



Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments

## STUDIES

# An Air Force for an Era of Great Power Competition

March 29, 2019 | **Mark Gunzinger, Carl Rehberg, Jacob Cohn, Timothy A. Walton, Lukas**

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Resources: Forces & Capabilities

The report summarizes insights and recommendations developed during a CSBA study of the U.S. Air Force's future aircraft inventory. As required by the 2018 National Defense Authorization Act, the report proposes a force planning construct and associated force structure necessary for the United States to support the 2018 National Defense Strategy. This construct would require the Air Force to size and shape its future force to sustain strategic deterrence, defend the U.S. homeland, and be prepared to defeat major acts of aggression by China and Russia as part of the Joint Force.

The report recommends creating a future aircraft inventory that would be more lethal and better able to operate in future contested and highly contested environments compared to today's force. It also advises the U.S. Air Force to develop and field this force over the next fifteen to twenty years instead of attempting to reach a specific inventory target by 2030.

Significantly increasing the size of the Air Force's aircraft inventory to reach an objective force by 2030 would require it primarily to procure aircraft that are in production now or are about to enter production. This could reduce funding to develop new weapon systems and create significant gaps in capabilities that would be needed beyond 2030.