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OF NOTE

• Hegseth to Meet with AC3 Leaders: Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth will meet with Panamanian President José Raúl Mulino and senior Colombian officials today as the United States works to deepen its defense cooperation with Americas Counter Cartel Coalition states (Article 1). Hegseth will also meet with service members at the Jungle Operations Training Course and observe the PANAMAX 2026 multinational exercise, hosted by U.S. Southern Command.
• Meink Discusses Modernization: Air Force Secretary Troy Meink spoke with Aviationist reporter Howard German last week at the EAA AirVenture airshow (Article 8). "There's no question that we're living at a point in time where technology is changing ... faster than perhaps at any time since World War II," Meink said. "We have to stay ahead. The United States needs to maintain its technological advantage."
• Officials See Lasers' Opportunities, Dangers: Directed energy weapons could both pose a threat and offer an opportunity, the deputy commander of U.S. Space Command said at the during the Space and Missile Defense Symposium in Huntsville, Ala. (Article 11). Army Lt. Gen. Richard Zellman said both the United States and adversaries are looking for ways to defeat proliferated satellite constellations, which are resilient against traditional anti-satellite weapons.

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JOINT NEWS
1. Hegseth travels to Panama as US deepens defense cooperation
(The Hill, 11 Aug 26) ... Filip Timotija
Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth will travel to Panama today to meet with Panamanian President José Raúl Mulino and senior Colombian officials. Hegseth will speak at the Americas Counter Cartel Coalition Forum, which was launched in March. "The era of capitulating to coercion by the communist Chinese is over," Hegseth said during a visit in April, when he signed a memorandum of understanding with Panama to bolster defense cooperation and a joint declaration regarding the Panama Canal's operations and security. "The Panama Canal is key terrain that must be secured by Panama, with America, and not China," he said. U.S. Southern Command has established Joint Task Force Western Hemisphere to work more closely with partner nations and counter drug cartel operations.

2. 'There is no Golden Dome' unless Congress prioritizes funding, general warns
(Defense One, 11 Aug 26) ... Thomas Novelly
The Golden Dome missile defense program is in jeopardy due to Congress' reluctance to approve a $350 billion reconciliation request from the Trump administration, Golden Dome Director Gen. Michael Guetlein said Tuesday. "If they don't figure it out, there is no Golden Dome because there is no funding," Guetlein said during the Space and Missile Defense Symposium in Huntsville, Ala. Guetlein said the program is making progress, including two "phenomenally successful" tests, but a lack of consistent funding could upend that progress. Guetlein said the Pentagon is planning for contingencies if they don't receive the full FY27 budget request. "There are some alternatives that we can pursue," he said. "We have not made any decisions on any pathway." Physicists have said one of the key features of Golden Dome, space-based boost-phased interceptors, are too costly to implement, as the architecture would require tens of thousands of armed satellites.

3. US forces disable third vessel transiting the Gulf of Oman
(Stars and Stripes, 11 Aug 26) ... Unattributed
U.S. forces in the Gulf of Oman disabled a ship attempting to run the Navy's blockade of Iranian ports, the third such incident since the United States reimposed the blockade last month. U.S. Central Command officials said they've redirected 55 commercial vessels attempting to run the blockade and boarded two. "American forces remain highly vigilant, focused, lethal, and ready," CENTCOM officials said. Pakistani Defense Minister Khawaja Asif said Tuesday that the United States and Iran are close to reaching an agreement over maritime shipping in the Strait of Hormuz.

4. U.S. military operations killed 153 civilians last year, Pentagon says
(CBS News, 11 Aug 26) ... James LaPorta, Eleanor Watson
U.S. military operations in Yemen killed over 150 civilians and injured over 240 others last year, Defense Department officials acknowledged in a report to Congress on Monday. Operation Rough Rider airstrikes "more likely than not" killed 80 civilians on April 17 and 68 civilians on April 28. The report doesn't count strikes conducted as part of Operation Southern Spear in the Pacific Ocean and Caribbean Sea, which accounted for 215 deaths since September. DOD officials wrote in the opening statement that "The U.S. military is steadfastly committed to limiting harm to civilians, and [the Department of War] has a strong record of compliance with the law of war." Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth has moved to eliminate the Civilian Protection Center of Excellence and the DOD's larger civilian harm reduction program.

5. Asbestos, mold and crumbling walls: The US military's Pacific bases are falling apart
(Military Times, 11 Aug 26) ... Michael Peck
Facilities at Kadena and Yokota Air Bases and Camp Courtney, Japan, exhibited visible mold, corrosion, burn damage, cracks on interiors and exteriors, concrete spalling and exposed rebar, asbestos-containing material and other signs of decay, according to a Defense Department Inspector General report published Aug. 6. "DOD officials told us that in some areas, falling debris ... poses an ongoing risk to personnel safety," IG auditors wrote. Concrete damage has affected over 500 homes at Kadena Air Base, and Sebille Manor Housing on base has received 100 reports of mold, according to the report. The report recommends that the service secretaries and commanders of Pacific Command and U.S. Forces Japan conduct a root-cause analysis of infrastructure problems and allocated funds to fix them.

6. USS Abraham Lincoln families press Navy leaders over sailors' mental health
(Stars and Stripes, 11 Aug 26) ... Alison Bath
Sailors and family members have expressed concerns about the risk of self-harm among Sailors assigned to the USS Abraham Lincoln during recent town hall meetings with Navy leaders. Officials at the meeting said Sailors aboard the carrier have access to mental health experts, chaplains and doctors and that the Navy is working to send more support personnel to the ship. "Leadership is continuously conducting assessments to monitor and sustain the psychological readiness of every Sailor," Navy officials said in a statement Monday. The Abraham Lincoln has supported 40 days of continuous combat operations and 250 consecutive days at sea, placing an unprecedented strain on the ship's crew. Sailors and family members said the Abraham Lincoln's crew has endured water and food shortages, long workdays and disrupted mail service. "We've just been turning and burning the whole time we're deployed," one Sailor said. "Nothing to really look forward to at this point. All we want is a date home."

7. Marines must update religious affiliation as service slashes list to 30 options
(Military Times, 11 Aug 26) ... Eve Sampson
Marines must choose a religious affiliation from a condensed list of 30 options that omits hundreds of non-Christian faiths, according to an administrative message to the force this week. Marine Corps officials said as a result of the change, "some previously authorized faith and belief designations are no longer individually represented and have been consolidated into broader religious affiliation categories." Marines must choose "the most appropriate" identity when selecting an affiliation, the message states. Chief Pentagon spokesman Sean Parnell said earlier this year that the consolidation of religious affiliation codes was designed to help chaplains better understand the composition of their units.

AIR FORCE NEWS
8. Engineering the future force: Exclusive interview with the secretary of the U.S. Air Force
(The Aviationist, 8 Aug 26) ... Howard German
Air Force Secretary Troy Meink spoke with Aviationist reporter Howard German on the sidelines of the EAA AirVenture at Wittman Regional Airport last week. "There's no question that we're living at a point in time where technology is changing, particularly for the Department of the Air Force, faster than perhaps at any time since World War II, when we went from aircraft like the P-51 [Mustang] straight into the jet age," Meink said. "We have to stay ahead. The United States needs to maintain its technological advantage." Meink said almost every Air Force mission is modernizing simultaneously right now, from aerial logistics and Collaborative Combat Aircraft to entirely new space-based capabilities. One of Meink's priorities is bringing more maintainers into the force and retaining them longer so they can develop expertise in their fields, Meink said. "That's especially important as we bring on the B-21 [Raider], which is an entirely new platform," he added. "Supporting that aircraft requires a significant increase in personnel, and we're working our way through that now."

9. Air Force explores AI tools to predict aircraft failures, strengthen sustainment
(DefenseScoop, 11 Aug 26) ... Mikayla Easley
AI has potential to improve the Air Force's fleet availability through predicting maintenance and supply chain needs, Air Force officials said during the Life Cycle Industry Days conference last month in Dayton, Ohio. "I would say we definitely have our foot in the pool, but we need to jump in a little deeper," said Brig. Gen. William Ottati, portfolio acquisition executive for mobility. Individual portfolios are exploring AI mechanisms that address specific challenges, Air Force officials said; the challenge is identifying and implementing the capabilities that match the service's needs. "We'll continue to work with our operational partners and all other parts of the enterprise to make sure that we're using it, but it feels like there's a lot of tools out there," Ottati said. Col. Timothy Spaulding, PAE for bombers, said the B-52 Stratofortress portfolio will incorporate AI-enabled maintenance capabilities within the next year, but turning data into insights is going to take work.

10. Air Force wants a drone factory in a box for rapid, remote deployments
(Air & Space Forces, 11 Aug 26) ... Matthew Cox
The Air Force's Rapid Sustainment Office published a Request for Information on Friday seeking ideas for expeditionary manufacturing equipment that could support a portable drone factory. "This will allow for the rapid, persistent, and distributed production of unmanned air systems near the point of need, reducing reliance on traditional supply chains and enabling forces to quickly replenish critical assets in contested areas," RSO officials wrote in the RFI. RSO officials said the Air Force doesn't currently have a preferred production capacity but is interested in scalable, expeditionary equipment that can be loaded into a shipping container and transported via ship, helicopter or C-130 Hercules aircraft.

SPACE FORCE NEWS
11. Laser weapons for space? US officials see threat, opportunity
(Breaking Defense, 11 Aug 26) ... Theresa Hitchens
Directed energy weapons could pose both a threat and an opportunity, the deputy commander of U.S. Space Command said Tuesday. Army Lt. Gen. Richard Zellman said both the United States and adversaries are looking to find ways to defeat proliferated satellite constellations, because traditional anti-satellite weapons are ineffective against proliferated constellations. Non-kinetic effects and directed-energy systems could succeed where ASAT weapons would not, though, said Army Brig. Gen. Drew Morgan, deputy commanding general of Army Space and Missile Defense Command. A 2024 Space Systems Command fact sheet warns that directed energy weapons pose a real threat to Space Force systems. Zellman said ground sites are still a weak point, as they are few in number and susceptible to kinetic and non-kinetic attacks.

OF INTEREST
12. How Iran adapted its attacks as U.S. war munitions dwindled
(New York Times, 11 Aug 26) ... Eric Schmitt and Helene Cooper
Iran has adapted its drone and missile strike tactics to overcome U.S. air defenses as it has enlisted Iraqi militias and Houthi rebels to widen the scope of the war. "The Iranians are making it more difficult on air defenses when you have a range of both missiles and drones coming in," said Seth Jones, president of the Center for Strategic and International Studies' defense and security department. "They have effectively leveraged the Russian tactic to make it more difficult to protect across locations in the Gulf." Iranian military officials studied U.S. and Israeli air defense tactics during the 12-day war in 2025 and noted the U.S. reliance on ballistic missile interceptors.

13. Ex-Trump Pentagon chief on Iran: 'We seem to be on our back foot'
(The Hill, 11 Aug 26) ... Finya Swai
The Trump administration appears to be on the back foot against Iran, former Defense Secretary Mark Esper said this week. "Tactically, we have imposed a lot of pain on them through our U.S. military strikes against their air force, their navy, their militias, their ballistic missile forces—done a lot of tactical damage," Esper said. "But strategically, we seem to be on our back foot right now." Esper, who served as defense secretary during the first Trump administration, said the United States should respond to Iran's leverage over the Strait of Hormuz by continuing to apply economic pressure. "I don't think this conflict is won through air power," he said. "I think economics will have a far greater long-term damage against them." He also encouraged the White House to bring in allies and partners to apply additional pressure against Iran.

14. Opinion: "Limits of airpower" are not the issue—strategy is

(Forbes, 11 Aug 26) ... David A. Deptula
Military campaigns fail when political leaders ask for strategic outcomes while restricting the conditions needed to produce them, writes retired Lt. Gen. David Deptula, dean of the Mitchell Institute for Aerospace Studies. "Military instruments possess different strengths, weaknesses, costs, and risks," Deptula writes. "The purpose of strategy is to reconcile them. Airpower should therefore not be judged against an imaginary standard of omnipotence. It should be judged against the political objectives assigned to it, the operational conditions under which it is employed, and the alternatives available." Airpower can create effects at ranges that other military forces can't, but it can't compensate for unclear political objectives, Deptula writes. "If the political objective demands the defeat of an adversary while policy simultaneously preserves the adversary's sanctuaries, external support, command structure, or capacity for regeneration, the contradiction is strategic. No military technology can solve it," he writes.

15. Opinion: Existing airpower theory still explains modern warfare
(RealClearDefense, 11 Aug 26) ... Col. Grant Georgulis
The recent discussion over the "air littoral" framework reinforces a recurring feature of warfare, writes Col. Grant Georgulis, a master air battle manager currently assigned to U.S. Northern Command and North American Aerospace Defense Command. "Technologies and methods change continuously, while the enduring principles governing the employment of military force remain remarkably durable." Advocates of the air littoral correctly identify operational challenges but don't demonstrate that the challenges require replacing existing warfare theory, Georgulis writes. Threats such as drones and cruise missiles don't require a new theoretical construct because existing doctrine already addresses these threats, he argues. "The burden of any new military operational construct is not novelty but explanatory power," he writes. "It must improve a commander's ability to understand the battlespace and make better operational decisions than enduring doctrine already allows. By that standard, the 'air littoral' falls short."

16. Opinion: Fatalities at CYBERCOM merit Pentagon intervention
(Breaking Defense, 11 Aug 26) ... Joshua Steifel
The quick succession of suicides among cyber operations forces requires urgent attention by Defense Department leadership, writes Joshua Steifel, co-chair on the Commission on Cyber Force Generation. Where most U.S. forces regularly cycle in and out of deployment phases, cyber operators are deployed in place for the entirety of their assignments, Steifel writes. "The lack of geographic separation, defined deployment endpoint or protected periods to reconstitute and retrain normally associated with a combat deployment downrange creates unique psychological strains on the operators, ultimately hurting readiness and limiting operational impact," he writes. Army Gen. Joshua Rudd, the commander of CYBERCOM, should prioritize expanding clearances, badges and facility access for chaplains and medical personnel where command personnel are assigned, Steifel writes. CYBERCOM should also request dedicated personnel to provide embedded, specialist care inside cyberwarfare units.

SOCIAL MEDIA

SUMMARY: Air Force social media posts included an article on the Combat Archer UK 2026 exercise at RAF Lakenheath, United Kingdom. Space Force social media posts included a video from a change of command ceremony for U.S. Space Forces in Europe-Space Forces Africa, an article on Col. Richard Beckman's assumption of responsibility as portfolio acquisition executive for infrastructure, an article on Mission Delta 9's involvement in the Victus Haze Tactically Responsive Space exercise, and an article on contract awards for the Space-Based Airborne Moving Target Indicator mission.

• Air Force on X: Posts included an article on the Combat Archer UK 2026 exercise at RAF Lakenheath, United Kingdom. Total engagement was 11 replies, 92 reposts and 686 likes.
• Air Force on Instagram: Posts included a photo by Airman 1st Class Francisco Huerta of 718th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron operations at Kadena Air Base, Japan. Total engagement was 5,351 likes and 22 comments.
• Space Force on Facebook: Posts included a video from the change of command ceremony for U.S. Space Forces in Europe-Space Forces Africa and an article on Col. Richard Beckman's assumption of responsibility as portfolio acquisition executive for infrastructure. Total engagement was 85 reactions, six comments and 11 shares.
• Space Force on X: Posts included an article on Mission Delta 9's involvement in the Victus Haze Tactically Responsive Space exercise. Total engagement was 13 replies, 95 reposts and 409 likes.
• Space Force on Instagram: Posts included a photo of the 15th Space Surveillance Squadron's operations floor. Total engagement was 705 likes and 11 comments.
• Space Force on LinkedIn: Posts included an article on contract awards for Space-Based Airborne Moving Target Indicator capabilities. Total engagement was 55 reactions, five comments and five reposts.

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