Wilson, Goldfein outline to Senate committee Air Force progress, need for larger force

Secretary of the Air Force Public Affairs

WASHINGTON — Secretary of the Air Force Heather Wilson and Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. David L. Goldfein told the Senate Armed Services Committee on April 4, 2019, that the Air Force must grow to meet – and defeat – security threats at home, globally and in space in an era of great power competition.

"In fiscal year 2020, we will continue to build a more lethal and ready Air Force, while fielding tomorrow's Air Force faster and smarter," Wilson and Goldfein said in a joint posture statement to the committee. The hearing marked the third congressional appearance of the week by Wilson and Goldfein devoted to the Air Force's posture, budget and mission.

As in separate hearings on April 2, 2019, before the House Armed Services Committee and House Defense Appropriations Subcommittee, the Air Force's two senior leaders cited findings from the independent and bipartisan National Defense Strategy Commission to explain the stakes and their vision for building "the Air Force we need."

"Regardless of where the next conflict occurs or which adversary it features, the Air Force will be at the forefront," the commission said.

They also bluntly emphasized the necessity of Congress providing predictable and uninterrupted funding so the Air Force can properly plan and execute the missions and mandates in the National Defense Strategy.

"No enemy in the field has done as much to harm the readiness of the Air Force than the combined impact of artificial spending restrictions, worsened by operating for 10 of the last 11 years under continuing resolutions of varied and unpredictable duration," the joint statement says.

"Let's be clear. We cannot fully implement the National Defense Strategy to protect America's vital national interests with unpredictable and constrained budgets. We must come together to find a way forward," they said.

Building a more lethal and ready force

Another equal necessity, they said, is increasing the number of operational squadrons to 386 from the current 312. The additional squadrons will provide the tools needed to meet requirements in the National Defense Strategy and to "prevail over our highest priority competitors." The analysis from which 386 was derived included thousands of simulations and war games "produced an unmistakable conclusion: the Air Force is too small for what our nation needs."

"It's no surprise that the Air Force we have is smaller than the Air Force we need," Wilson told the Defense Appropriations Subcommittee, April 2, 2019.

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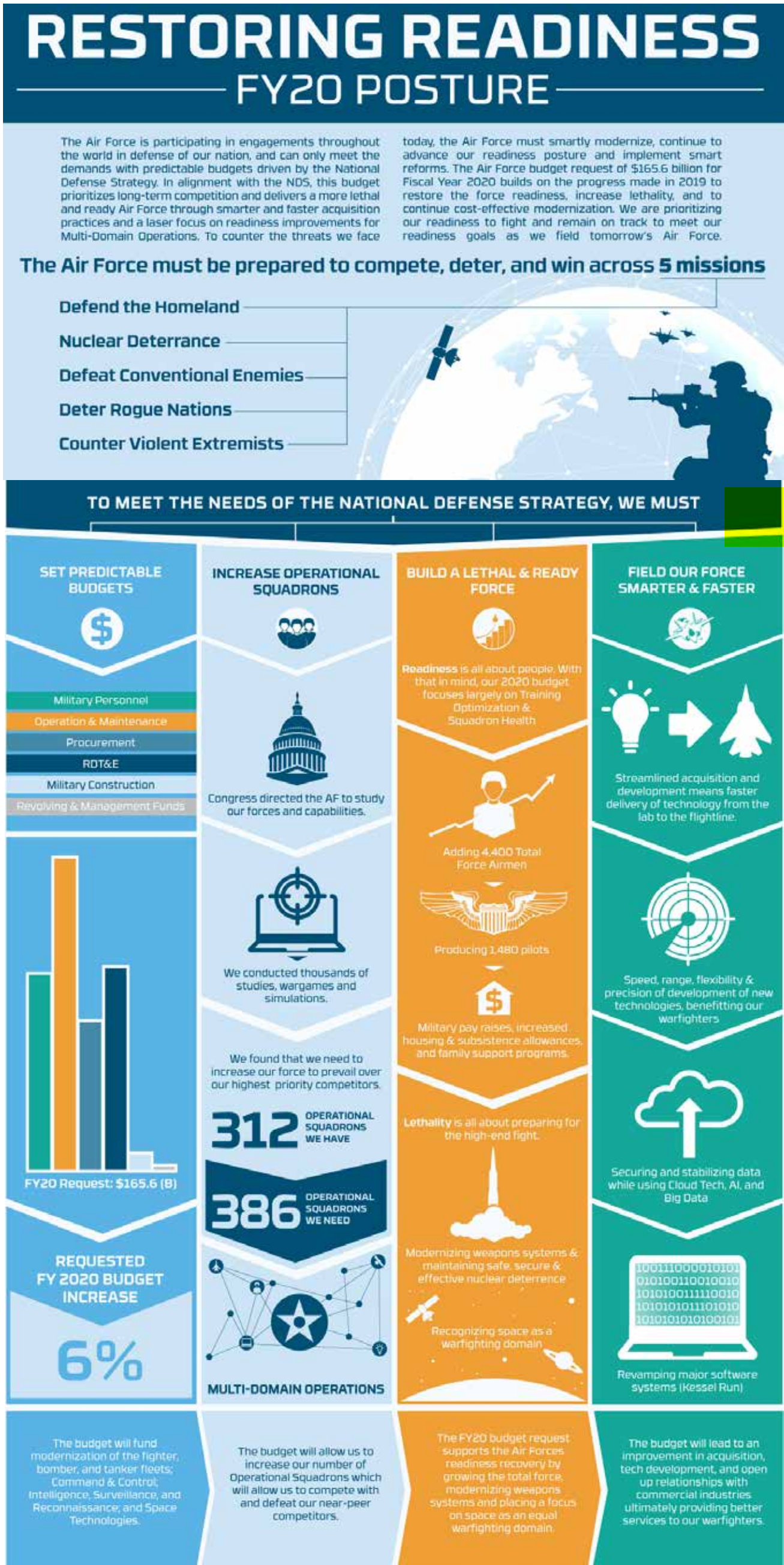

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