

Episode_92-A_World_on_Fire-The_Rendezvous

Mon, 9/5 9:46PM 42:29

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

ukraine, sledge, air force, civilian casualties, china, continuing resolution, slick, operations, force, defense, civilian, general, dod, taiwan, military, impact, department, conflict, congress, war

SPEAKERS

Maj Gen (Ret.) Larry Stutzriem, Todd "Sledge" Harmer, Lt Gen (Ret.) Dave Deptula, John "Slick" Baum

- J** John "Slick" Baum 00:01
Welcome to the Aerospace Advantage podcast. I'm your host, John "Slick" Baum. Now here on the Aerospace Advantage, we speak with leaders in the DoD industry and other subject matter experts to explore the intersection of strategy, operational concepts, technology and policy when it comes to air and space power. So, if you like learning about aerospace power, you are in the right place. Now to our regular listeners, welcome back. And if it's your first time here, thank you so much for joining us. And as a reminder, if you like what you're hearing today, do us a favor and follow our show. Please give us a like and leave a comment so we can keep charting the trajectories that matter to you most. Now this week, it is time for the Rendezvous, our monthly installment where the Mitchell team digs into stories that you've seen in the headlines. And this time, we have Todd "Sledge" Harmer with us who as you know, is one of our Washington experts here as part of the Rendezvous team. Todd, welcome back to the show.
- T** Todd "Sledge" Harmer 00:55
Good to be here, Slick. Thanks.
- J** John "Slick" Baum 00:57
We also have General David "Zatar" Deptula.
- L** Lt Gen (Ret.) Dave Deptula 00:59
Yeah, thanks. I'm happy to be here.
- J** John "Slick" Baum 01:02
And last but not least, we have Larry "Stutz" Stutzriem with us.

M

Maj Gen (Ret.) Larry Stutzriem 01:06

Hey, thanks, Slick.

J

John "Slick" Baum 01:08

Now Anthony Lazarski who we all know as "Laser" is our other Washington expert. But he is on travel this week, and we'll look forward to having him next week. All right, Congress has been on recess for most of August. So we don't have a lot of current events on that side of the equation for the Rendezvous. But we are anticipating a lot of action when the members return this month. There is a lot of business to fit in the schedule before the November election. So Sledge, would you please give us a rundown of the top defense items you think we're gonna see in play on the Hill?

T

Todd "Sledge" Harmer 01:36

Yeah, slick. I think you hit it there with the August recess. Not a lot has happened since we last spoke last month. Just to recap quickly, though, the House has passed their version of the NDAA. The House Appropriations Committee has passed their defense spending bill but that has not gone to the floor yet. And over in the Senate, the Armed Services Committee has passed their bill, but it's waiting for floor time. And we're not sure when that, hopefully, before here in about two weeks that will go to the floor. And then the Chairman's mark for the Senate Appropriations Committee subcommittees are all out. But there's been no further progress there. And we don't really expect any either. But, to your question, specifically, I think there's really going to be four key areas that we will want to look at. The first is obviously the top line spending number. Right now the House appropriators have marked to the President's budget, but everyone else is, is added anywhere from \$30-45 billion to the PBR top line. So that's going to be something to keep an eye on. And my understanding is the holdup on most of the legislation right now is really over an agreement on what that top line spending number is going to be. And sometime after the election, they'll resolve that. And then, as you said, things will move very quickly. The other thing I think we need to keep an eye out for and obviously this is near and dear to our hearts force structure is going to be a big issue in terms of aircraft procurement, but also aircraft retirements. And we've hashed over that, you know, not only the the F-22 issues, but looking at you know, things like the F-35 buy the C-130Js that keep getting added for the National Guard. And then really what the Air Force is going to do with the F-15EX. You'll see a lot from the Navy, too, on their shipbuilding plan or the variances thereof. And then there's some contention over the Navy's request to retire some of their LCS. And then I think finally force structure, there's going to be some debate on nuclear weapons. I think the Sentinel Ground Based Strategic Deterrent is safe. But there's going to be some debate over the Navy's nuclear sea launched cruise missile. The next issue, I think that you'll see is going to be some type of an effort to trim back the President's authority to to wage war, the AUMF or the Authorization for the Use of Military Force that was enacted shortly after the 9/11 attack, I think is going to be repealed or at least curtailed somewhat. And then you'll see the cat and dog personnel matters that come up. I know base renaming is a contentious issue. And then with the recent Supreme Court ruling on Roe, you're probably going to see some debate over protection of abortion rights for military members.

J

John "Slick" Baum 04:04

Got it. Well, you hit on it. And I've got to ask, and I mentioned it in the intro here. The elections coming up in November, how's that gonna affect the schedule?

T

Todd "Sledge" Harmer 04:12

Well, I think the first reality is nothing's going to happen before the election or nothing dramatic. So we will start FY23 under a continuing resolution. And then the the elections will, I think serve as more of a starting line for a mad sprint to the end of the calendar year. And I think the Christmas holiday, the break, or even the end of the 117th Congress, which is scheduled for the third of January, by law, that will be the forcing function to make sure that things happen. But really, the election is important because I think both parties right now are looking at who's going to control Congress in 118th. And there's going to be some changes in leadership, most notably with the Chairman and the ranking member of the Senate Appropriations Committee, both retiring, who's going to replace them. So there's a little bit of jockeying for position on leadership, but I don't think I think they're going to wait to see what happens after November 8. And then they'll decide how they want to proceed in the new calendar year. And that will really determine how it goes forward. But I think what you're gonna see as a sprint, after the eighth of November, you'll see probably at the end of this, in September of this year, you'll see a continuing resolution into early December, probably the second, then there'll be a sprint to get the NDAA done and get the appropriations bill on Omnibus for the fiscal year done. I don't think they can get that done by the second of December. So they'll probably be another continuing resolution. But really to kind of put a fine point on that. If you look at the calendar, after the eighth of November to the end of the year, there's only 17 legislative days. So they really got their work cut out for them. And I think you'll see some type of a backdoor leadership agreement and things will pass pretty quickly.

J

John "Slick" Baum 05:50

Copy. Now, you've said it six to nine times. So, the continuing resolution, let's hear more about that. And you know, what's so bad about it?

T

Todd "Sledge" Harmer 05:58

Well, there's there's a couple of things. The first it is a continuation of funding and the funding baseline is the previous fiscal year enacted level. So it really limits the Department of Defense to spend at a proportional rate. So 112 for each month, of what was enacted in fiscal year 22. And if you, you know, remember back to what they did in 22, a significant reduction well-below what was requested in 23. And when you factor in inflation, it really is going to, it's going to make it difficult for DoD to make their dollar go very far. So that's the first thing, is the funding level is restricted. The second major point is under a continuing resolution, DoD is not allowed a new start program. So if it wasn't previously authorized, or if it's transitioning from research and development into a sustainment, so an operations and maintenance or procurement activity, then it's not allowed to proceed forward. And another lesser known, I think subset of that is under a continuing resolution programs are not allowed to increase their production rate

or ramp the numbers up. So if you have a program that was going to go from say, you know, we're going to buy 50 units this year, and in 23, we're gonna buy 150, you're not allowed to ramp it up. And the practical impact of that is it's extremely inefficient. It's hard for DoD to plan. But because it delays things, time is money, it drives up the cost of all these programs significantly, but unfortunately, DoD has gotten very good at mitigating the impact of CRs, but I think that's what you're gonna see.

J

John "Slick" Baum 07:35

Copy. And, obviously Sledge that's why we have you on the show. We really appreciate all that insight. I want to bring in Stutz here and I want to stick with the notion of this continuing resolution and Stutz, I'm going to ask you to put your commander hat back on. How would this have impacted you at the unit level?

M

Maj Gen (Ret.) Larry Stutzriem 07:49

Yeah, well, let me first say, you know, it's easy to talk about the modernization dilemma, you know, each CR delays modernization, while, you know, adversaries surge ahead. What could be so disruptive, from a strategic perspective than inflicting, you know, self-inflicting damage to our modernization timeline, but at the unit level, the impact is just as corrosive not knowing when projected resources are available, declining purchasing power of dollar means that your squadron commanders are cutting and trimming and conserving and you know, what, what are they doing in terms of trimming? Well, they're, they're not doing the additional training, they wanted to do. Developmental opportunities that are optional, at times are cut. Other programs intended not just to be better warfighters on the combat edge, but also that motivate and provide an environment of professional growth. So, you know, in other words, CR impacts not just some readiness, of course, the unit level, but your esprit de corps, and ultimately, you know, there's impacts on retention. Imagine the impact of freezing assignment opportunities or civil servants that worried about the chances of a furlough, you know, this is a very important set of dynamics related to both retention and morale. And by the way, you know, Slick, our young company grade officers, or staff sergeants are really plugged into the world unlike generations past and, you know, they see promises made in the command chain and they see somewhat, they look up that command chain and go, you know, "who's fighting for us?" They see this disruption at the unit level. Finally, yesterday, just yesterday, I was talking to this Air Force squadron commander who reminded me that you know, the families are impacted too with a CR. These programs that support families, quality of life, they're on hold to a degree. They need to be trimmed and cut at times and managed by the commanders downward during a continuing resolution and so there's once again an impact on that you know, level of trust with the command chain at the at the unit level.

J

John "Slick" Baum 09:58

Alright, so General Deptula, you and Stutz, you've both been quoted a lot about your thoughts on the Department of Defense's Civilian Harm Mitigation and Response Action Plan. And while the effort sounds good, I mean, we don't want civilians dying unnecessarily if you both suggested that this could end up putting more people at risk. So, walk us through your thinking on this.

L

Lt Gen (Ret.) Dave Deptula 10:18

Yeah, sure, Slick. First, as you alluded to, minimizing the potential for civilian casualties, is really a noble and immoral endeavor. And I really admire the intent behind Secretary Austin's new Department of Defense, Civilian Harm Mitigation. But the recommendations in it threatened to undermine US combat force. It limits America's ability to wage war, and it has a potential of actually increasing the risk of civilian casualties in the future. So why do I say that? Primarily because today's military personnel are very well trained on the laws of armed conflict, and they completely understand the implications of inflicting civilian casualties in excess of what's needed to accomplish a mission. All our US military forces undertake extraordinary actions to assure that unnecessary civilian casualties don't occur in the conduct of operations. Now, the recommendations in the new plan are excessive to the laws of armed conflict, and already established Department of Defense guidance. To give you some idea of that guidance, the Department's law of war manual is over 1200 pages long. So simply put, the new recommendations are not needed. And worse, Austin's recommendations may actually increase the probability of civilian casualties in future wars by lengthening the conflicts.

M

Maj Gen (Ret.) Larry Stutzriem 12:06

Yeah, I'll jump in on this Slick. Both General Deptula and I you know, we were at the beginning of a drone operations as it's being referred to by the SECDEF, RPA, remotely piloted aircraft in Afghanistan 20 years ago. And let me tell you, it is developed there is not a more state of the art fusion center of information than what we do in a ground control station of an MQ9 Reaper. It's an extraordinary weapons system. And the technology is drastically reduced collateral damage compared to past operations, you know, unlike the manned aircraft or tank, there's an entire team in the squadron operations center who are helping, you know, reduce collateral damage on two levels. First, it's, you know, they're taking information from all sources. It's as real time as possible, and they're adding it to the Reaper crews' situational awareness and then along a second channel, the operation is plugged into a command chain, who real-time may adjust rules of engagement or authorities based upon a concern of proportionality that General Deptula mentioned. That is whether a strike's merited based on you know, this extensive analysis they do. So you can't be more precisely conducting operations, simply with more information or control by some collateral damage commissar looking over the shoulder of the crew, except to always say "don't strike, don't strike." And General Deptula, if I could refer back to op ed you did in 2015, when there was a zero tolerance for collateral damage that was actually enabling the growth of ISIS and its carnage. And you said, and I'll quote, this, I use this all the time, you know, "What's the logic of a policy that restricts the use of airpower to avoid the possibility of collateral damage, while allowing the certainty of the Islamic State's crime against humanity?" So we gotta be very careful, because we can't swing these kinds of constraints to an encounter with a peer competitor like China. I have to say one last thing, you know, in the stack of SecDef priorities, as important as reducing civilian casualties, is, this is not the number one priority, we should be focused on. You know, by all credible counts, three to six times as many servicemen and women died in these operations as civilian deaths. You know, what does it say to the parents and the spouses and the children left behind? We need to prioritize thinking about how we don't do these blunders again. And that's a spotlight, not on our operations or our airmen or weapons system, but it's on top defense leadership.

J

John "Slick" Baum 14:52

Yeah, I couldn't agree more, but I'm just going to dive in even further and say, let's cut to the chase. Why do you think this is going to be a counterproductive effort?

L

Lt Gen (Ret.) Dave Deptula 15:00

Well first, this is a complex subject. But let me try to summarize some of the points. Contrary to what many assume. And the reason for this is because the Department of Defense has done such a very poor job of explaining to the public just what the laws of armed conflict allow. It's important for the audience to understand that it's perfectly legal to execute an attack despite the knowledge that civilian casualties will inevitably occur. Why is the law this way? Well, if it wasn't legal to conduct an attack, even when you're certain that civilians will be killed, belligerents would be incentivized to surround themselves with civilians, in order to create a legal sanctuary from attack. Now, as Stutz alluded to, it appears that Austin's intent is to drive the US military policy to a zero civilian casualty standard. And that would yield a huge advantage to our enemies by slowing down the US military targeting process. Second, Austin's report, and its recommendations look backward at an era of counterinsurgency and counterterrorism, all occurred in a permissive aerospace environment that dominated US military actions over the last two decades. That kind of a situation an environment has little relevance to the conduct of operations that we anticipate and have experienced before in a major regional conflict. Where the magnitude of the threats, the rapid execution timelines required in the distributed and decentralized nature of future combat is not going to allow for the kind of studied and lengthy and intensive reviews that this report recommends. Instituting Austin's action plan has the potential of negating the key elements that the US military is basing its pure warfighting success upon. And those tenants being acquiring information and making decisions faster than our adversaries. These are fundamental to the military's new joint warfighting concept that I'm sure everyone on the podcast has heard about. But this concept is going to be negated by adding, as the report recommends, centralized bureaucratic and political decision layers at every US warfighting echelon. Because not only would such layers, slow down decision cycles, but they could also act as a deterrent, steering some military members to choose not to engage rather than be denied. And that would only slow down and negate any US decision speed advantage. And it also reinforces adversary behavior, to use civilian and humanitarian barriers to shield their forces from direct attack. But that's not all. Number three, for too long, the inherent Operation Inherent Resolve operations that Stutz just talked about are mentioned against the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, operated under the zero casualty standard. And as I mentioned earlier, and Stutz mentioned, it appears that Austin's intent is to drive US military policy back toward that goal. And what that does is prolongs conflicts rather than ending them. And guess what? Longer wars inevitably cause greater civilian pain, and during Inherent Resolve this policy backfired. It extended the time needed to secure military objectives, which then granted the Islamic State forces more time to commit atrocities and more radical Islamist to emerge out of Syria. I know we're on a timeline here. So I'm not going to give you the multiple examples that are out there. But if anyone's interested, give me a call. The bottom line is that US military personnel should do and they can and they do do all that they can to prevent civilian casualties. They're trained to do so, well trained. The Department of Defense can save more civilian lives, by devising ways to effectively deter war or win quickly when deterrence fails then by piling new constraints on to America's combat forces as this new Civilian Harm Mitigation Plan does.

M

Maj Gen (Ret.) Larry Stutzriem 19:46

Yeah, boss, you masterfully framed this discussion. I'll just add one perspective and you know this, that when we start to train staffs, the machines that support combat, you know, planning and execution, when we condition our commanding generals to operate in this kind of environment, you just don't hand wave that away when you go over and you're going to fight a China in a peer conflict where you cannot operate with these constraints. And so you're conditioning a force, you know, the old saying, you fight the way you train, should we be thinking about, you know, some problems with with the export of this kind of, you know, structure, this kind of rule set over in the Pacific? I think it could be disastrous.

L

Lt Gen (Ret.) Dave Deptula 20:35

Yeah, the other part and I know, we're on timeline here. But the other part to consider is, if you look at Operation Inherent Resolve, we were executing five, six, less than a dozen strikes sorties a day. in Desert Storm, we averaged over 1200 strike sorties a day. And if you look at future conflicts, at least when we can get our force structure up to levels that we can actually fight and win, they might exceed 1500 strike sorties a day. That's a rate that you simply can't do the kind of exquisite evaluation and ascertainment of every single target. The fact of the matter is, every warfighter needs to understand the laws of armed conflict, and make sure that they're applied in every aspect of the conflict, not have some committee back in Washington second guessing their engagement work before they pull the trigger.

J

John "Slick" Baum 21:34

Again, I'll bring the Neanderthal perspective here, didn't we learn this in Vietnam? Okay, moving on. Sledge, I want to get your thoughts on this, because you're obviously seeing this through the Washington lens. But you've also commanded and you've been on the front line, and you understand those implications.

T

Todd "Sledge" Harmer 21:48

No, I think the, at least the operational and strategic level perspective has been covered extremely well. I'd like to drill down tactical and put my weapons officer patch back on and say, you know, when I'm in the mission planning cell I've already got a staff judge advocate there. I don't need another set of eyeballs telling me "no." And I just, my bottom line, and it's just a well intentioned, but very bad idea.

J

John "Slick" Baum 22:13

Yeah, I couldn't agree more. All right. Well, let's move on to the next topic. And that is fighting in Ukraine. It continues, we just saw China execute a large set of drills around Taiwan in response to Speaker Nancy Pelosi's trip to the island. So what's your take on how leaders in Washington are processing these developments? And, what's keeping everybody up at night here? And Sledge, I want to get started with you.

T Todd "Sledge" Harmer 22:35

Yeah, I think I'll tackle Ukraine first here. I think first of all, there is there's universal opposition to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, and the fact that there are alleged war crimes, it does seem fairly obvious. So there's bipartisan support, at least for the time being. And I think the, you know, the fact that that we've already spent or we've promised somewhere in the vicinity of \$14 billion to Ukraine, a lot of this is the presidential drawdown authority that allows the President to take weapons and munitions out of our stockpiles, and transfer them directly to Ukraine. Another is the assistance initiative that we have for Ukraine. And that's allowing the Department of Defense to engage in direct contracts with the prime defense contractors to provide those capabilities. And I think Congress has appropriated somewhere in the vicinity of \$6 billion for that. I saw something this morning about long range planning in the Department of Defense, this is going to be a multi-year effort, I'm starting to hear rumors that when we do have a CR, there's going to be additional money for Ukraine, and that there's going to be some type of a supplemental or there's going to be additional funding added to whatever the FY23 defense appropriations bill is. So, I think it's safe to say that there is long term support. But on the other side, there's going to come a point unless we have a well articulated policy of what the end state looks like, what the objective is, and what's the national security interest of the United States, you're going to see people start to question the carte blanche that we're given to Ukraine and the money that could be better spent at home, or whenever there's allegations of corruption. I think the fiscal hawks are going to jump on that. And we'll see this come back into balance. That's it for Ukraine, I think China is a completely different example. I mean, it's one thing to roll tanks across an international border. It's another to attack a well-defended mountainous island across 100 miles of open sea. I think on both in capital or in DoD and on Capitol Hill there's a belated recognition that China is more than a competitor, they're becoming a threat. And at the end of the day, it's in the US national security interests to make sure that we have microchips from Taiwan. And I think that's really, that's the bottom line. This is about microchips. And I read a foreign policy article yesterday that I thought put a really fine point on it. The fact that Taiwan is the world's leading supplier of advanced microchips is a strategy on their part to keep China out and America in. And I'll let the others talk about some of the operational implications there. But this is really about microchips.

J John "Slick" Baum 25:10

Yeah, that's great analysis. So, Stutz, I want you to hop in. What's your take?

M Maj Gen (Ret.) Larry Stutzriem 25:13

Let me let me focus on China. I don't think the DC crowd is quite connecting the dots yet, and they better soon. Tough words need to be backstopped by credible forces, both in the near term and long term. And that's the essence of deterring conflict or Chinese action. So despite the bravado, you know, and poking China in the chest, the nation is not prioritizing its aerospace power that it needs to to deal with Chinese. And this is incredibly dangerous. Every time we war game, the Pacific here at Mitchell Institute, we have to leave out a huge bulk of old generation inventory aircraft that simply can't survive because China has worked to blunt our aerospace power. Air Force is you know, procuring about new aircraft at a snail's pace...about 7% of its budget. And we needed that fifth generation capacity yesterday. So it's time for leaders in Washington to look eye to eye at the potential for conflict with China, to look to

reverse the apportionment of resources to favor the only force that can have immediate effect against aggression by China within hours, not weeks or months, which will be required to marshal other service's forces, you know, otherwise, China could be smoking cigars in Taipei before we can really do much about it.

J John "Slick" Baum 26:35

I really appreciate that, Stutz. You said one thing, one key word to me, which was "leaders." And I know General Deptula, you speak with a lot of senior defense officials almost on a daily basis. So what's the impact with these leaders?

L Lt Gen (Ret.) Dave Deptula 26:35

Well, Slick, it really kind of depends on the individual leader. But in general, most understand the stark reality of Ukraine being under attack by incredibly ruthless Russian attacks, not trying to avoid civilians, back to the issue of avoiding civilian harm. But the Russians are intent on killing as many innocent men, women and children as possible. Putin is engaging in a reign of terror that's reminiscent of the former Russian genocide against Ukraine in the 1930s. There's also a growing realization that nothing will stop this war, except defeat of the Russians in Ukraine. And the only way the Russians will be defeated is by supplying Ukraine with weapons and training that will enable them to do that. Now, Senator Chris Coons, who's not a defense hawk by any stretch of the imagination, stated recently that the history of the 21st century will turn on how fiercely we defend freedom in Ukraine, and that Putin will only stop when we stop him. Now, I go on to tell you that, I would think and I would hope that the Russian Ukraine war would shock the United States and create the conditions to rebuild our military. But unfortunately, back to your original question, there's little discussion among US senior defense officials, virtually none among Congress or the American public. If you look at the run up to the 22 elections, to increase defense spending to the levels required to execute the national defense strategy. You know, Sledge mentioned that, you know, there are folks on the Hill talking about increasing DoD spending in this budget by \$35 billion, guess what, that's one half the required increase just to keep up with inflation. So we continue to ignore the reality of the growing threats to the United States in our friends and allies. And that's just an unfortunate reality of the times. And I'm very concerned that it's going to have to take a loss before we wake up the American people in Congress to the threats that are facing us.

J John "Slick" Baum 29:13

Well, sir, if you weren't awake, you are now after listening to that, that's a really sobering statement. I appreciate that. I want to throw this one out for each of you. And you really teed me up for this one, sir. So if you're in charge for the day or a day, how would you respond to the current situation in Ukraine? And what response do you think the US should have mounted to the Chinese provocations? So I'd like to go Zatar, Stutz, and then Sledge.

L Lt Gen (Ret.) Dave Deptula 29:38

For Ukraine to when they need control the air, pure and simple. And that's not just me saying that. It's President Zelinsky's is number one priority because he realizes the historical

that it's President Zelensky's number one priority because he realizes the historical precedent that whichever side has control of the air is going to win. He's repeatedly called for nations to send him weapons systems that will enable him to do that to include fourth generation US fighters, like the F-15, and the F-16. Now, it just so happens that the US Air Force is retiring over 100 combat aircraft this year to include F-15s and F-16s. Those should be given to the Ukrainians as soon as possible, along with the training and the weapons to effectively use them. The bottom line is, it's critical to get more powerful weaponry to Ukraine now to prepare for the Russians next onslaught, and defeat its forces and push them out. Now, regarding the response to what the US should mount to Chinese growing threats to Taiwan, what I tell you, quite simply, is increase the sale and quantity of capable military equipment to Taiwan, intending to confound the PRC's invasion calculus and lessen their probability of attack. So you're gonna ask, "All right, well, what's that include?" Well, that includes anti-ship, cruise missiles, air and missile defense systems like Iron Dome batteries, that Terminal High Altitude Area Defense missile defense system, or even providing an Aegis Ashore capability. It includes providing all weather airborne early warning, battle management, and command and control aircraft like the E2D. And, accelerating delivery of Taiwan's next generation of new build F-16 block 70 fighters. So the, you know, the sooner we do those things and provide capabilities to Taiwan, the sooner that we'll have the Chinese, mainland Chinese, think twice about invading.

M

Maj Gen (Ret.) Larry Stutzriem 31:53

Well, I don't want to dilute anything you just said General Deptula, I will say, in particular, in Ukraine in my assessment, support to Ukraine is lags the situation in Ukraine from the start, you know, watching the build up for 12 months along the border, debating what kind of munitions or what kind of weapons we're going to provide. And I would say that now that there is that discussion, and airpower is central to what they need, it's not just about the aircraft and not just about the munitions, it's how it's used. So if we allow that not to be exported along with good understanding of how airpower can be employed effectively not to simply be a support to ground forces, but to truly have effect against Russian forces in depth, then they're not going to be as effective as they could be over in that environment. We also see that there's hesitation to allow export of really important articles. For example, Ukraine needs ISR, you know. Why are we limiting export of certain RPA capabilities, that that really could enhance their ability to conduct some very, very, very effective operations, it shouldn't be that a bureaucrat or two in the Pentagon can, you know, hold back on those sorts of capabilities. And that's where I see Ukraine, you know, support Ukraine in lag a bit, it needs to accelerate.

T

Todd "Sledge" Harmer 33:22

The only thing I would add and this is more in regards to China. You know, if you go back 2400 years and reread Sun Tzu. I mean, I think that still drives a lot of the Chinese thought and planning. Their objective is to get Taiwan back into Beijing's orbit as part of China without firing a shot. And so there, I think we need to counter a lot of the activities that they're doing non-kinetically, you know, whether that be in cyber, whether that be in space. But I think the most important thing we can do is not allow a change to the status quo. So we need to continue to maintain our freedom of navigation operations through the Taiwan Strait, we need to push back without escalating any of the incursions into the air defense identification zones and those kinds of activities.

J

John "Slick" Baum 34:12

Yeah, all makes a ton of sense. Now, I just want to shift gears General Deptula. You and Mark Gunzinger are about to release a new report in a few days talking about the Air Force's budget position, and how this is impacting the decision making within the service. So can you give us a little bit of your wave top findings?

L

Lt Gen (Ret.) Dave Deptula 34:27

Yeah, sure, Slick, and thanks for that question. What the report does is provide objective facts that the Department of the Air Force leadership can and should use to make the case for why the Air Force requires not just an increase but a significant increase in funding in order to accomplish the missions that the nation has asked it to perform. Now, the title is a pretty good summary of the contents. "Decades of Air Force Underfunding Threaten America's Ability to Win." And while I've been talking and writing about the underfunding of the Air Force, using some of these facts for over a year now, I believe that many people in Congress, the Department of Defense, the Air Force, and the public will be surprised by the facts that we reveal, and the underlying explanation of those facts. The fact that when actual budgets over which the Air Force has actual control, revealed that the Air Force has been funded less than the Army and the Navy for 30 years in a row, and this most current budget continues that negative trend. Now that was a choice made by the Department of Defense leadership, and it's had consequences. Guess what? Those consequences have resulted in the smallest, oldest and the least ready US Air Force in the history of the nation. When our combatant commanders are increasing their demands on what the Air Force provides. The fact that in the 20 years that the US military was engaged in Iraq and Afghanistan, the Army received over \$1.3 trillion more than the Air Force. Now, that's an average of over \$66 billion a year than the Air Force. Okay, I get it, funding for the army was increased by shifting budget share from the other services, to compensate for the increased demand for land forces in Iraq and Afghanistan. We're no longer there. So it's now time to apply that same logic, to stop the decline in Department of the Air Force capabilities and capacity, and to meet the demands that are absolutely required to deter and if necessary, win in a fight against our enemies. So let me wrap this up by saying that of all the reports that the Mitchell Institute's published in our nine years of existence, this one is perhaps the most important, so don't miss it.

J

John "Slick" Baum 37:07

Yeah, I couldn't agree more. Sledge, given these points, does this explain why we saw Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Acquisition Technology and Logistics, Andrew Hunter, leaning on Congress to retire the block 20 F-22s as a means to fund the next generation unmanned aircraft? As I see it, it's an impossible choice. We need F-22s to meet the air superiority requirement for at least the next decade. And, the unmanned aircraft are going to be critical in the out year. So it's a lose lose choice.

T

Todd "Sledge" Harmer 37:36

Yes, Slick, I agree with you, it's a lose-lose under the current resource allocation construct. And let me kind of put that into context. I'm going to tell you an Uncle Sledge Cold War story. A few years ago, I was deployed, it was a joint job but I was the only Airman in an Army headquarters.

We were responsible for all the advice, train, assist and equip with the Iraqi security forces. And I was the commander's action group commander. I worked directly for the Army three star. And, I had an epiphany one night and at about midnight in Baghdad, and I realized the Army and the Air Force approach this problem in a fundamentally different way. In the case of the Army, they take the mission, they develop a strategy, and then they asked for the resources. Because I could tell you every single time we did that, the first thing out of my boss's mouth was I need more boots on the ground. Now, conversely, you take the Air Force, and you know, we're all trying to be good citizens. And this culturally is the way we're raised. You know, we're given a problem, we're gonna solve it at all costs, just get it done. So the Air Force approach is get your mission, you analyze your resources, and then you come up with a strategy. And that is a resource constrained force planning structure. And it really has become self deterring behavior. It has allowed us to try to accomplish the mission with diminishing resources for the last 30 years, and I certainly couldn't put it as eloquently as General Deptula has there. So I would say that, you know, this is the Air Force's Kobayashi Maru right here, we will continue to face impossible choices until we get out from under that self-induced force structure planning construct. And and I think that would be a good topic for a future Rendezvous.

J John "Slick" Baum 39:20

Yeah, I couldn't agree more. Stutz, you want to hop in here?

M Maj Gen (Ret.) Larry Stutzriem 39:23

First, Sledge that was a well said piece. I'll add to it that the three of us know that you fight with the force you have today. So back to those F-22s. Are you kidding me? Yes, we should spend what it takes to extend them in service not sacrifice. Today's capability to fund new capabilities somewhere out in the horizon. Let's face it, China's in a position, the city is talking about this. They're in a position in the next five years or so to pounce. What happens then? The longer we lack fifth generation capacity, adequate munitions, the ability to stand in and affect them in a conflict, well, it just invites China to act sooner than later. We need to modernize, yes. But we need adequate Air and Space Forces now to bolster deterrence thought we wait 15 or 20 years to enter your some promised land of a dazzling future force design is crazy. If to get there we're cutting today's capability and capacity to finance a trip. Yeah, we need those F-22s because it's what we have. So we shouldn't wring our hands and ask the question, "How much is it going to cost us to upgrade and maintain these F-22s?" It's the wrong question. The question is, "What's the cost of not having them in future conflict?"

L Lt Gen (Ret.) Dave Deptula 40:41

Hey, let me jump in here because you know, like Stutz, I want to underline the beauty in the succinctness of the way Sledge kind of put that. And let me try to get it even shorter with respect to the Air Force's force sizing methodology. Divest to invest is a bankrupt force sizing methodology, as it has no relevance, and it has no tie to the nation's defense strategy requirements. And that needs to be changed.

T Todd "Sledge" Harmer 41:13

Thank you, if I had more time, I would have said less.

J John "Slick" Baum 41:15

Well, gentlemen, as always, it's great to have you here on the Rendezvous. I want to say thanks for everybody's time today. Unfortunately, it's all the time we have so for General Deptula, Stutz and Sledge it has been awesome catching up, and we'll do it again soon.

L Lt Gen (Ret.) Dave Deptula 41:30

Hey, thanks, Slick. Y'all have a great aerospace power kind of day.

T Todd "Sledge" Harmer 41:34

Thanks, Slick. Good talking to you.

M Maj Gen (Ret.) Larry Stutzriem 41:36

Hey Slick, thanks for the time. Great job.

J John "Slick" Baum 41:40

With that, I'd like to extend a big thank you to our guests for joining in today's discussion. I'd also like to extend a big thank you to our listeners for your continued support, and for tuning into today's show. If you like what you've heard today, don't forget to hit that like button and follow or subscribe to the Aerospace Advantage. You can also leave a comment to let us know what you think about our show or areas you think we should explore further. As always, you can join in on the conversation by following the Mitchell Institute on Twitter, Instagram, Facebook or LinkedIn. And you can always find us at Mitchellaerospacepower.org. Thanks again for joining us and we'll see you next time. Stay safe and check six.