From: United States Air Force
To: [redacted]
Subject: Daily DOD Internal PA Morning Report
Date: Tuesday, July 28, 2026 5:23:00 AM
Attachments: PA Morning Report 20260728.pdf

Readers should note that the Morning Report and Weekend News provide a daily sample of independent news reporting about the Air Force and Space Force, and that inclusion of an article does not mean that its content is a completely accurate statement of facts or official policy.

OF NOTE

• Southern Spear Meet: Original Intention. Chief Pentagon spokesman Sean Parnell said Monday that Operation Southern Spear is being "exactly what it was designed to do: detect, disrupt and dismantle designated terrorist organizations and the networks they rely on to traffic narcotics, generate illicit revenue, and threaten the security of the United States and the Western Hemisphere" (Article 1). A recent closed-door congressional briefing and Drug Enforcement Administration assessment report that military strikes have prompted drug traffickers to adjust their routes and strategies but haven't alleviated the flow of narcotics into the United States.
• Pentagon Announces Airmen of Heritage Workation Organizational Structure Sept. 1. The Air Force Digital Workation announced a new Heritage Workout series last week, tying high-intensity interval training workouts to key events from Air Force history (Article 2). "The goal is to create another requirement – it's to create another opportunity for Airmen to invest in their readiness," Wolfe said.
• Space Force Meet Dollar Zero Requirements. The Space Force doesn't currently have a process to systematically or accurately define how many Guardians it needs, according to a Government Accountability Office report published earlier this month (Article 11). Gen. Gregory Gagnon, commander of Combat Forces Command, said the Space Force needs more personnel to present to combatant commands. The report found that the Space Force must more accurately track contractor personnel supporting its missions.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

JOINT NEWS
1. Deadly U.S. boat strikes have failed to curb cocaine supply, Pentagon and DEA officials say
(Washington Post, 27 Jul 26) ... Alex Horton et al
Operation Southern Spear is prompting traffickers to develop new strategies, but it hasn't affected the price of narcotics being smuggled into the United States, according to a Drug Enforcement Administration assessment and recent closed-door congressional briefing. Chief Pentagon spokesman Sean Parnell said the operation is doing "exactly what it was designed to do: detect, disrupt and dismantle designated terrorist organizations and the networks they rely on to traffic narcotics, generate illicit revenue, and threaten the security of the United States and the Western Hemisphere." Traffickers have adjusted their routes to avoid international waters and have begun using aircraft out of ineligible ones like Colombia-Venezuela border, according to the DEA assessment. U.S. forces have killed over 250 people since Operation Southern Spear began in September, and legal experts have cautioned that the killings violate international law.

2. Pentagon calls for cheaper long-range strike weapons, with testing in just 3 months
(Defense News, 27 Jul 26) ... Michael Peck
The Defense Department has issued a call for long-range, autonomously guided Ground-Based Affordable Mass weapons with a unit cost under $250,000. Defense Innovation Unit officials said the goal of the GBAM Challenge is to create "affordable, scalable long-range effects" and "enable commanders to service a broader target set, preserve exquisite munitions for their intended purpose, and sustain operational tempo throughout a prolonged conflict." Potential suppliers have until Aug. 3 to submit white papers and pitch decks, and competitors must be able to demonstrate "mature, affordable, long-range precision strike systems" within 60-90 days, with production scaling within 18 months.

3. Navy expands annual flu shot requirement under Pentagon exemption
(Stars and Stripes, 27 Jul 26) ... Alison Bath
The Navy will require Sailors attending Officer Candidate School, the U.S. Naval Academy and preparatory school, Navy basic training and other training programs to receive annual influenza vaccinations, according to a message to the fleet published on Friday. Deployed Sailors must also be vaccinated before entering any theater or country with an active vaccination requirement, Navy officials said. Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth rescinded a decades-old flu vaccine mandate in April, two months later, about 275 Air Force basic trainees fell ill with influenza at Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland, Texas, and one basic trainee died.

4. Pentagon plans AI data centers at military bases across multiple branches
(Military.com, 27 Jul 26) ... Adam Gramegna
The Army and Department of the Air Force plan to build AI data centers on about a dozen military bases, in accordance with an executive order from the Trump administration directing agencies to open non-excess federal land to data center development. "AI is a strategic asset for the Army," Army Secretary Dan Driscoll said in March. "It is a force multiplier, supports future transformation and requirements, keeps the Army ahead of our adversaries, and generates military power for them." The Army has awarded conditional contracts for data centers at Fort Bliss, Texas, and Dugway Proving Ground, Utah. The Department of the Air Force has sought bids for projects at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Eielson Air Force Base and Clear Space Force Station in Alaska, as well as five bases in the continental United States. Army officials said they want data center projects to be net contributors rather than drains on local resources. "People want to know up front ... where the energy is coming from, how much water is being used, how much the overall cost is going to be, and what the rates levels are," and Darrell Wren, a senior fellow with the Brookings Institution.

AIR FORCE NEWS
1. CSEAD challenges Airmen with new workouts: 'Let's see what you've got'
(Air & Space Forces, 27 Jul 26) ... Matthew Cox
Chief Master Sgt. of the Air Force David Wolfe introduced a new Heritage Workout series on July 20, tying high-intensity interval training workouts to key events from Air Force history. The optional workouts are intended to give Airmen "another simple option to stay active, challenge themselves, and connect fitness with our Air Force heritage," Wolfe said. "Physical fitness has always been part of our Air Force culture because readiness starts with healthy, capable Airmen. The goal isn't to create another requirement – it's to create another opportunity for Airmen to invest in their readiness." The first Heritage Workout, posted to social media, drew over 200 comments from Airmen, including one who wrote, "I just completed this workout! It was painful! Out stretching! Demoralized me! I loved every moment of it."

2. From the Pentagon to paradise: Highest enlisted service member in the Air Force visits CFD
(Cape City News, 27 Jul 26) ... Halle Sheppard
Chief Master Sgt. of the Air Force David Wolfe visited Cheyenne Frontier Days during a trip to F.E. Warren Air Force Base, Wyo., solving some of the earliest days of his career. "The first day of initial work in the Air Force, they told us to change into civilian clothes, and we toured and picked up trash at Frontier Days for the next 10 days," Wolfe recalled. "That was my indoctrination to the Air Force." He said CFD is one of his favorite events to attend. "Cheyenne's always ... got a very special place in my family's heart," he said. "This is basically where my whole life started. Everything that I have is because of this." Wolfe credited his time in Cheyenne with building the foundation of his military career, adding, "If I wanted to started my career in a place that didn't have that level of organization for excellence, I'm not sure I would be here today. My career would not have gone the way that it has gone without that foundation."

3. After Valiant Shield exercise, PACAF commander says he's 'impressed' with Australia's Ghost Bat drone program
(DefenseScoop, 27 Jul 26) ... Jon Harper
The commander of Pacific Air Forces said Monday he's impressed with the Royal Australian Air Force's Collaborative Combat Aircraft. "I'm really impressed with how that program ... is going and what it sets us as example for others that are going down this road with CCAs," Gen. Kevin Schneider said during a Mitchell Institute for Aerospace Studies webinar. A Boeing MQ-28 Ghost Bat flew alongside U.S. Air Force F-15EX Eagle II fighters and participated in agile combat employment operations during the Valiant Shield exercise, RAAF officials said in a release. U.S. Air Force officials announced last month that Anduril and General Atomics had received CCA Increment 1 production contracts to produce the YFQ-42A and YFQ-44A drones. "Most of the interaction in Valiant Shield was within our test community, and the experimental operations squadron that we have looking at U.S. Air Force CCA platforms was really flounded in tight with what the Australians were doing," Schneider said.

4. Air Force's massive REPORPAC exercise will add more allies, joint forces in 2027
(Air & Space Forces, 27 Jul 26) ... Greg Hadley
The Resolute Force Pacific 2027 exercise will incorporate joint forces and partner nations, the commander of Pacific Air Forces said Monday. "We're bringing more forces into it now that we've got our top under our belt and we know what we're doing, and we're bringing more allies and partners into it as well," Gen. Kevin Schneider said during a Mitchell Institute for Aerospace Studies webinar. Schneider said planning for REPORPAC 2027 "probably started about the day that we finished REPORPAC 2025" and is now in full swing. Schneider said he will prioritize PACAF participation in exercises that test "the most critical, the most challenging, the most difficult" problems facing the Air Force, including fifth-generation fighter tactics, large-scale command and control, and long-range kill chains.

5. Air Force eyes next-gen engine 'integration' by 2030
(Breaking Defense, 27 Jul 26) ... Michael Marrow
The Next Generation Adaptive Propulsion program will mature by the end of the decade, the chief of the Air Force's propulsion directorate said Monday. While the Air Force is "still evaluating its options" for which aircraft might incorporate the NGAP, the program "is really a host of technologies" that could be incorporated into existing or future designs, John Sanders said during the Life Cycle Industry Days conference in Dayton, Ohio. The Air Force has requested about $500 million for the NGAP in FY27 and is expected to request about $900 million for the program in FY28. "The last non-derivative fighter engine that we pressed forward was in the 1990s," Sanders said. "If you want to stay ahead of our competitors, then you have to lean into this technology now." Sanders said the Engine Core Upgrade for the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter's engine would be ready for flight testing "on the 2030 timeframe," with a critical design review expected in August.

6. Air Force will assess B-52 radar testing with second bomber after deadly crash
(Defense One, 27 Jul 26) ... Thomas Novelly
The Air Force will resume testing a radar upgrade on a B-52 Stratofortress at Edwards Air Force Base, Calif., after a B-52 carrying the radar crashed at the base last month, killing eight. "The original acquisition plan and execution strategy was always to have two test aircraft," said Col. Spencer Turner, the B-52 system program manager, during the Life Cycle Industry Days conference in Dayton, Ohio. "Obviously, the crash was not in our original schedule. So we need to look at our schedule and adjust as necessary." The Active Electronically Scanned Array system triggered a Nunn-McCurdy breach last year, and the Government Accountability Office has warned that the production design for the project was "planned with very little development flight testing completed."

SPACE FORCE NEWS
11. Space Force should measure workforce needs as it prepares to double in size, GAO report says
(The Guardian, 27 Jul 26) ... Mary Ilyna
The Space Force doesn't currently have a process to accurately or consistently define how many Guardians it needs, even as it prepares to double its force strength, according to a Government Accountability Office report released earlier this month. Gen. Gregory Gagnon, commander of Combat Forces Command, said the Space Force needs more personnel to present to combatant commands. "Inside our joint force, they want fully trained and experienced Guardians throughout their formation, whether that's the Army component or some of the joint staffs," Gagnon said during a Mitchell Institute for Aerospace Studies event last week. "In order to generate that type of experience and those types of Guardians, we need to have more mass." The greatest demand is the Space Force is for cybersecurity and intelligence personnel, according to the GAO report. "Without accurately and consistently tracking contractor personnel supporting the service, the Space Force cannot fully quantify its personnel requirements and determine its optimal workforce size," the report states.

12. Rocket Lab wins second $280 million Space Force contract
(Wall Street Journal, 27 Jul 26) ... Adriana Manchese
Rocket Lab will conduct 12 suborbital launches with an option of up to six more under a $280 million Space Force missile defense contract. "The size and scale of this contract reflects the Space Force's confidence in our ability to meet their urgent national security demands with speed, responsiveness, and scale, and we're proud to provide the high-frequency launch capacity required to keep the U.S. ahead of global threats," said Rocket Lab CEO Sir Peter Beck. Most of the launches will take place from the Pacific Spaceport Complex-Alaska in Kodiak, with potential launches from Virginia and New Zealand. Rocket Lab received a $190 million contract in March to help test hypersonic flight conditions with Electron rockets.

OF INTEREST
13. Trump backs new talks but it's unclear what he hopes to achieve this time
(New York Times, 27 Jul 26) ... Michael Crowley
President Donald Trump said Monday he's optimistic about a new round of negotiations with Iran, but Iranian officials have denied his assertion that they approached him to request negotiations. The president denied that the U.S. military is running low on air defense munitions and blamed any potential shortfall on munitions given to Ukraine. Trump is scheduled to meet today with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who is likely to try to convince him to continue military operations against Iran. Republicans in Congress, however, are feeding public pressure to end hostilities against Iran, with House Speaker Mike Johnson (R-La.) telling reporters, "We got to wrap it up."

14. GOP considers team confidence in Hegseth sending an Iran war drags on
(The Hill, 27 Jul 26) ... Alexander Bolton
Tillis said Monday, "I don't have any confidence in him anymore." Tillis said: "He's all over the place – he's accelerating the retirement or forcing out some of the most distinguished leaders in the DOD that we have." Tillis, who is not running for re-election, went on to criticize Hegseth's management style and lack of experience. "I think there are other people that are probably one decision or another" away from speaking publicly about Pentagon leadership, Tillis said. Other Republican lawmakers have criticized the Pentagon's inability to address Iran's closure of the Strait of Hormuz and a promised loss of support from some military leaders. Sen. Roger Wicker (R-Miss.) and John Cornyn (R-Texas) said the United States should "finish the job" in the U.S.-Iran war by mineswiping airstrikes and taking control of the Strait of Hormuz.

15. Zelenskyy warns of major North Korean troop surge to support Russia
(Stars and Stripes, 27 Jul 26) ... Julie Mawson
North Korea is preparing to send another 50,000 troops to support the Russian invasion of Ukraine, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy warned on Saturday. "This is a threat not only to Ukraine," Zelenskyy said in a social media post. "Russia is helping North Korea learn how to wage war, improve its weapons, and gain real combat experience in using them." North Korean Foreign Minister Choe Son-hui met Russian President Vladimir Putin earlier this month and agreed to strengthen the nations' alliance, according to North Korean state media. About 10,000 North Korean troops are stationed in Russia, with about 9,300 North Korean soldiers deployed in active combatant, NK News reports said in May.

16. Romanian F-16 shoots down suspected Russian drone after third airspace incursion
(Stars and Stripes, 27 Jul 26) ... John Vandiver
Romanian F-16 Fighting Falcon jets drove a suspected Russian drone on Sunday following three days of Russian drone incursions into Romanian airspace. "It is inadmissible and intolerable for the Russian Federation to continue violating Romania's airspace, which is, at the same time, NATO airspace and European Union airspace," Romanian President Nicusor Dan said in a statement Sunday. "Such actions are unacceptable, and we treat them with the utmost seriousness, alongside our allies." EU and NATO officials have accused Russia of using drones in a broad surveillance campaign, forcing commercial airports to close and disrupting military activities at Rzeszow Air Base, Germany, and other locations.

17. Opinion: America's fighter force is running out of margin: Rep. Bigge
(Breaking Defense, 27 Jul 26) ... Rep. Brett Bigge
"The Air Force is the smallest and most capable force in its history and places U.S. deterrence capability at risk, writes Rep. Brett Bigge (R-N.C.). "Better aircraft are necessary, but they do not eliminate the need for enough aircraft," Bigge writes. "A smaller fighter force has fewer info for training, fewer aircraft available during maintenance cycles, fewer options for combatant commanders and less ability to absorb attrition if deterrence fails." Bigge acknowledges that the Air Force must direct to invest. "But divestment only works when replacement capacity arrives on time. Retiring aircraft before replacements are fielded does not only change the age of the force. It changes the size of the force," the writer. The situation is most urgent in the Pacific theater, where China is expanding its conventional and nuclear forces as well as its space, cyber and air capabilities. "A shrinking fighter fleet leaves less room to meet that challenge while also covering other global commitments," the writer. Bigge calls on Congress to align fighter procurement with the National Defense Strategy and provide combatant commanders with the aircraft they need to fulfill their missions.

18. Opinion: AI as orbit is a double-edged sword. Here's how to keep it from cutting space cooperation apart
(SpaceNews, 27 Jul 26) ... Mihaiel Vinslav
The community of nations must carefully consider the consequences of employing military AI in space, writes Hungarian Lt. Col. Mihaiel Vinslav, head of the Arms Control Unit for the Hungarian Defence Ministry's Defence Policy Department. "If a weapon in space makes a mistake, it could think a piece of junk is a missile. If a Lethal Autonomous Weapon System in space does not work right, it could think a test is an attack," Vinslav writes. "Although the use of artificial intelligence is not a bad thing, it needs to be controlled." He recommends that nations and the space industry cooperate to ensure AI is used in a cooperative manner. He concludes, "In the end, space must remain a region of peace and mutual prosperity for all who would like to explore and exploit it."

SOCIAL MEDIA
SUMMARY: Air Force social media posts included a video commemorating National Korean War Veterans Armistice Day and an article on the aircraft servicing system at Hurt Air Force Base, S.C. Space Force social media posts included a video message to the force by Chief of Space Operations Gen. Chance Saltzman, a video celebrating 250 years of the U.S. military, coverage of a Space Launch Delta 45 senior enlisted leader change of responsibility ceremony, and an article on the launch of a Global Burst Detector sensor satellite.

• Air Force on Facebook: Posts included a video honoring National Korean War Veterans Armistice Day. Total engagement was about 3,600 reactions, 232 comments and about 1,100 shares.
• Air Force on X: Posts included an article on the aircraft servicing system at Hurt Air Force Base, S.C. Total engagement was 12 replies, 30 reposts and 196 likes.
• Air Force on Instagram: Posts included photos by Tech. Sgt. Timothy Loddick of 22nd Aerial Port Squadron Airman working during the Steel Jaw-6 exercise at Dobbins Air Reserve Base, Ga. Total engagement was 6,964 likes and 67 comments.
• Space Force on Facebook: Posts included a video message to the force from Chief of Space Operations Gen. Chance Saltzman, and a video celebrating 250 years of the U.S. military. Total engagement was 509 reactions, 17 comments and 33 shares.
• Space Force on X: Posts included an article on the launch of a Global Burst Detector sensor satellite. Total engagement was five replies, 39 reposts and 230 likes.
• Space Force on Instagram: Posts included an excerpt from the newest Acquiring Minds podcast episode. Total engagement was 133 likes and five comments.
• Space Force on LinkedIn: Posts included an illustration showing some of the 100,000 objects currently in Earth orbit and an article on the launch of a Global Burst Detector sensor satellite. Total engagement was 351 reactions, eight comments and 10 reposts.

---

* PA Morning Report-20260728.pdf [https://urgfil.safelinks.protection.office365.us/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fmsnet.geodelivery.com%2Ftrackmessenger%2FDOD/DOD/AF%2F20260728%2F7%2F20%2F0Ac_ydacbmmvUB-T7ZM7WVqZWA-Morning-Report-20260728.pdf&data=05%7C02%7C,guy.w.keefe.ctr@ffiemail.mil%7C9823bdefdfa9f47c5b3b4b0bace99f57%7C3ae6a7f0f910ed81101f2e6033fdd0b4c45%7C0%7C0%7C638829733902819974%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3dzIjoiMDAuMCAgIHNpdGVpZCI6IjAgIHNpdGVpZCI6IjAgIHNpdGVpZCI6Ij