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STATEMENT OF

Frank C. Conahan, Director

National Security and International Affairs Division

before the

Subcommittee on Legislation and National Security

Committee on Government Operations

House of Representatives

on

Readiness of Navy Tactical Air Forces

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Mr. Chairman; I am pleased to have the opportunity to appear before this subcommittee to discuss the results of GAO's recently completed review of the readiness of the Navy's tactical air forces.

My remarks are unclassified.

The Navy's tactical air--or TACAIR--forces are composed primarily of aircraft carriers and their accompanying combat and combat support aircraft. Their principal missions are to gain and control sea and land areas and suppress adversaries challenging such control, and to help keep open vital sea lanes connecting the United States with her allies.

Our objectives in the review were to examine the TACAIR forces' reported readiness and whether the readiness reports were portraying accurate data. We also looked into how well the carriers could meet their wartime deployment schedules. We concentrated our work on two key readiness indicators--mission capability rates, which measure the percentage of time aircraft are available to perform their assigned missions, and combat (C) ratings, which indicate the degree to which units are capable of performing the wartime missions they were organized, designed, or tasked to do. We chose these indicators because they are used within the Navy for programming and budgetary purposes, as well as by the Navy to represent the forces' readiness to Defense and Congress. We believe sound and accurate readiness

data is essential for the Navy's budget development process and for Congressional oversight, review, and approval of the Navy's budgets.

We found the TACAIR forces' reported readiness levels to be generally below established Navy goals, although the forward deployed forces' reported readiness is generally near Navy goals. But, in looking into how the reports are developed, we found that the forces' actual readiness may be significantly lower than the reports indicate it to be. We also found that shortages of various essential assets, such as munitions and spare parts, limit the carriers' ability to meet their wartime deployment schedules. We believe that these conditions have implications for Navy, Defense and Congressional decisionmakers, who in dealing with National Security issues must allocate funds for the forces' readiness and sustainability.

Our previous reviews of military readiness have shown that readiness reports often contain errors due to less than adequate reporting guidance and inadequate training for those developing the input data. We found similar circumstances during this review. The Navy has taken, or plans, a number of steps for reducing errors in mission capability input data and improving the procedures for computing C-ratings. We believe these

actions should significantly improve the reports' accuracy and usefulness, and we commend the Navy for them.

On the other hand, problems remain with the Navy's overall guidance for developing mission capability rates, and we know of no Navy actions for revising the guidance, even though it inflates the rates. Current guidance allows aircraft to be reported mission capable although they

--cannot perform the primary warfare roles for which they were designed and procured, and

--have been equipped for certain systems the Navy deems mission essential, but are missing the systems.

It is possible therefore for an F-14 fighter aircraft, for example, to be rated mission capable even though it cannot launch air-to-air missiles, or if it is missing an APX-76 identification friend or foe interrogation set. (The Navy has determined the set to be essential for independent operations in a multi-threat environment.)

The guidance also allows squadrons to remove certain aircraft, such as those with the squadrons but awaiting depot repair, from the mission capability computation base, thereby reducing the population from which the rates are derived.

Our report contains recommendations which, if implemented, should significantly improve the use of mission capability rates as readiness indicators.

It is difficult, Mr. Chairman, to discuss the aircraft carriers' deployability without getting into classified information. Let me just say that we found the Navy can generally support its peacetime carrier deployment schedules, but because of shortages of various essential assets, such as munitions and repair parts, it will have difficulty meeting its wartime requirements. Navy Officials told us that current budget and procurement plans will largely eliminate this problem by 1988 to 1990. However, these plans are predicated, in part, on future expenditures. Meanwhile, the carriers' deployability continues to be impaired.

The Navy's total obligation authority over the last four years has grown from \$56.9 billion to \$77.9 billion, a 37 percent increase. Funds allocated for new aircraft increased by 88 percent; funds allocated to maintain the readiness of existing aircraft grew by 37 percent. (The attached table shows the Navy's growth in total obligation authority for fiscal years 1980 through 1983, expressed in terms of the Navy's four elements of military capability: readiness, force structure, modernization, and sustainability.)

The need to continually upgrade the forces is absolutely vital to an adequate national defense. Maintaining the readiness of our forces is also vital. We recognize that

striking an acceptable balance in allocating the funds to accomplish both objectives requires judgements on a variety of matters. Our basic concern is that some of the important data used in helping decisionmakers reach those judgements is not as accurate and complete as it could or should be. To the extent that readiness data influences the balance of resource allocations between readiness, sustainability, force structure, and modernization, the fact that the data is inaccurate and incomplete suggests the need to carefully assess resource allocations.

Mr. Chairman, to supplement my remarks, I am pleased to provide you a copy of our classified report, which has just been issued. In view of the seriousness of the problems discussed in our report, we believe that in assessing the Navy's fiscal year 1985 budget request and its actions to improve readiness, the Congress should take into account that the TACAIR forces' readiness is lower than reported.

This concludes my statement, Mr. Chairman. I would be happy to answer any questions you or the other members may have.

Attachment

## ATTACHMENT

NAVY TOTAL OBLIGATION AUTHORITY GROWTH  
EXPRESSED IN THE FOUR ELEMENTS  
OF MILITARY CAPABILITY

<u>Military capability</u>	<u>Total obligation authority expressed in 1984 constant dollars (Billions)</u>				<u>Percent growth between FY 80 and FY 83</u>		<u>FY 84 proposed</u>
	<u>FY 80</u>	<u>FY 81</u>	<u>FY 82</u>	<u>FY 83</u>			<u>(billions)</u>
<b>Readiness:</b>							
All Navy	\$32.8	\$35.1	\$37.6	\$38.5	17		\$41.1
Aviation	6.8	8.1	8.7	9.3	37		10.1
<b>Force Structure:</b>							
All Navy	11.9	13.7	16.8	23.7	99		19.6
Aviation	3.8	5.1	7.2	7.2	88		7.2
<b>Modernization:</b>							
All Navy	9.4	10.3	10.8	11.7	25		13.7
Aviation	1.0	1.1	1.4	1.6	60		1.8
<b>Sustainability:</b>							
All Navy	2.6	3.5	3.7	4.0	50		5.1
Aviation	0.3	0.5	0.6	0.6	83		1.0
<b>Total (note a)</b>							
All Navy	\$56.8	\$62.6	\$69.0	\$77.9	37		\$79.6
Aviation	11.9	14.9	17.8	18.6	56		20.2

a/Total may not add due to rounding.

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