production or pursuing an FB–22 variant of the F/A–22 Raptor seemingly on the back burner, the current emphasis is on incremental upgrades. Numerous programs to improve bomber effectiveness are ongoing.

Situational awareness improvements, the Link 16 data link, laser targeting pods, and computer enhancements will continue to make each bomber a more efficient war machine. And upcoming weapons such as the Joint Air-to-Surface Standoff Missile and the Small Diameter Bomb will further broaden the range and number of targets bombers can precisely attack.

ACC officials say that, at this point, almost every improvement serves a dual purpose. Upgrades are expected to both sustain and modernize. Sustainment doesn't just mean keeping the aircraft aloft, either—the aircraft must remain valuable fighting machines. ''We're looking at 2040,'' one B–52 official said. ''Unless we can come to the war, they won't need us.''

The Air Force is trying to get additional targeting pods on its B–52s, Deptula said. ''We're looking at using [Fiscal 2003 and 2004 funds] to get as many targeting pods as we can,'' by using money set aside for the war on terrorism.

Goldfein said the service is interested in increasing the availability of the B–2's deployable shelters. Because of the sensitive low observable finish on the B–2, the bomber must be maintained in a climate-controlled shelter. Deployable shelters, reportedly set up at the Indian Ocean atoll of Diego Garcia, increased the flexibility of the B–2 for Gulf War II. The Air Force is ''looking to expand'' their use, Goldfein said.

As Air Force officials tell it, existing bombers will continue to get better and there is no urgent need to field a new system. Recapitalization is ''a huge piece'' of force structure planning, Deptula said, but USAF has some time to make proper assessments and make wise decisions.

The old way of procurement—planning a new system to replace an old one—''isn't completely gone.'' Deptula said, ''but the fact of the matter is, with respect to the long-range strike platforms formerly known as bombers, their lifetime is viable for many, many years into the future.''

The Air Force does not expect to see a dramatic technological breakthrough anytime soon. However Deptula believes that hypersonics research now being done at Air Force Research Laboratory may hold the key to breakthrough strike capabilities in the future.

TRANSITION PERIOD

''We are in a transition period . . . when it comes to technologies for long-range strike,'' he said. Reusable hypersonic propulsion has been difficult to develop, he noted, but it remains worth the effort because the technology offers revolutionary responsiveness, reach, and range. ''We're not there yet,'' Deptula noted.

Improvements to existing systems are expected to bridge the gap until scientists ''solve some of these technological challenges that will get us to the next step in potential capability,'' he said.

In Deptula's view, the break-through will not come until sometime in the next decade. That timing seems to mesh cleanly with financial realities.

''Our legacy platforms are viable through 2025,'' said Deptula, ''and when we enhance them with all these modifications, they are going to continue to increase in capability.'' It's a nice fit, he went on, because major funding for future long-range systems probably won't be available ''until the 2010–2020 time frame, because we have such a pressing need to recapitalize our fighter force in the next decade.''

The Air Force is holding to its November 2001 bomber roadmap, which laid out a notional plan to begin a new long-range strike program sometime around 2012–15. Officials say there is no need to rush into a new strike program, because USAF would spend billions developing a system that may not be significantly better than what is available today.

Features such as stealth, high speed, long loiter time, large payload capacity, and flexibility are well-understood goals for any future strike capability. However, there is great uncertainty. Officials are loath to say a follow-on system will be a ''B–3'' or even a bomber.

Industry, think tanks, and Air Force officials are all studying what is within the ''art of the possible,'' and USAF wants to keep the broadest possible range of options on the table. These options include traditional bombers, unmanned systems, hypersonic airspace vehicles, conventionally armed ballistic missiles, and even space-based weapons. Current time-lines give the Air Force a decade to explore the options.

ACC's Long-Range Global Precision Engagement Study—a look at future strike requirements—noted that the US is pushing for a capability to conduct high-speed strikes against emerging targets anywhere in the world on short notice. However, it has limited options in this area. Conventional ballistic attack missiles, derived from the nation's nuclear ICBM force, ''offer increased strike flexibility,'' but the financial and political cost would be high, the report noted.

Another area for improvement concerns stealth. The B–2 bomber's low peacetime MC rates stem from the high-maintenance nature of its low observable coatings. The aircraft is also largely relegated to nighttime use in high-threat environments. Yet the B–2 remains the only stealthy strike system largely unhindered by distance or basing concerns.

In the future, the F/A–22 and F–35 fighters will offer around-the-clock stealthy strike capability, noted the study, but the B–2 will continue to be the only stealthy, deep strike penetrator for the foreseeable future. The F/A–22 and F–35 have more limited combat ranges.

The study did not advocate a specific course. However, it did highlight the importance of speed. The advent of hypersonic weapons and platforms would permit ''prompt global strike from significant ranges and reduce the risks associated with forward basing,'' the report noted. Compared to ballistic missiles and cruise missiles, it went on, reusable platforms have high utility ''in all lesser threat scenarios, enhancing their cost-effectiveness across the spectrum of conflict.''

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

TRIBUTE TO MARGARET ANN HOFFMAN

● Mr. BUNNING. Mr. President, I pay tribute to Margaret Ann Hoffman of Walton, KY on being recognized as one of America's top principals in the 2003 National Distinguished Principal Program by the U.S. Department of Education.

The annual National Distinguished Principals Program was established in 1984 to honor elementary and middle school principals who set high standards for the pace, character, and quality of the education their students receive.

Ms. Hoffman, a principal at Fort Wright Elementary School, in Covington, KY, has been recognized by the U.S. Department of Education for her tireless work in exhibiting excellence at Fort Wright Elementary School and has made outstanding contributions to the Covington community. Ms. Hoffman sets an example of excellence for the rest of the faculty, and the faculty follows that example. She inspires her students to achieve academically and contribute to the community.

I know ask my fellow colleagues to join me in thanking Margaret Ann Hoffman for her dedication and commitment to the education of America's future. In order for our society to continue to advance in the right direction, we must have principals like Margaret Ann Hoffman in our schools, and communities, and lives. She is Kentucky at its finest.●

IN HONOR OF MIKE ELWOOD

● Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, I rise today to acknowledge and honor a very important constituent, as well as a very important program in my State and across the Nation—CASA for Children. ''CASA'' is short for Court Appointed Special Advocate, and it is a program that is made up of extraordinary men and women who find it in their hearts to devote their time and energy to help some of the neediest of their community's children. CASAs come from all walks of life, all professions, and all educational and ethnic backgrounds, and their mission is to advocate for the best interests of children who find themselves, through no fault of their own, under the jurisdiction of the juvenile court system.

As we see all too often in public service, far too many children find themselves enmeshed in the juvenile court system due to abuse, neglect or abandonment. Once in the court system, these kids can find themselves cruelly buffeted by legal battles and their parents' continuing poor choices. Some find themselves in multiple foster care situations at a very young age, and many are eventually permanently removed from the care of their birth parents. CASAs serve their communities by becoming an independent advocate for a child as a sworn officer of the court. They spend time with health professionals, teachers, parents, prospective parents, and the children themselves to help the court reach the best possible conclusion for the interests of the child.

CASA came to Oregon in 1985 under the leadership of Judge Stephen Herrell and citizen advocate, Susan Holloway. For Almost 20 years, CASA has trained Oregon volunteers to be the eyes and ears of the court, making independent objective recommendations regarding the best interests of children.

In Oregon, we have a CASA leader who personally exemplifies the very best of my State in his legacy of commitment to the future of Oregon's children. Mike Elwood, who has been both