-navy-collaborate-to-find-answers-on-hypoxia-1349794.html>

WRIGHT-PATTERSON AIR FORCE BASE - The Air Force and the Navy have combined research into a perplexing problem that may have vexed both services in the skies.

The U.S. Air Force School of Aerospace Medicine and the Naval Medical Research Unit, next door to each other at Wright-Patterson, have linked research for hypoxia — incidents that may have caused a lack of oxygen to reach pilots during some flights in the Air Force’s F-22 Raptor stealth fighter and the Navy’s F-18, military leaders said.

“We had what we believe was a common issue,” said Capt. Rita Simmons, executive officer of the Naval Medical Research Unit. “Nobody knows what the underlying problem is yet.”

Col. Donald L. Noah, deputy commander of the Air Force School of Aerospace Medicine, said hypoxia research is a high priority at the school. “That’s one of the major tests going on right now,” he said.

Noah and Simmons say the two are collaborating more on medical research since both relocated to Wright-Patterson last year to comply with the 2005 Base Realignment and Closure law.

“Having them here just prevents duplication of effort,” Noah said. “Before we start any research, we say to them, ‘Have you ever done this, do you want to do this with us?’”

In the largest construction project in Ohio since World War II, the Air Force’s $239 million aerospace medical school opened at Wright-Patterson last year with 900 military and civilian staff members, and trains more than 5,000 students a year. The 680,000-square-foot complex, part of the 711th Human Performance Wing, relocated from its long-time home at Brooks City-Base in San Antonio, Texas.

The Navy unit, with about 75 staffers, relocated aerospace medical research to the Dayton air base from Pensacola Naval Air Station in Florida.

The Air Force school hired at least 200 people locally and the Navy hired about 40 area residents, officials said.

The Navy brought one-of-a-kind machines that mimic conditions in flight to test human limits.

An Air Force Institute of Technology researcher, for example, will use the Navy’s 12-foot-tall Vertical Linear Accelerator on base to test more effective ways to keep an image stable, such as on a Heads Up Display during vibration in an aircraft, Simmons said.

A Heads Up Display beams flight data, such as speed and altitude, on a windscreen in front of a pilot. Vibration during flight can be a particular problem in helicopters, said Simmons, a physiologist and an aviator.

Air Force and Navy research at the base also has investigated personnel selection traits to pick UAV crews, Simmons said.

Both services plan to build more advanced machines at Wright-Patterson to test human physiology.

The Air Force will construct a $34.4 million centrifuge, the largest in the world, at the School of Aerospace Medicine to replace similar machines at Brooks City-Base, Texas, Holloman Air Force Base, N.M., and at Wright-Patterson, according to base spokesman William Hancock. A centrifuge has a capsule-like device that spins around in a wide circular arc on a giant metal arm to test pilots’ G-force limits.

The Navy will start operations this summer on a $19 million Disorientation Research Device. Tests of the silver spinning chamber, capable of generating up to three times the force of gravity as it moves in three dimensions between two rails, aim to help researchers understand spatial disorientation and motion sickness in humans.

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**M6**

**$2 billion update for Whiteman’s B-2 bomber**

*A 10-year plan to enhance the fleet at Missouri base will be “biggest and most complex” in its history.*

(*AP, 26 Mar 12*) … Rick Montgomery

<http://www.kansascity.com/2012/03/26/3515979/2-billion-update-for-whitemans.html>

Say you own a 20-year-old car and intend to drive it beyond the year 2050. It will need some fixing.

A challenge similar to that continually faces Whiteman Air Force Base, home to the B-2 stealth bomber. Many aircraft parts made in the 1980s, when the first of 21 B-2s rolled out of a Northrop Grumman Corp. hangar, are as obsolete today as the floppy disk.

Yet the plan is to keep those bat-winged bombers flying, and eluding the latest in radar technology, until 2058.

The Pentagon is moving forward with a $2 billion, 10-year effort to modernize the fleet’s defensive capabilities. Digital equipment will replace analog, antennas will be upgraded, communication systems and pilot displays will be enhanced — all needed to address “emerging and proliferating 21st century ground and airborne threats,” according to an Air Force report last year to Congress.

Col. Rob Spalding of Whiteman’s 509th Bomb Wing called the coming enhancements “the biggest and most complex update of the B-2 in its history.”

Washington’s commitment to the B-2 is a no-brainer, experts say, given the plane’s lethal legacy. It has been involved in every combat action since NATO’s 1999 bombing of Serbia in the Kosovo War.

“The B-2 is a door opener,” said John Pike of GlobalSecurity.org, a think tank on weapons systems. “It has the unique ability to fly unescorted into hostile airspace and blow up a lot of stuff — without us first having to take out the other guy’s air defenses.”

Maintaining the fleet — now down to 20, following the wreck of a B-2 flying out of a Guam air base into heavy rain in 2008 — is job one at Missouri’s Whiteman. Scheduled overhauls happen every seven years, and replacement parts are increasingly difficult to find, Spalding said.

In some instances, technicians at the base have devised their own remedies to keep the bomber current with changing technologies.

Case in point: Avionics Plug and Play, or AP2.

It is an email and communications system that is separate from the aircraft’s operational backbone. This is a huge cost-saver, Spalding said, because any fiddling with the bomber’s core functions requires years of research and testing.

AP2 allows commanders on the ground to shoot coordinates and revised flight plans to the B-2’s two-person crew. Rather than relying on a laptop that once swiveled on a stand between the pilot seats, the new system puts computer screens at the shoulder of each flyer. And it can be easily upgraded as more sophisticated technologies emerge, said Spalding, operations group commander for the 509th.

“We designed it ourselves,” he said. “Necessity is the mother of invention. We saw the need and went out and did it.”

Last month, Northrup Grumman awarded a contract to BAE Systems to replace 30-year-od analogue electronics with digital support systems on all B-2s. The size of the contract was not disclosed, and a Northrop Grumman spokeswoman said sensitive specifics about the planned upgrades would not be divulged.

A BAE executive said in a press release the new electronics will help give the fleet “exceptional situational awareness to reach its targets through highly developed, increasingly sophisticated enemy defenses.”

It’s not such a reach to imagine keeping the B-2s up to date and operational for decades to come, said expert Pike: “We did it with the B-52.”

Many of those bigger bombers were in active service before their crews were born.

“We’re talking about a low-mileage aircraft,” he said, with the typical B-2 accumulating fewer than 5,000 flying hours since birth.

“The notion of the thing getting worn out due to airframe stress, you don’t really need to worry about.”

Then again, Lockheed’s F-117 — a stealth fighter on flight lines since the early 1980s — was phased out of active service by the Air Force beginning in 2007. The fighter’s capabilities were questioned when one was spotted and shot down during the Kosovo conflict, its radar signature compromised with bomb bay doors opened.

The F-117 airframe required substantial maintenance and eventually was superseded by streamlined shapes designed by computers.

Spalding said no B-2s were currently in forward locations such as Diego Garcia, the Indian Ocean atoll from which bombers launched attacks on enemy targets in Afghanistan and Iraq.

The Air Force has $560 million in its present five-year spending plan for modernizing the B-2’s defense-management system, according to InsideDefense.com.

The bomber currently is the only aircraft capable of carrying a super-bunker buster in development — the 30,000-pound Massive Ordnance Penetrator, or MOP. The Pentagon considers the MOP crucial to defense capabilities against hardened, deeply buried targets.

Few in Washington appear inclined to neglect “The Plane That Would Bomb Iran,” as The Atlantic Monthly once called the B-2. Believed to have significantly enhanced their air defenses and radar systems in recent years, Iranian officials last month crowed of successfully identifying and repelling mock fighter jets during four days of war games.

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**RECAPTURE ACQUISITION EXCELLENCE**

**A1**

**USAF, Boeing Deny GAO Warning on Tanker Program Test Schedule**

(*Defense News, 26 Mar 12*) … Marcus Weisgerber

<http://www.defensenews.com/article/20120326/DEFREG02/303260013/USAF-Boeing-Deny-GAO-Warning-Tanker-Program-Test-Schedule?odyssey=tab%7Ctopnews%7Ctext%7CFRONTPAGE>

The Government Accountability Office said the U.S. Air Force’s KC-46A tanker program test schedule is too aggressive, a claim the service claims is being overblown.

In a March 26 report to Congress, GAO said “significant concurrency, or overlaps, among development and production activities add risk to the program.”

The Air Force and Boeing, the KC-46A prime contractor, said the schedule risk is moderate, “citing concerns about software and the ability to complete development flight testing on time,” the report states.

In a response to GAO, Maj. Gen. Christopher Bogdan, the KC-46A program manager, said the agency’s assessment of “significant” concurrency “overstates the actual level and impact of schedule concurrency between development, testing and production activity.”

Boeing was awarded a fixed-price development contract for the tanker program in February 2011. Since then, the program office has developed an acquisition strategy for development and production.

The Air Force is using a $4.4 billion fixed-price development contract that gives Boeing incentives to lower its costs and limits the Pentagon’s liability.

“While estimated development costs are currently $900 million higher than the February 2011 contract award amount, the government’s share of these extra costs is limited to about $500 million,” the report states.

Asked about the status of the KC-46A program during an interview earlier this month, Air Force acquisition executive David Van Buren said, “I feel very good about the program. It is definitely what you would call a green program.”

Dennis Muilenburg, the president and CEO of Boeing Defense, Space & Security, during a February interview said the company “submitted an aggressive bid, but it’s an executable bid and one that, in the end, will be good business for Boeing and good business for our customer.”

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**A2**

**Embraer Expects U.S. to Rebid Light Attack Plane Within Weeks**

(*Bloomberg: Businessweek, 26 Mar 12*) … Jose Sergio Osse

<http://www.businessweek.com/news/2012-03-26/embraer-expects-u-dot-s-dot-to-rebid-light-attack-plane-within-weeks>

Embraer SA, the world’s fourth- biggest airplane maker, said it expects the U.S. government to seek new bids within weeks on a contract for light attack aircraft that was taken from the company in February.

Embraer thinks it has a great chance of winning the work again if the contract requirements are maintained, a company press officer said, citing its defense division president, Luiz Carlos Aguiar.

Aguiar said the U.S. decision needs to be made before Sept. 30, when the budget allocation for purchasing the planes expires, according to the press officer, who asked not to be identified because of the Sao Jose dos Campos, Brazil-based aircraft maker’s policy.

Embraer and its American partner, Sierra Nevada Corp., won a $355 million contract in December to sell 20 Super Tucano aircraft to the U.S. Air Force for use in Afghanistan. The award was canceled Feb. 28 after losing competitor Hawker Beechcraft Corp. sued the military over the decision.

Aguiar said Embraer’s defense division has a backlog of $3.5 billion and will end 2012 with sales of $950 million, an increase from $868 million last year, according to the press officer.

The Financial Times reported Embraer’s expectation for the timing of the new bidding earlier today.

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**A3**

**China Does Nothing to Stop Counterfeit Defense Parts; Findings 'Should Outrage Every American'**

(*AOL Defense, 26 Mar 12*) … Colin Clark

<http://defense.aol.com/2012/03/26/china-does-nothing-to-stop-counterfeit-defense-parts-findings/>

CAPITOL HILL: "These findings should outrage every American."

Sen. Carl Levin, chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, is a tough former prosecutor but he rarely offers such sweeping condemnations as he did today when releasing the findings of a congressional sting operation designed to test whether China had changed its ways and had started combating counterfeit defense parts.

"The Chinese government's refusal to shut down counterfeiting that occurs openly in their country puts our national security and the safety of our military men and women at risk. Not only that, but it also costs thousands of American jobs," Levin said in a statement.

The sting was run by investigators from the Government Accountability Office (GAO). They bought parts for the Air Force's F-15 fighter, the Maverick missile, the Marine Corps' V-22 Osprey tilt-rotor aircraft, and the Navy's Los Angeles-class nuclear submarine. All the parts bought "failed inspection and were determined to be counterfeit."

One part bought by GAO was an amplifier used found in the Army and Air Force's Joint Surveillance and Target Attack Radar System, the Air Force's F-15 fighter, and the Maverick AGM-65A missile. It's designed to convert incoming voltage into outputs that can be hundreds to thousands of times higher. If they fail that could cripple a subsystem, the GAO found.

Visual inspection of these parts found inconsistencies "which suggested that samples were re- marked. Scanning electron microscopy (SEM) analysis revealed further evidence of re-marking. X-ray fluorescence (XRF) testing of the samples revealed that the leads contain no lead (Pb) instead of the 3 percent lead (Pb) required by military specifications," the GAO report says.

The report, written by government auditors, contains an important caveat, one that will be ignored by almost everyone involved except, probably, the Chinese: "The results of this investigation are based on the use of a nongeneralizable sample, and these results cannot be used to make inferences about the extent to which parts are being counterfeited." Now that we've got that out of the way...

"The Chinese government won't act to stop counterfeiting carried out in their country," Levin said. "Since China won't act, we must. It is critical that Treasury and the Department of Homeland Security implement the authorities we gave them in the National Defense Authorization Act to stop counterfeit parts before they enter the country. There is too much at stake for us to delay."

The SASC added language to last year's defense policy bill aimed at curbing the purchase of counterfeit parts, but Levin and his ranking member, Sen. John McCain, clearly think more needs to be done.

At a November hearing on the issue of counterfeit parts, the GAO found that counterfeit parts were discovered on at least seven aircraft, including two C-27J aircraft deployed to Afghanistan, Boeing's new P-8A anti-submarine and ISR aircraft, as well as some of Lockheed Martin's C-130Js.

"So long as this threat persists, we must continue to take steps, such as the ones Senator Levin and I legislated in last year's defense bill, to prevent counterfeits from harming our troops and undermining our weapons systems," McCain said in a statement.

The Pentagon said in November that it would have a new policy aimed at counterfeit parts out sometime this month.

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**A4**

**F-35 Fighter Costs: Six Ways To Make A Bargain Seem Unaffordable**

(*Forbes, 26 Mar 12*) … Loren Thompson

<http://www.forbes.com/sites/lorenthompson/2012/03/26/f-35-fighter-costs-six-ways-to-make-a-bargain-seem-unaffordable/>

The tortured path of the Pentagon’s biggest weapon program is beginning to look like a case study in poor management. The problem isn’t the F-35 fighter, which is making steady progress towards becoming the best tactical aircraft ever built. The problem is a federal acquisition culture that has grown so risk-averse it no longer cares about long-term consequences.

That bureaucratic myopia will be in abundant display next month, when the Department of Defense releases updated cost estimates for the fighter program. The estimates will reveal a modest increase in the cost of each plane, and Pentagon policymakers will repeat for the umpteenth time all of the heroic steps they have taken to rein in a wayward contractor. But don’t expect them to take any responsibility for the cost increases because, after all, they’re the good guys.

If you follow the F-35 program closely, which almost nobody outside the Pentagon does, a different narrative emerges. It is the story of what happens to major technology programs in a balkanized, distracted political system when there is no urgent danger to push them forward. Bureaucratic and personal agendas fill the vacuum once occupied by the threat, and so programs seldom stay on track — leaving the nation unprepared when the next big threat appears.

Maybe you’re incredulous that the real reason the F-35 program has become so controversial is government behavior. After all, I advise many of the companies involved in the program so I’m not objective, right? Fair enough. I’ll abandon generalities and provide concrete examples of what the Pentagon has done wrong (the examples aren’t hard to find). Here are six ways that the military acquisition system makes a bargain seem unafforbable.

1. Develop a plan for holding down costs, then ignore it. The F-35 fighter was conceived as the cheapest way of modernizing the tactical air fleets of three U.S. military services and eight foreign allies. The key to keeping it cheap was to fund a compressed development program in which production quickly ramped up to the kind of rates providing economies of scale. The Clinton Administration had a plan for doing that, and the Bush Administration tried to stick with it despite encountering the usual challenges any next-generation weapon system faces. But the Obama Administration decided not to take any chances, repeatedly restructuring the program and slowing it down.

The official story on why the program was delayed was problems in developing and testing the plane. But the production rate will remain depressed long after testing has concluded, and tests to date have not revealed major design issues anyway. The real reason it was slowed, with $30 billion being taken out of the program over the last three budget cycles, was so the money could be used for other things. Under the Obama plan, the number of F-35s produced through the end of the President’s second term (assuming there is one) will be 365 rather than the 1,600 originally planned. The idea of a quick production ramp-up is dead, along with the economies of scale it would have produced.

2. Issue cost estimates nobody understands. A year ago, the Pentagon provoked a political firestorm by revealing that it would cost over a trillion dollars to operate and support F-35s once they had been produced. Nobody in Congress had ever seen a weapon system that cost so much, and some legislators concluded the system must be unaffordable. What got lost in all the noise was that the F-35 was the first big aircraft program ever that the Pentagon tried to project costs for over a 50-year period.

And I don’t mean in today’s dollars. The trillion-dollar cost projection was in what the Pentagon calls then-year dollars, meaning with inflation included. That’s right, the Department of Defense really thinks it knows what the inflation rate is going to be in 2035, so it’s included in a cost estimate that stretches from 2015 to 2065. Try applying that same methodology to the four-dollar latte you buy each day, and you’ll discover that over the next five decades it will cost you more in nominal terms than a typical house currently sells for in Cleveland. So of course Congress was upset. The Pentagon didn’t have an estimate of what the program would cost in today’s dollars, but it helpfully threw in an estimate in “base-year” 2002 dollars. How confusing is that?

3. Blame the contractor for cost increases the government caused. Congressional ire over F-35 support costs was exacerbated when the media reported that projections had increased by over a hundred percent since the program began without any corresponding increase in the number of planes. Many legislators assumed this signaled massive cost overruns. What it really signaled, though, was changes in the way the government calculated support costs. For instance, it decided to estimate costs over 50 years rather than 30 years, it increased the number of operating bases from 33 to 49, and it doubled some categories of equipment needed to sustain the plane.

It also changed its ground rules for projecting future labor rates, fuel usage, material costs and other inputs, without making any adjustment for program features aimed at holding down those costs. And it included the cost of lifetime modifications to the aircraft aimed at improving its performance — expenses that are not included in the projections for other aircraft. It turns out that about three-quarters of all the “increases” in F-35 support costs were caused by changes in the scope and methods of government estimators rather than actual escalation in costs. But almost nobody outside the Pentagon realized that.

4. Never explain costs in a meaningful context. If a development program was begun to meet valid operational requirements but is experiencing cost growth, the logical question is whether there are other ways of meeting the same needs. Congress has a mechanism for reporting cost overruns called the Nunn-McCurdy process that is designed to address that question. But Pentagon policymakers never put F-35 cost trends in perspective by detailing the price of potential alternatives. If they did, it would be obvious the current program remains a bargain.

For instance, some analysts have proposed that the military scale back its purchase of F-35s and instead keep relying on Cold War planes such as the Air Force’s F-16 and the Navy’s F/A-18. However, the cost of maintaining the existing fleet of legacy fighters each year is already greater than the projected cost for the F-35s that will replace them, and the burden of supporting old fighters will double over the next decade as metal fatigue, corrosion and parts obsolescence take their inevitable toll. Over the long haul, it would cost the military 3-4 times more to keep existing fighters flying than it would to replace them with the F-35. Unfortunately, nobody ever explains that to Congress so legislators lack the budgetary context to assess options.

5. Don’t discuss the long-term consequences of current choices. Last week, senior Pentagon officials proposed a further slowing of the F-35 program designed to calibrate production rates to contractor performance. None of the various officials discussing the new approach in congressional hearings said anything about the long-term consequences of waiting so long to get the program into serial production. Reflecting the tenor of the Obama Administration’s recently announced Asia-Pacific posture, the implicit assumption is that near-term delays in programs will have “manageable” consequences for future administrations.

However, recent history suggests the opposite could be the case — that delaying tactical-aircraft modernization could leave the military unprepared for the next big threat, and might even encourage aggression. From Sputnik to the Tet Offensive to 9-11, military planners have a stunningly poor record of anticipating new challenges. They all agree enemies are likely to strike where America is weak, and yet no one seems to draw the obvious inference that if air fleets have grown decrepit with age that is a signal to rising powers about what strategy might work best. In other words, the biggest bill taxpayers are likely to get as a result of how the F-35 program is being managed isn’t for the planes, but for the consequences of not having them in adequate numbers when the next big aggressor comes along.

6. Send the wrong signals to domestic and foreign audiences. With the single exception of Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta, senior Pentagon officials often seem to be competing with each other to utter the most negative comments about the F-35 program. When Pentagon acquisition chief Ashton Carter discussed the program’s support costs before the Senate Armed Services Committee last May, he called them “unacceptable” and “unaffordable” rather than explaining they were inflated. More recently, Air Force Secretary Michael Donley told the same committee the military has “no more money to put against contract overruns or problems” in the F-35 program — which is an odd statement coming from a service that keeps reducing money for the program.

Such gratuitous expressions of outrage undermine support for the program in Congress and among allies, even though the F-35 remains by far the most cost-effective solution to future air-power needs for the U.S. and its overseas allies. Several of the countries that have been in the program from the beginning such as Canada and Norway have recently reiterated their support, but it is clear that criticism coming out of Washington has not helped the cause of selling F-35s to foreign partners. Instead of scoring political points by adopting an adversarial, punitive approach to the industrial team developing the F-35, the government needs to offer a more balanced picture of what has been accomplished — one reflecting an awareness of how severely U.S. security would be impaired if the program does not go forward.

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**A5**

**F-35 Reaches Critical Juncture After Strong Year, Official Says**

(*AvStop, 26 Mar 12*) … Tyrone C. Marshall

<http://avstop.com/March_2012/f35_reaches_critical_juncture_after_strong_year_official_says.htm>

The F-35 Lightning II joint strike fighter program the centerpiece of future tactical aviation and a key to implementing new military strategic guidance made strong progress in its development last year, a defense official said.

Frank Kendall, the acting undersecretary of defense for acquisition, technology and logistics, told the House Armed Services Committee that the fighter aircraft is essential to the Defense Department and that it made "strong progress" in 2011.

"Last fall, the department engaged in a strategy and budget review where everything -- and I do mean everything -- was on the table," Kendall said. "After a careful look at the joint strike fighter program, the department determined that we do need the JSF (and) that we need all three variants of the fighter, and that we need the planned inventory of 2,443 jets."

That said, Kendall added, "you must recognize there is still a long way to go for JSF." The F-35 flight test program is only about 20 percent complete and "many of the more challenging elements of flight test are still ahead of us," he said.

An F-35 Lightning II flies over Destin, Fla., before landing at at Eglin Air Force Base, Fla., July 14, 2011. According to Defense Department officials, the F-35 development has reached a crucial point in the conversion from conceptualization to actual production.

Kendall said the F-35 development has reached a crucial point in the conversion from conceptualization to actual production. "The JSF program is undergoing the critical transition from development to production," he said. "Historically, this is always a difficult phase for any program, but particularly so for a high-performance aircraft."

That transition has been even more difficult for the F-35, Kendall said, because the program began production very early, well before flight testing had begun. That decision for early production resulted in an unprecedented level of concurrency, which drove the need for significant changes in the program, he said.

"With this year's budget, I believe we are now set on a course for program stability," Kendall added. Navy Vice Adm. David Venlet, the program manager for the F-35, also said the program now is on track. The F-35 has schedule and budget realism now going forward," Venlet said. "It is transparent in the discovery and correction of issues arising in tests that are typical in all fighter aircraft development."

Venlet told the Congress members he believes the F-35 "is a critical presence in the combined force battle space. It makes many other systems and capabilities and effects better because of the presence of the F-35's sensors." The admiral called the F-35 a "critical presence" to many nations as well as a bond of joint strength across all U.S. military services. "It is a bond of capability and a bond economically across many nations that raises the level of technology benefit in our militaries and our industries," he said.

Venlet called the F-35 "the best possible growth platform to incorporate future advances in weapons, sensors and networks." The F-35 also is an assurance to service members that "they will succeed in every mission and return home safely to their loved ones."

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**GLOBAL AIR, SPACE, and CYBERSPACE ENVIRONMENT**

**G1**

**ASDF command now at Yokota base**

(*Japan Times, 26 Mar 12*) … Unattributed

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/text/nn20120326x3.html>

The Air Self-Defense Force's top command post began operating Monday at U.S. Yokota Air Base after being transferred from a nearby city under a bilateral agreement signed in 2006.

The transfer of the Air Defense Command, the ASDF's nerve center mainly dealing with airspace intrusions and ballistic missile interceptions, to the base in western Tokyo is part of efforts to bolster joint operations between the U.S. military in Japan and the Self-Defense Forces, defense officials said.

The moving of the ASDF's top command post outside the Defense Ministry's Air Staff Office comes ahead of a rocket launch by North Korea in April that Japan and the United States believe to be a cover for an ICBM test.

Yokota is now hosting the headquarters not only of the USAF in Japan, but of all U.S. military forces in the country.

Japan and the U.S. set up a joint operations coordination center in an underground part of the ASDF's new command post that is linked to the U.S. Air Force by an underpass.

Haruhiko Kataoka, ASDF chief of staff, said it is important to share information with U.S. forces and coordinate actions promptly because the time given for effectively using the missile defense system is extremely short. The transfer of the top command post "is extremely important in light of the Japan-U.S. security alliance," he said.

But one senior ASDF official wondered whether it can truly be independent while on the premises of a U.S. installation. "It's odd that the top command is placed on a base under the control of a foreign military even if that is of an ally," the official said.

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**G2**

**Newest Japan-US alliance could get early test from North Korea**

(*Stars and Stripes, 26 Mar 12*) … Charlie Reed

<http://www.stripes.com/news/newest-japan-us-alliance-could-get-early-test-from-north-korea-1.172697>

YOKOTA AIR BASE, Japan - Japan might not have to wait long to test its new Air Defense Command if neighboring North Korea goes ahead with plans to launch a satellite-toting rocket in the coming weeks.

Tokyo says it is prepared to shoot down the North Korean rocket using land- and sea-based missile interceptors developed in conjunction with the United States. The North Korean launch has been condemned by the international community as a pretext for a long-range missile test.

But unlike previous North Korean launches, Japan and U.S. experts now will be sitting side-by-side while tracking the rocket. The Air Defense Command began operating from Yokota on Monday, signifying what U.S. and Japanese officials called a “new era” in the bilateral security alliance.

U.S. and Japanese military officials are expected to break in the bilateral operations room in the ADC headquarters in the coming weeks, hashing out missile-defense plans related to the latest threat by North Korea, Col. Kourta Tanaka, the ADC’s chief of defense plans, said Monday during opening ceremonies for the facility.

The U.S. and Japan agreed in 2006 to move the ADC from nearby Fuchu Air Base to Yokota to enhance missile-defense operations, on which the two began collaborating in 1998 following North KoreaTaepodong-1 ballistic missile test. The main benefit of the relocation is the proximity it creates between the Japan Air Self-Defense Force and U.S. Forces Japan and 5th Air Force.

“These headquarters buildings, standing side-by-side, are a tangible result of our efforts to strengthen defense cooperation between our two countries,” said the USFJ commander, U.S. Air Force Lt. Gen. Burton Field. “It’s a visible symbol that reflects the nature of our alliance.”

The project was delayed a year because of the March 11, 2011, earthquake and other construction delays.

Along with a 1.3 million-square-foot operations center, the Japanese also have built a dormitory for about 200 single enlisted airmen, a dining facility, a Japanese military exchange store, an auditorium and other support facilities.

The ADC commander and vice commander also will live on Yokota, though most of the 800 ADC troops and personnel will live in Japanese government housing off-base.

Security officials are still making the necessary adjustments to handle the incoming Japanese workers. And details of how Yokota’s new residents will share facilities with the 11,000 Japanese nationals and Americans already there — including troops, Defense Department civilians and their dependents — are still being worked out, said Lt. Col. Peter Kelley, the special assistant for the ADC project. While some facilities will be open to both Americans and Japanese, others will not, he said.

Despite their 60-year alliance, the U.S. and Japan have never worked in an integrated setting.

“What lies ahead is the real challenge,” Field said.

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**ITEMS OF INTEREST**

**I1**

**Report: AF has most whistle-blower complaints**

(*Air Force Times, 26 Mar 12*) … Kristin Davis

<http://www.airforcetimes.com/news/2012/03/air-force-report-most-whistle-blower-complaints-032612w/>

In the wake of controversy over whistle-blowers being punished at the Dover Port Mortuary office for airing their complaints to supervisors, a new report says the Defense Department has kept poor records of military whistle-blower reprisal complaints, used outdated investigation guidelines and was often slow to handle cases, with some dragging on for years.

The report, issued by the Government Accountability Office, also found that the Air Force was responsible for a disproportionate number of whistle-blower complaints.

The report — issued in February to the Senate Judiciary Committee — noted missing documents in case files, incorrect dates, and date fields for tracking phases of the investigation left blank.

While the Defense Department inspector general has taken steps to more quickly resolve complaints and improve oversight, GAO said, the whistle-blower reprisal process has no standard for monitoring cases and ensuring the quality of investigations.

Further, only a fraction of service members with substantiated complaints actually sought relief, a process that requires the victim to make a separate application to the Board for Correction of Military Records, according to GAO.

The findings were based on a random sample of nearly 100 military reprisal cases concluded between Jan. 1, 2009, and March 31, 2011, and interviews with the DoD inspector general’s office, as well as service IGs, GAO said.

The report followed an independent review in January that concluded three Air Force officials had illegally retaliated against four Port Mortuary workers who blew the whistle on the mishandling of war remains arriving at Dover Air Force Base, Del. One of the workers was fired and then reinstated. Another was placed on leave for eight months and accused of being mentally unstable.

The three Air Force officials were reprimanded and one, Quinton “Randy” Keel, who served as division director at Dover Port Mortuary, resigned at the end of February. The other two officials’ cases have not been fully resolved, but the Air Force is considering further disciplinary action, according to OSC.

The Air Force had a disproportionate number of whistle-blower complaints, according to GAO’s analysis of closed cases between fiscal 2006 and the first half of fiscal 2011. Airmen, who represent 22 percent of the military population, filed 37 percent of the complaints.

The Air Force was also more likely to fully investigate a case — about 46 a year over the five-year period. The Marine Corps investigated the fewest, about two cases annually, the GAO report said. Not all cases must be fully investigated.

The Air Force and Army substantiated an average of 10 whistle-blower cases per year during the five-year period, higher than the other two branches, the report said.

The Military Whistleblower Protection Act of 1988 is supposed to protect from retaliation service members who report waste, fraud and abuse to an inspector general, a member of Congress, a law enforcement agency or certain Defense Department officials. Reprisals generally took the form of unfavorable assignments or reassignment, poor performance evaluations or disciplinary action, GAO found.

Defense officials told GAO that most of the reprisal complaints involved minor issues that affected only one person, “such as a supervisor not following regulations regarding a performance review.”

But GAO said it found that to be untrue: These issues accounted for about a third of all complaints. Reports of fraud, waste and abuse made up slightly less than a third of all complaints — and a combination of the two accounted for the rest.

It’s up to the DoD inspector general to review all complaints of reprisals and approve investigation findings, which must be completed within 180 days, according to federal law. Investigators are supposed to notify the defense secretary’s office and the person who made the complaint if it’s going to take longer.

Failure to meet deadlines

An estimated 70 percent of cases are not completed in 180 days, GAO found. And neither the Defense Department inspector general nor the service inspector generals made the required notifications, which are supposed to include a reason for the delay and an expected completion date.

Five dozen cases closed without a full investigation took anywhere from 14 to 2,215 days, according to the GAO analysis. Twenty-eight fully investigated cases took between 51 and 1,181 days.

GAO identified three cases listed as closed by the Defense Department that had been referred to service inspector generals. One of those took another 872 days to complete — more than two years.

The DoD inspector general’s office, which blamed lengthy investigations on staff shortages and growing caseloads, has added a dozen positions to its whistle-blower-reprisal directorate, bringing the total to 42, according to the report. That’s more than double the number in 2006.

The IG also eliminated in late 2010 a cumbersome phase in the investigation that put a committee in charge of deciding whether a case should be fully investigated, and has said it has fixed the problem with tracking cases.

A Defense Department IG guide for investigators had not been updated since 1996 nor had it been consistently followed, GAO found.

In an official response to the report, titled GAO-12-362, the Pentagon inspector general said it is updating policy manuals and revising investigation manuals.

When investigators substantiate claims of whistle-blower reprisals, it is then up to the service member to apply for relief. But less than 20 percent do, GAO said. Those who did apply for relief usually got it. Relief took the form of amended personnel records and back payments, benefits and awards that were denied because of the reprisal.

Airmen who submitted applications to the Board for Correction of Military Records got some sort of remedy. About half of soldiers who sought relief received it; in the Navy, it was 80 percent, the GAO report said.

The boards “will consider how best to ensure that whistle-blowers whose reprisal complaints are substantiated are provided with all the information they need” to decide whether to apply for relief.

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**I2**

**Engineers transform sugars into jet fuel**

(*Knovel: Engineering News, 26 Mar 12*) … Unattributed

<http://why.knovel.com/all-engineering-news/1388-engineers-transform-sugars-into-jet-fuel.html>

Researchers from one organization recently said they had successfully created jet fuel from cellulosic sugars.

Scientists from Virent and Virdia said this week their engineering research and development had yielded a major breakthrough in the creation of new fuel sources. According to researchers, they successfully converted cellulosic pine tree sugars into drop-in hydrocarbon fuels.

The U.S. Department of Energy, the Israeli Ministry of National Infrastructure and the BIRD Foundation funded the research project, which began in January 2011. Officials from the research consortium said that amid continued volatility in energy prices, it is absolutely essential that the U.S. develop new and improved ways for creating artificial fuel sources from plants and other natural products.

The team of scientists used sugars that were generated from cellulosic biomass to ultimately create fuel, according to Virent co-founder Randy Cortright. Engineers then manipulated the sugars to produce gasoline and jet fuel that were subsequently tested by the U.S. Air Force Research Laboratory (AFRL), a move that ensured they met stringent government specifications.

The U.S. Air Force is working to drastically reduce its reliance on traditional fuel sources, a move prompted by both its commitment to sustainable energy and ongoing cuts to its annual operating budget. AFRL fuels researcher Tim Edwards said the jet fuel and gas produced by the engineers at Virent and Virdia passed the group's exacting specifications.

"This fuel passed the most stringent specification tests we could throw at it [such as thermal stability] under some conditions where conventional jet fuels would fail," he said. "This fuel is definitely worth further evaluation."

Cortright said scientists were able to achieve the impressive results because of a shift in their approach to generating the fuel source. He noted Virent had previously created fuels from such substances, but he said the use of a new kind of sugar improved the efficiency of the process.

The "process has previously generated fuels and chemicals from sugars in cellulosic biomass," he said. "The high-quality sugars generated from pine trees using Virdia’s process leveraged Virent’s conversion process, establishing a viable route to drop-in hydrocarbons from biomass."

Officials said the oil engineering breakthrough would likely spur additional advances in the production of synthetic fuels, particularly as the federal government continues to fund such research projects.

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**I3**

**Officials: White House offers to curtail drones**

(*AP, 26 Mar 12*) … Kimberly Dozier

<http://www.airforcetimes.com/news/2012/03/ap-white-house-offers-curtail-drones-pakistan-032612/>

WASHINGTON - In a bid to save the CIA’s drone campaign against al-Qaida in Pakistan, U.S. officials offered key concessions to Pakistan’s spy chief that included advance notice and limits on the types of targets. But the offers were flatly rejected, leaving U.S.-Pakistani relations strained as President Barack Obama prepares to meet Tuesday with Pakistan’s prime minister.

CIA Director David Petraeus, who met with Pakistan’s then-spy chief, Lt. Gen. Ahmed Shuja Pasha at a meeting in London in January, offered to give Pakistan advance notice of future CIA drone strikes against targets on its territory in a bid to keep Pakistan from blocking the strikes — arguably one of the most potent U.S. tools against al-Qaida.

The CIA chief also offered to apply new limits on the types of targets hit, said a senior U.S. intelligence official briefed on the meetings. No longer would large groups of armed men rate near-automatic action, as they had in the past — one of the so-called “signature” strikes, where CIA targeters deemed certain groups and behavior as clearly indicative of militant activity.

Pasha said then what Pakistani officials and its parliament have repeated in recent days: that Pakistan will no longer brook independent U.S. action on its territory by CIA drones, two Pakistani officials said. All the officials spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the sensitive negotiations.

Pasha went further, saying Pakistan’s intelligence service would no longer carry out joint raids with U.S. counterterrorist teams inside its country, as it had in the past. Instead, Pakistan would demand that the U.S. hand over the intelligence, so its forces could pursue targets on their own in urban areas, or send the Pakistani army or jets to attack the targets in the tribal areas, explained a senior Pakistani official.

The breakdown in U.S.-Pakistani relations follows a series of incidents throughout 2011 that have marred trust — from a CIA security officer who shot dead two alleged Pakistani assailants, to the Navy SEAL raid that killed Osama bin Laden in May, to the border incident where U.S. forces returned fire they believed came from a Pakistani border post, killing 24 Pakistani troops. The diplomatic fallout has led to the ejection of U.S. military trainers who’d worked closely with Pakistani counter-insurgent forces, slowed CIA drone strikes, and almost halted the once-common joint raids and investigations by Pakistan’s intelligence service together with the CIA and FBI.

Pasha’s pronouncements were in line with the Pakistani parliament’s demands issued last week that included ceasing all U.S. drone strikes as part of what Pakistani politicians call a “total reset” in its relationship. Pakistan’s parliament last week demanded cessation of all unilateral U.S. actions including the drone strikes.

The rejection of the U.S. offers set up a potentially rocky meeting ahead between Obama and Pakistani Prime Minister Yusuf Raza Gilani in South Korea on Tuesday, on the sidelines of the Nuclear Security Summit. President Asif Ali Zardari met with special representative to Afghanistan and Pakistan Ambassador Mark Grossman en route to Pakistan, and Central Command chief Gen. James Mattis is headed to Pakistan in April.

Complicating efforts to restore relations are the demands made by a Pakistani parliamentary committee.

A personnel change at the top of the Pakistani Inter-Services Intelligence is another wrinkle, with Pasha now replaced by Army Lt. Gen. Zaheerul Islam officially last week, a senior U.S. official said. While Islam has spent time studying at U.S. military institutions, and once served as deputy to the ISI, he is a mostly unknown quantity to U.S. officials. The staff change was not anticipated when the January Pasha-Petraeus meeting took place, both U.S. and Pakistani officials said.

The diplomatic furor threatens to halt the CIA’s drone program, which in the last eight years, has killed an estimated 2,223 Taliban, al-Qaida and other suspected militants with 289 strikes, peaking at 117 strikes throughout 2010, reducing al-Qaida’s manpower, firepower and reach, according to Bill Roggio at the Long War Journal website, which tracks the strikes. U.S. officials say his figures are fairly accurate, though they would not give more precise figures.

The strikes have markedly slowed to only 10 strikes in the opening months of this year, with the last in mid-March, Roggio said. That puts the program on pace for a total of 40-50 strikes for the year, less than the year before.

Roggio says the strikes so far this year seem to back up that report: out of the 10 strikes, two killed high-value targets, and another strike killed three mid-level Taliban leaders, with no large groups reportedly targeted by any of the drone’s missiles. In previous years, an average of only 5 percent to 10 percent of targets were deemed high value, with larger numbers of foot soldiers and a much lower percentage of commanders among those hit.

U.S. officials took issue with the interpretation that signature strikes had ceased, adding the “U.S. is conducting, and will continue to conduct, the counterterrorism operations it needs to protect the U.S. and its interests.” The CIA offered no official comment.

In his opening salvo to keep the program going, Petraeus offered to give his Pakistani counterpart advance notice of the strikes, as had been the practice under the Bush administration, which launched far fewer strikes overall against militant targets.

The U.S. had stopped giving the Pakistanis advance notice, after multiple incidents of targets escaping, multiple senior U.S. counterterrorist officials say. U.S. intelligence intercepts showed Pakistani officials alerted local tribal leaders of impending action on their territory, and those leaders oftentimes in turn alerted the militants.

Petraeus also outlined how the U.S. had raised the threshold needed to take strikes, requiring his approval more often than in the past, the U.S. official said.

Pakistan’s military wants to go back to the “Reagan rules — the way the CIA operated with the ISI against the Soviets” inside Afghanistan, says former CIA officer Bruce Riedel, of the Brookings Institute. “We give them a big check, and they make every decision about how that is spent. Minimal American footprint in country, or involvement in actual fighting the bad guys.”

“We cannot trust the ISI to fight this war for us,” after finding bin Laden in a Pakistani military town, “showing the ISI was either clueless or complicit,” Riedel said.

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END OF FULL TEXT