Senate Armed Services Committee:

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The service, in the fiscal year 2020 budget, is set to continue the development and purchase of key weapon systems to include the KC-46, B-21 and F-35 while also investing in modernized F-15EX's to replace the aging F-15Cs.

"We remain committed to the F-35 and its game-changing capabilities, and will continue purchasing 48 aircraft each year," they said.

Wilson and Goldfein also continued to urge that Congress pass a supplemental spending bill. That legislation includes funds to repair Tyndall Air Force Base that was heavily damaged by Hurricane Michael in October and Offutt Air Force Base that was submerged in March by seven feet of water in some places when the Missouri River flooded.

Core issues

Wilson and Goldfein highlighted the core set of issues, such as ensuring readiness. When fiscal year 2020 ends, they said, the Air Force will increase by 4,400 Airmen and 5,143 civilians. That growth follows 2019 in which the Air Force increased pilot production by graduating 1,211 pilots with production expected to hit 1,480 in 2020.

"We are more ready for major combat operations today than we were two years ago. More than 90 percent of our pacing squadrons are ready to 'fight tonight' with their lead force packages," Wilson and Goldfein said in their Fiscal Year 2020 Posture Statement to Congress.

The service's space budget also increases in fiscal year 2020 with a 17 percent increase over the 2019 budget, building on advances and further accelerating efforts to protect and defend the nation's ability to operate in space.

The top service leaders also affirmed the importance of a safe, secure and effective nuclear deterrent. The Air Force provides two-thirds of the nation's nuclear triad and 75 percent of the nuclear command, control and communications capability, they told the Armed Services Committee.

"Since the end of the second World War over 70 years ago, every president and every Congress has supported the nuclear triad as a vital element of our national defense. We must continue to do so," they said in the joint statement.

Fielding tomorrow's Air Force faster, smarter

Yet another continuing priority is updating the Air Force's acquisition system to make it faster and more efficient.

In this era of great power competition, Wilson and Goldfein said, "We cannot win this contest with an acquisition system from the Cold War. We must move fast to stay competitive, and we are fundamentally transforming what we buy, how we buy it and from whom we buy it."

They noted the advances the Air Force has realized in speeding up and streamlining the acquisition process. To date, the service has eliminated 78 years of "acquisition schedule time" and saved $15 billion in the last nine months. There is heightened focus – and results – from using prototypes, tailored acquisition strategies and agile software development, they said.

> "It's no surprise that the Air Force we have is smaller than the Air Force we need,"
> -Heather Wilson
> *Secretary of the Air Force*

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