

TRANSCRIPT

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Session with Gen. Michael E. Ryan, USAF

Chief of Staff, United States Air Force

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THIS IS A RUSH TRANSCRIPT AND MAY CONTAIN ERRORS. USERS ARE ADVISED TO CONSULT THEIR OWN TAPES OR NOTES OF THE SESSION IF ABSOLUTE VERIFICATION OF WORDING IS NEEDED.

Question: The F-22 is clearly the topic of the moment. The House says zero funds for production. I've been keeping a straw poll of the editorials around the country and they are running about 10 to 1 in favor of what the House did. Why has the Air Force not been able to make the case for the F-22? Why hasn't it sold the F-22 to the country and the Congress and what are you going to do to change your tactics to convince people that this is an airplane the country needs?

Ryan: First of all, my piles don't equal your piles in counting them up out of the Early Bird. Some neutral. Some positive. Others negative. One of the issues that we have and that is better education. Not just of the American public, but also some of the staffers over on the Hill and others on the need for the aircraft. Those who are knowledgeable about what we believe will be the threats in 15 years or so are convinced that this airplane is what the joint system needs, not just the US Air Force. Witness all the joint chiefs of staff support. Witness all 10 CINCs in support of the F-22. Witness almost every living secretary of Defense in support of the airplane. Those who understand the need for the airplane are very supportive of the airplane. Those who understand the essence of what this airplane does, which is give us the edge in the future to command the battle space so we can leverage all the other capabilities we have that need that. That is why we went for a high-low mix. This is similar to the high-low mix we went for in post-Vietnam. That is, with the F-15 at the high end and the F-16 at the low end. We are doing the same thing here in our modernization with the F-22 at the high end and the Joint Strike Fighter at the low end. I am convinced that when we come out of this, we

will produce this airplane. It is not a paper airplane. It is a real airplane. It is out there flying. It is just about to complete 300 hours of testing with no major glitches at all. It is a real, living capability. We need it because not only the air-to-air but the ground-to-air threats that are out there as we look out into the next 15 years will overcome, will take the dominance of the air away from us unless we have a capability like this. This is modernization for future readiness.

Question: I agree with you, but ... why hasn't it worked out so far? Every year it seems like we see the Air Force struggling to make the case for the F-22. The numbers keep coming down and this has to have been a shock. So what are you going to do different? How are you going to change your educational tactic?

Ryan: We are continuing to engage with the staffers on the Hill and with the committee members who we don't think had all the facts about the airplane. We need to continue that dialog. That is how we get through these things. This isn't us against them. This is American government working. We will get through this. I think when we get to the conference committee that the F-22 will be supported.

Question: Have you done some personal lobbying with the congressmen involved?

Ryan: We are not allowed to lobby. You know that.... We've had some open and closed meetings on the Hill. Some of the closed because of the technologies involved and the classification of some of the capabilities of the aircraft. Those are going very well. We met with Chairman Lewis last night for a good conversation. He and Secretary Peters-- not acting Secretary Peters, who was sworn in yesterday in a little private ceremony. We had a very professional and straight forward discussion.

Question: Did you change his mind?

Ryan: Don't know. We'll find out.

Question: Did he agree that you had provided information that he was not aware and that somehow he was misinformed?

Ryan: No, because this was a closed meeting between the three of us, I won't comment on the meeting except to say that it was a frank and straightforward exchange of information.

Question: My impression is you've got some other problems, too. That the Air Force has been handed \$2.7 billion in bills that they've got to figure out how to pay and that all the systems are being scrubbed again..can you give me a sense of how you are going to address that problem?

Ryan: We go through this every year. The bills this year are no different than they were last year and about the same level of pain that we go through every year. We are working on the 01 POM process and the scrub on that is going pretty well. Every year we go through this and look at all our programs and rack them up to make sure we are doing the right thing with the right program. The additional funding that the Administration came across for the 00 POM, the budget was very helpful and it looks like Congress is going to help us even more than that. 00 looks like a pretty good year and we are working 01 right now. Of course, we scrub every program we have--we have to. Tight budgets. I am on record going on over to Congress saying we need \$5 billion more a year in the US Air Force. We have got about half of that in the 00 budget from the Administration and hopefully we will get a little more from the Congressional markups. That was a \$5 billion every year out through the FYDP.

Question: You don't anticipate killing a program to pay your bills?

Ryan: I don't know of a program that we have that we have killed yet in this budget cycle.

Question: That wasn't the question....

Ryan: But that is the answer.

Question: Joint Strike Fighter, the linkage you gave, you implied the Air Force might have to seriously re-think its participation or funding in the program, a clear message maybe you will have to deep six the JSF if this happens. Is that an accurate characterization? Is that some of your thinking right now?

Ryan: There are those who intimate that the Joint Strike Fighter can do the mission that the F-22 does and that is clearly not true. If you look at the parameters set by the JROC for the kind of capabilities that you need on F-22, you find that the Joint Strike Fighter, which is not an airplane yet. It is paper. They haven't bent metal on the real airplane yet, just the requirements don't come close to doing the things that we need the F-22 to do. That has to do with top end speed, dash speed, weapons carried, super cruise, etc.... Because the F-22 not only goes deep into enemy battle space and take out air defenses including aircraft, but also air-to-ground, it also has the mission of protecting our high-value assets which leverage all the rest of our capabilities. That is, if you have an aircraft that is a high flyer, can go very rapidly after AWACS or Joint STARS or Compass Call or any of our leveraging capabilities and can put them at risk, we lose a lot in the synergism of our forces. One of the things the F-22 will have to do is protect those and that is why this top end speed and dash speed and capability to flex and go from one place to another is very important to the F-22, particularly at the higher altitudes, where these

airplanes fly. It is for those reasons that we don't think the Joint Strike Fighter, as it is designed today, can meet the requirement for the F-22 and that is why we have to go back and re-think if the F-22 is not produced.

Question: unintelligible.

Ryan: I don't know yet because we hadn't planned on this happening. Not cancel. I haven't said that. I have said we have to go back and re-think what the requirements of the Joint Strike Fighter would be.

Question: That would have wide ramifications on the industrial base.

Ryan: Canceling the F-22 would have a wide impact on the industrial base.

Question: unintelligible.

Ryan: Yes. We haven't gone through that, because we've always sat at this high-low mix, but once you take the high away. I am not sure what we have designed and laid out for requirements for low are valid for the missions that the Air Force needs to do.

Question: You are implying you may just pull out of the money for the service support altogether, it shouldn't be read that way?

Ryan: I don't know that yet. I really don't. We are looking at it right now. Our assumption is we are going to get the F-22 and the Joint Strike Fighter will go. That is my going in assumption. If that doesn't occur, then we are going to go back and re-think the whole program.

Question: Update us on your efforts to reconstitute the Air Force.

Ryan: First of all, I've seen people write and other pundits quote the Air Force has got to stand down. The Air Force is not standing down. We used by some measure about 35 to 45 percent of our force in this major regional contingency, just as we did when we went to Desert Storm, by percentage of force. We opened a lot of Ols. We went to places we hadn't been before. Some of them were pretty good--in Budapest. Others weren't that good. But we opened a lot of Ols and brought the security and the expeditionary tent cities and all of the support that goes along with that from Toronto to Turkey. If you count what happened to Desert Fox and then work your way through this summer, that was six months of very high OPTEMPO for the Air Force. When you do that, training, new production of your air crew and your training of your ground capabilities suffers because the new people who are coming in don't have a unit to go to. They are normally stuck at the base back home where we've deployed from. We have to come back and

retrain those folks and integrated them into the operation. When we have large deployments like that, there is a big training back-up that occurs and that, plus resting those who came back a short period of time and then went there way, some of their skills atrophied. When you don't do some of your low-level training, when you don't do some of your gunnery, when you are fixed into certain missions during this time and you have to go back and re-broaden your force. Forty percent of the Air Force, about, used in the last operation of the active duty force, required us to come back and reconstitute. We use reconstitute to say, we are going to catch up on our training. We are going to let the people rest a little bit. Two weeks down when they came home then back into training: crawl, walk, run. And regain those skills that they need for the next time we are called on. That process is going on right now. When we came back from Desert Storm, for instance, we dropped about 12 percentage points in readiness indicators. We are probably going to drop 12 percentage points in readiness indicators this time on those units across the board. And we'll come back up. It took us about a year after Desert Storm. We'll come back up faster this time, about a half year for most of the unit's to recover. When I say recover, what I mean is we don't task them during that period because they've been gone some of them for 150 days, we want to give them time to recover so we won't task them for another half year. Their optempo on a year to year basis, we try not to exceed 120 days--about a third of the time gone is our cap. A lot of these people are gone longer than that. It is this recovery phase that we are going through that we are looking at where we have commitments--in Northern Watch, Southern Watch, in Bosnia and other deployments that we know about and how do we balance all of that with this recovery plan we have. That is what I am going to talk with the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs about today. All of the Joint Chiefs understand recover operations. The Navy does it with every carrier that goes out and comes back. We just happened to send a lot of the Air Force out and it is coming back and we need to reconstitute it.

We have another part of the Air Force that did not deploy during this time. They are very ready to go. In fact, we could reconstitute the force and send them again now if we needed to. But we'd rather do it in a very precise measured way to bring them back up to the training levels that we think they need for across-the-board operations, those who deploy. Air Force isn't broken. When you use a force, you have to recover it and we are doing that. The emergency supplemental funding is going to help us a lot. We had a fair amount of expenditures during this time and the supplemental is going to help us get back in that along with all the other things we did in last year's budget, both 99 and 00, will help us come out of this as strong or stronger than where we were. Ols, of course, we would rather not--we had a lot of OLs going during this time. You have to remember the backdrop under which that OL discussion went. We had just opened 16 or 17 OLs across Europe about the same time we are being asked to open up OLs in SOUTHCOM. But we would rather have opened one OL where the Air Force would operate out of. CINC South through there were other OLs that needed to be opened. We went through that

discussion. So far, we've opened the Air Force OL at Kirasow and it is up and operating. We are looking at the others and what the requirement is and when we need to open those.... There is an OL at Aruba, but the people who are bedded down there are not the US Air Force. We are executive agent. That means we deal with the government and do the money business and the pay the negotiation on bed down space and that is what executive agent means. We finally got a definition of executive agent. That didn't mean we'd provide all the security forces and other things, but it was that through our Air Force agencies we would deal with their requirements of the OL. Funding would come from counter drug funds.

Question: What was the timetable for the AEF before and what is the impact now?

Ryan: Actually, we were fortunate that we went through them. Description and design and foundation of the AEF structure because it gives us something to recover to. Before we didn't have anything to recover to. What is it that your steady state, how are you organized to fund that steady state to execute that steady state? In this case, what we've done is use the AEF as the platform to which we recover or under which we recover and then come back up. We are going to execute except for those units that were stressed and are in a recover period and we can't re-task. That tell us where our holes are. We could task some of the units from further down in the AEF, but that is pay me now or pay me later. That is a discussion we've been going through with the Joint Staff and others and very supportive. People understand when you stress a force like this, when you fight a major theater war, there is some recovery period you have to go through. We are going to discuss, in fact today, the recovery options that we have for meeting the requirements that are out there with the CINCs. No decisions have been made yet on just how we are going to do that. But if we hadn't had AEF, we would not have a template to recover to.

Question: I know your ambitions for AEF are partly to help retention. My question is, are we in a new quarter of the moon psychologically as far as recruitment goes? Projections are the Air Force is not going to meet its quota for the first time in enlisted people. Is it strictly the economy or is there a new culture out there and how are you going to fix it?

Ryan: I think it is the economy. I don't think there is a new culture out there. In fact, if you look at our young people who come into the service today, they are bright and smart. We are holding to our standard for our enlisted--99 percent high school graduates and the others have to have the equivalency. We have never had our full recruiting recruiters out there, we've always been short of our goal, we have always run about 85 percent of our recruiters out there, we have always done it by volunteerism for recruiting. We are looking at all that. We are upping our production of our recruiters and are giving them better tools to do their recruiting. We are going prime time in TV

with advertising. I think it is not a change in culture, but a competitive world out there where for the last six years this economy has been booming at a rate that is almost unprecedented. And no one predicts it is going to change. Opportunities are out there.

We won't know until October, when we do the books, but it is somewhere in around 2000, two thousand to three thousand. We haven't got it nailed down yet. And it will be the first time in a long, long time that we missed our recruiting goals. We are aware of that, but we think that we can turn that around through a lot of mechanisms like six-year enlistment bonuses on coming into certain career fields. I am confident we will turn that around. We haven't put a big press on for recruiting in a long, long time. We didn't need to. Now we need to.

Question: Both houses of Congress have passed very large tax cuts. This should mean tough times for the Defense Department given caps and strengths, etc.... Just last year the Chiefs went up to the Hill and said we need more money, we need more help. There seemed to be consensus behind more money for Defense. Now some of your friends on the Hill are saying tax cuts first, Defense later. How concerned are you about this trend?

Ryan: I think in the end it will come out balanced. There is no question that most of the Hill in this Administration agree that Defense spending needs to be increased, that we probably undershot as we came down in the drawdown and that we need to reinvest, recapitalize. That probably will be the intention with tax cuts, but we certainly have the commitment of this Administration and many, many in Congress saying we must keep or increase Defense spending. I don't know where that is going to sort out. I am not an economist and certainly can't predict what swings will occur politically. But the requirement will be there and we will lay the requirement out very carefully and very straight forwardly about what we need for Defense.

Question: unintelligible.

Ryan: First of all, our air lift force, we are going through a large mobility study right now. That will complete at about the end of this year and it will tell us what we think the requirement is. From an airlift standpoint, on a day-to-day basis we have sufficient airlift, but where airlift becomes very important is in operations such as this one, or in major theater wars and we are not a two major theater war Air Force in a lot of areas. One of them is air lift. That is, if you have, one of the reasons that we have for planning purposes, have 90 days between two major regional contingencies is to be able to swing the airlift fleet from one theater to the other because it is primarily a one-theater airlift force. I don't think we can afford to have a two-major-theater war airlift force simultaneously. That would drive the numbers completely out of the reality realm. But we need to continue to modernize our airlift fleet and that is what we are working on very hard in our budgets. As you know, we are going to buy out the C-17s at 120 and then

we added last year another 14. We want to re-avionic and re-engine the C-5 because they are very, very important to large oversized cargo capability. We want to continue to take our tactical airlift fleet and modernize it into a C-130J and C-130X so we get rid of the 21 different configurations we have in 130s and get them all up to re-engine, re-avionic capability. For the most part, these large airplanes, except for the 141, which will be coming out of the inventory, are in pretty good shape as far as the box and the wings and the structure of the airplane is concerned, where they are damned by the time they were built in the avionics and engine area and that is why we are taking these older airplanes and upgrading them. Our tanker fleet, we've done that already. We upgraded the engines on the tanker fleet. We are putting them through the pacer-craig mod right now as part of our mobility fix that gives them much better avionics sweep and much greater reliability and they've proved themselves fairly well on this last operation. Something people don't really realize is during this operation while we were deploying all our forces over there, we were also moving Task Force Hawk in and we were doing humanitarian airlift, too. We stressed our air forces pretty well because it was a major theater war for us. When we finish this MRS 5 study, which should come out at the end of this year, we will have a better idea of what the requirements overall are ... the prediction is every time you do one of these, the requirement goes up. How much, I don't know. One of the things we really have to work on and all the services including us in the Air Force is to get lighter and leaner when we go forward. We can't take the shower and the kitchen sink and everything else when we go forward. We have to do this a little bit lighter. We in the Air Force are working on that. Should we take 30 days of supply when we go forward with a squadron or should we take seven and then depend on rapid airlift to back fill. We are going through those kinds of operations. We have a battle lab that is looking at that for our major aviation packages. How do we do this we a smaller footprint forward? On both people and.... incidently, the F-22 goes forward with about 50 percent of the airlift it takes to go forward with an F-15, so we are trying to build this in to our newer capabilities, like the F-22 and the Joint Strike Fighter to be lighter and leaner when you go forward.

Question: You said there are many areas where the Air Force is not a two-major theater war Air Force. You mentioned air lift. What other areas is it not a two war Air Force?

Ryan: Air lift we are not a two major theater war in most of our ISR assets. We swing them from one theater to the other. None of them meet the overall requirement, very few of them meet the overall requirement that we have. You could look at our fleets of ISR assets across the board. We swing those, too. We swing our stealth assets. We swing our bombers. Those are not two MRC forces. Fighters. Specific kinds of capabilities within fighters are not two MRC. We are working very hard on making sure we have enough defense suppression. We have short falls in lots of areas. We are not a two MRC Air Force simultaneous. We are a two MRC Air Force near-simultaneous. That is, 90 days and we swing it.

Question: I just wanted to ask about the House Appropriation. Back on F-22, it said the Air Force had short-changed almost all else to pay for F-22--readiness, modernization. I wanted to get your response to that and also if there is a compromise that would be acceptable to you if in fact you cannot get all \$1.8 billion back.

Ryan: That is an exaggeration as you presented it that the Air Force has forsaken all other areas for the F-22. If you look at our modernization account, the F-22 as we have it laid in, and the Joint Strike Fighter and other modernization programs hit the right on the median of what the Air Force has put in for modernization for the future. We have timed this in ways that it does not push out other things off the top if you look back in history and look at our modernization account. The assertion that this is squeezing other things out I think is an incorrect statement. We are at, as we go out into the future, the level of modernization that we've done in the past and I think we have to make sure our readiness is the best it can be in the future because that is our real issue when we deal with modernization. What is it we do today to make sure today's short-term readiness is sufficient while making sure we don't mortgage future readiness? Future readiness is modern equipment for our people. We certainly don't want to go into any battles in the future and have fair fights. That is what we in the leadership have to balance. What compromises there are to cut will be made between the Senate and the House in the conference committee. We have laid out the President's budget, we have laid out what we think is required. It is up to the Congress to make their determination as to what that ought to be. If you look at the F-22, we have cut that program from 700 plus to 600 all the way down to 339. We have caps laid on us by the Congress of about \$40 billion for that program. If you do anything for the program right now to unbalance it, you are probably going to bust through the caps. That is why we've said, any delay or pause in this is going to bust the caps and probably kill the program and that is because we think the vendors, the people who have been with us for the last 10 to 15 years who are counting on this aircraft to be made--and there are a lot of them in a lot of places--will walk on us or the prices will go sky high and we will bust the caps for other reasons. We think we are down to where the program is very executable. The airplane is flying well. People talk about \$200 million airplane. The fact is the airplane, we have spent \$20 billion anymore, I think it is unfair to say this is a \$200 million airplane, it is about an \$85 million airplane flyaway cost. That is sunk cost. We have \$40 billion to go for 339 airplanes. We think that is rock bottom as to where we can go with trade offs on it.

Question: You talked about recruiting problems. You also talked about retention. What is the biggest problem you have--optempo, living conditions, economy, what is main reason your people are leaving at a higher than desired rate?

Ryan: Yes. I think you hit most of them.

Question: What order?

Ryan: I think stability for our folks is one of the issues we are trying to address with the AEF concept. All people want some stability in their lives. They want to be able to raise a family and have some assurance of when they are going to be home and when they are going to be away unless it is a major war and then they are prepared to go through anything. We ask them to because that is why they signed up. Stability is an issue for us. The Air Force is in a bit different state than some of the other services. We have a very large population overseas. We must turn that population at a two to three year timeframe. We have 70 to 75 thousand people stationed overseas at any one time and those are families and we are moving them constantly to replenish our overseas, which is part of the engagement process in our strategy. They are a part of it. That puts a toll on families quite honestly because if they had a home here in the United States, they don't get equity in the home, the kids don't go to the same school, the spouse, if he or she accompanies the member overseas, probably cannot pursue their occupation and probably can't even get a job, so there are economic downturns to this overseas to CONUS rotation. We are a forward deployed force, substantially in Europe and the Pacific. When you have that as a given, then the stability of the rotations for operational reasons become very important to the force because we, quite honestly, take people who are stationed in Misawa Japan and have them deploy to the desert. So you have a family that has moved to Misawa Japan, living on Misawa air base and then we take the unit and deploy them elsewhere to take part of the optempo. Taking care of these families is our number one priority. Taking care of our folks because we ask the members to do this. That is why we think stability is really important and that is why we think the AEF concept gives some predictability to stability. Predictability is a piece of stability in the way we think That is one of the issues we are working very, very hard and we are working it both systematically and individually. Stability. Predictability. Knowing that you are going to be gone at a certain time. Knowing that are you are going to be home at a certain time unless a major theater war arises. That is what we are trying to do with this AEF concept, besides making sure that those forces are trained to the task to go from Misawa to that desert. That is a training task that they can focus on before they go. A couple other points. Predictability and stability are high on our list of things that we are trying to provide our folks. Underneath that are the economic impacts of this life that we have in the military. I think the Congress and the Administration has stepped up with no questions about the need for increased pay and to turn around the retirement system. Those two things are a given, everybody acknowledges them and I think that will be very helpful and we have a lot of people out there in the forces waiting for that to become law and seeing it in the checkbook. That will be very helpful in turning around some of the downturns that we see in our retention. We've had an upswing in our pilot retention, which is interesting. We've had about a 27 percent take rate on our pilot bonus last year and we are up to around 41 percent this year. That is a heck of a jump, through three quarters. Some of that is accounted for by a change in the rules of how

long you've been in the service vice how long you've been a pilot. But that is a very small percentage of that uptick. That is a very heartening sign for us.

Question: Are there other programs that could be affected by a change in the F-22 program?

Ryan: We'd have to look at what we'd have to spend on better leveraging.... Let me start from the beginning on that question. We made decisions in the Air Force on the assumption that the F-22 comes on board--about jamming capability, about need for suppression of enemy air defenses, about how maneuverable certain airplanes like the JSF needed to be, about the structure that we have to support our forces in the future. I won't get specific because we would have to go back and look at what we've done with suppression of enemy air defenses, how we will use our jamming capabilities in the future if we don't have this airplane. There are lots of other things that are tendrils that hang off a decision to cut this airplane that we haven't investigated very heavily because we were under the assumption the airplane was in pretty good shape.... We had planned on using the follow-on for our F-117 when its life was out and F-15E when its life expectancy had ended to look at a derivative of the F-22 as a force store (?) For those aircraft. That is a decision we don't have to make now but of course it would be one of the candidates to do that. There are impacts across the board that we don't completely understand yet if we canceled the production of this F-22. But there are a couple things we know for sure. We know that the engine maturation for Joint Strike Fighter would be slowed considerably. That is a single place airplane and we are not sure of its engine in a two engine airplane. We know that. Because by the time the Joint Strike Fighter would come around, we would have a lot of time on the core of this engine which is the core for all variants of the Joint Strike Fighter. We know that the avionics technology would be leveraged into the Joint Strike Fighter. If you don't do it in this airplane, you are going to have to do it in Joint Strike Fighter and those prices are going to go up. We know this is third generation stealth technology, second being the B-2, first being the F-117. We were planning on the maturation of those technologies in the F-22 to pass on to the Joint Strike Fighter. Those are just three areas where we see a direct impact on the Joint Strike Fighter, but there are other areas in the Air Force that we need to re-think our way through if this airplane is canceled. I am confident the airplane is not going to be canceled. I think we will work our way through this through dialog and persuasion and exchange of information with the Hill. From our standpoint, this is a process we just have to get through. It is part of our democratic process. Congress is absolutely empowered to raise armies, support navies and take care of air forces. It isn't in the Constitution, but it is by implication. We'd like it written in so we'd make sure this never happens again.

Question: Is the \$85 million that you talked about with the F-22....

Ryan: We think that this airplane is needed to protect those high-value assets and we are going to have them out there for years and years to come. The AWACS and the Joint STARS kinds of aircraft, U-2 for that matter and others will be part of our leveraging capabilities well into the future and high-value asset protection is one of the basic missions of the F-22, particularly because the aircraft such as the SU-35 and others are certainly capable of high altitude and very fast flight that you need a very agile and quick airplane to get to, to protect those assets. So, we are worried about that aspect of the F-22.

We have an explanation of all the costs and I think it is important that you all get a copy of that so that we know when people say \$200 million airplane, we know that they taking all the costs that have already been spent, over \$20 billion, adding it to the \$40 billion cap and then dividing by 339 airplanes. Then you have to look at what year dollars you are talking, whether you are talking about 1991 or 1991 within year dollars. Very complicated. I will provide to you all a piece of paper that outlines the exact costs so that when you writing about this, you make sure it isn't a generalization about what the airplane is going to cost in the future. What the airplane is going to cost in the future is a lot different than the touted \$200 million an airplane.

Question: That is what it is going to cost based on the past figures....

Ryan: But it is not what it is going to cost from now on. The taxpayer has already invested in this airplane over \$20 billion.

Question: The AEF is supposed to debut this month. That has been delayed for how long and....

Ryan: 1 October is when we were going to begin into it and we are going to go into it 1 October. We've already begun the transition to the AEF, this has been laid out in our long-range plan for the air expeditionary force. You'll see that actually kick in 1 October where we lead turn out right now. In fact, that is a discussion that I am going over and supposed to leave right now to talk to the Chairman about how we lead turn into this. Yes, we are going to execute it. Some pieces of it may not go because that particular unit may be still in recovery. But the plan itself is what we have begun to execute right now.

Question: Did you say you were willing to give up the Joint Strike Fighter in order to have the F-22?

Ryan: No, I didn't say that.

Question: What did you say about the balance between the Joint Strike Fighter and the F-22?

Ryan: The F-22 is considered a high-end capability and the Joint Strike Fighter a low-end capability. When you have a force that is based on a high-low mix and you take away the high mix, you then have to go examine what you would get in the low mix as it is defined right now. Right now that mission of the Joint Strike Fighter comes nowhere close to meeting the requirements that we have for the high-end mix. So we have to go back and look.

Question: But if you were given the choice--F-22 or Joint Strike Fighter--what would be your choice?

Ryan: We actually need both airplanes.

Question: If Congress says sorry, you can only do one ... would you punt?

Ryan: We never punt. We are always on offense. Congress has not said that to us. Hypothetically, if they said we are not going to fund Defense anymore. Hypothetically, I dislike answer hypothetical questions. I just don't think that is an option. They have not asked us one or the other. What they've done is said we want to take a pause on the F-22. They have not said they will kill the F-22. They said we take a pause. What we've said is, if you take a pause of any length of time, you will bust the caps on the airplane and the airplane will then probably be killed. At that point, we'd have to go back and revisit our high-low mix and what our requirements are and the Joint Strike Fighter right now certainly doesn't meet the high-end mix.

END TEXT