



# F-35 Lightning II Program

Public Release – 2018 05 03

## DoD Official: Lethality, Readiness Drive Acquisition and Sustainment Reform

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*By Terri Moon Cronk, DoD News, Defense Media Activity*

The National Defense Strategy's priority of readiness and warfighter's needs make it important for the Defense Department to be easy to do business with, the undersecretary of defense for acquisitions and sustainment said here yesterday.

At the first DoD Human Capital Symposium, Ellen M. Lord explained that the department's former acquisitions, technology and logistics function recently became two organizations: acquisitions and sustainment, and research and engineering -- each headed up by an undersecretary, as part of the effort to reform the Pentagon.

Lord noted the three lines of effort in the National Defense Strategy: lethality, strengthening alliances and partnerships, and reform. "Everything we do is in the context of our National Defense Strategy, and one of the things that makes [Defense Secretary James N. Mattis] one of the best leaders in Washington is that he is very clear on his objectives," she said.

With the first line of effort being lethality, the undersecretary said, "make no doubt about it -- we are about warfighting." "All of the dollars that we have been given -- and Congress has given us a two-year omnibus bill -- we have 14 percent more money than last year, ... about a \$700 billion budget that goes up about another \$20 billion for 2019. We have budget certainty that we have not had in a long time," Lord said.

And DoD has the responsibility of taking those dollars, getting them on contract, and buying the capability that the warfighter needs, she emphasized.

"We are supposed to be spending our money on warfighting. We need to ensure that we are ready to fight tonight, and that we are modernizing for the future," Lord said, noting that the framework of lethality is readiness and modernization. What readiness means to DoD is platform readiness, to make sure that it has aircraft available, she said. "Right now, we have on average 50 percent operational availability for aircraft. That's unacceptable," she added. "We as warfighters cannot [operate] on that."

That speaks to the sustainability side of acquisitions and sustainment, she said, noting that 70 cents of every dollar DoD spends over the lifecycle of a program goes to sustainment. "We need to start thinking about sustainment more when we design systems, so that we are designing [them] to be maintainable," she explained. "To be able to change out parts quickly, we need to make sure that we think about the costs of sustaining systems."

In production, she added, the department will stand by its requirements and make sure its industry partners stand by their commitments.

"We have an enormous amount of work to do to take the F-35 [Lightning II] -- which is the greatest fighter aircraft today -- and make sure it is the greatest fighter aircraft in 2025," the undersecretary said, using the joint strike fighter as an example. "Threats are evolving, and we need to evolve."

Sustainability is the last line of effort in the F-35, she said. “My customer is the warfighter, ... [and] my job is to take the resources I have and make them stronger.”

Further within the realm of lethality is focusing on DoD’s nuclear triad, and the department is modernizing every leg of the nuclear triad, Lord said.

The No. 2 line of effort in the National Defense Strategy is strengthening alliances and partnerships. “When we go to war, we go to war with a lot of allies and partners,” the undersecretary said. “We can only dominate in an interoperable battlefield of multi domains if we have equipment that talks to [one] other. A huge part of what we need to do is enable our allies and partners to fight with us by selling them weapons that we’re developing. It’s important not just for interoperability, but it also stabilizes our defense industrial base.”

Lord said her commitment is to speed up getting warfighting systems to U.S. partners and allies who depend on DoD.

The No. 3 line of effort in the strategy is reform. “Secretary Mattis is well aware that the Pentagon is not a paradigm of efficiency,” Lord said. “We’ve done it to ourselves, and it’s up to us to undo it. Leadership staff changes in the past year have offered fresh sets of eyes to look at how to streamline systems, she added.

“A part of that is saying what you’re going to do, go do it and measure it and keep doing it again and again,” Lord said. One of the issues to which she is committed is looking at all the acquisition authorities the department has and lining up all the different contract vehicles it has and “making that very clear to the acquisition workforce,” the undersecretary noted.

“Then [we’ll take] examples of how these different acquisition authorities and contract types were used correctly and incorrectly,” she said, “so we can teach [acquisitions] people with real-life examples.” The acquisitions and sustainment effort is “focused on how we buy things more simply, more quickly and how we get capability downrange,” Lord said.