

## OPERA – fiche sociographique - défense

### Prénom, Nom:



Erin C. Conaton

### Contact :

4E858

1670 Air Force Pentagon

Washington, DC 20330-1670

Direct Dial: 703-697-1361

### Catégorie : Législatif

Attention, elle devient par la suite Under Secretary of the Air force.

### Dates de naissance / décès :

26 sept. 1970

### Lieu de naissance :

Rutherford, NJ (Hackensack, NJ ?)

### Genre : Fem.

### Lieu de résidence (si DC avant l'accession à un poste retenu, avec si possible l'année de l'emménagement à DC):

### Formation :

<b>BA/BS</b>	Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service, Georgetown Univ., B.S.F.S/BA., 1992
<b>MA/MS</b>	law and diplomacy, Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Tufts Univ., M.A., 1995 completed an International Security Studies Fellowship at Tufts Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Tufts Univ, 96-97
<b>PhD</b>	

<b>Law degree (JD...)</b>	
<b>Autre</b>	completed a graduate fellowship at the Central Intelligence Agency in 1998.

### **Profession initiale :**

### **Carrière :**

1992-1993 : Financial Analyst, Salomon Brothers, Inc, New York, NY  
1993 : Director of Client Services, Yield Enhancement Strategists, Inc., New York, NY  
1994 : Graduate Fellow, National Security Council, Washington DC  
1995 : Associate, Overseas Private Investment Corporation, Washington DC  
1996-1997 : International Security Studies Fellowship, The Fletcher School, Tufts Un., Medford, Mass.  
1998 : Graduate Fellow, Central Intelligence Agency, Washington DC.  
1998-2001 : Research Staff Director and Research Associate, US Commission on National Security for the 21st Century, plus connue sous le nom de Hart-Rudman Commission. Le panel bipartisan recommanda la création d'un Department of Homeland Security.  
2001-2005 : Professional Staff Member, House Committee on Armed Services (6 years), Democratic (minority) Staff Director de 2005 à 2007.  
2007-2010 : majority Staff Director, House Committee on Armed Services (4 years)  
Expertise au Congrès : national security policy, military strategy, non proliferation : contrôle sur guerre en Iraq, lien avec les Alliés et la Chine, bills.  
2010-2012: Under Secretary of the Air Force (2 years)  
23 janvier 2012 : Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness

### **Sources biblio/bio, articles, divers.**

ERIN CONATON  
Who runs gov ? Washington Post

« Conaton is a creature of Capitol Hill, having worked on the House Armed Services Committee for the past decade. She began there as a professional staff member, and worked her way up to become the panel's Democratic staff director under Chairman [Ike Skelton](#) (D-Mo.). Thus, during a time of major budget cuts and two wars, Conaton knows how to get things done on the Hill, and with the power brokers and opinion shapers of the defense industry.

"She's well-respected amongst her peers, and extraordinarily capable of handling not only the administrative duties of the committee but also grasping difficult policy issues," a defense industry lobbyist told *Roll Call* in a June 24, 2009 profile. Conaton told *Congressional Quarterly* that her message to industry lobbyists is: "Do your homework and know your issues."

Conaton has her work cut out for her. In the late 2000s, the the Air Force struggled to regain its footing after failing to purchase a new aerial refueling tanker fleet, and was slammed by federal auditors for embarrassing errors in its selection process. Nuclear weapons were loaded on an Air Force plane that flew over the U.S., and nuclear components were mistakenly

shipped to Taiwan. The combination of those events, along with the perception that service brass were not doing enough to support the Iraq war, led Defense Secretary [Robert Gates](#) to fire then-Air Force Secretary Michael Wynn and then-service Chief of Staff Gen. Michael Moseley.

### [In Her Own Words](#)

"There is a need to balance modernization of current platforms and to continue to invest in new capabilities that will be needed in future conflicts." [Advance Policy Questions for Erin C. Conaton](#), Nominee for Under Secretary of the Air Force, 2010<sup>(2)</sup>

### **Path to Power**

Conaton's hometown is Rutherford, N.J. She left the Garden State for college, picking up a bachelor's degree in foreign service from Georgetown University in 1992.

Three years later, she earned a master's in law and diplomacy from The Fletcher School at Tufts University. She completed fellowships at the Central Intelligence Agency and the [National Security Council](#). Early in her career, Conaton was research staff director for the so-called Hart-Rudman commission, which was charged with fashioning a national security strategy through 2025.

### [Hill Staffer](#)

In 2001, Conaton became a professional staff member with the House Armed Services Committee. She worked her way up the ranks, becoming the important committee's Democratic staff director just as the country was about to tackle two wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

And when Democrats took control of the House in 2006, that gave Conaton the powerful post of majority staff director. It's a big job, to be sure. "As the Staff Director, she served as the primary adviser to the Chairman and 61 other members of the Armed Services Committee," states her official U.S. Air Force biography. "She directed the overall operations, strategic planning and substantive agenda of the committee, to include drafting and overseeing the annual defense authorization bill." Official Air Force [biography](#)<sup>(3)</sup>

### **The Issues**

During her 2010 confirmation hearing, Conaton made clear she faces a tough road as Air Force under secretary. "This is a time of great challenges, for the [Department of Defense](#) generally and for the Air Force in particular," she told the Senate Armed Service Committee. [Advance Policy Questions for Erin C. Conaton](#), Nominee for Under Secretary of the Air Force, 2010<sup>(2)</sup> [Advance Policy Questions for Erin C. Conaton](#), Nominee for Under Secretary of the Air Force, 2010. "The Air Force has come through a period of challenge with regards to its nuclear enterprise and its acquisition processes."

Conaton added that service officials must balance supporting the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts will also planning for future wars. "There is a need to balance modernization of current platforms and to continue to invest in new capabilities that will be needed in future conflicts," Conaton said. [Advance Policy Questions for Erin C. Conaton](#), Nominee for Under Secretary of the Air Force, 2010<sup>(2)</sup> [Advance Policy Questions for Erin C. Conaton](#), Nominee for Under Secretary of the Air Force, 2010

She also mentioned doing right by airmen and their families. . "At a time of great fiscal challenge for our nation, these challenges will continue to pose hard choices for the service in its overall budget, particularly in the investment accounts," she said. [Advance Policy Questions for Erin C. Conaton](#), Nominee for Under Secretary of the Air Force,

2010<sup>(2)</sup> [Advance Policy Questions for Erin C. Conaton](#), Nominee for Under Secretary of the Air Force, 2010

### KC-X Tanker

Coming into office, the [Obama administration](#) inherited the controversial race between American-based Boeing and Northrop Grumman and its European partner EADS to replace the service's aging KC-135s. The latest attempt at buying new tankers will come at a time when the 2008-2009 economic crisis has some U.S. lawmakers ramping up protectionist rhetoric. In fall 2009, Pentagon procurement czar [Ashton Carter](#) and his fellow Pentagon leaders issued a solicitation for the program that many experts said favored a smaller -- and cheaper -- plane. Northrop officials quickly painted the new competition as "unfair," and threatened to opt out. Bennett, John T., "[USAF Tanker RfP Raises More Questions Than Answers](#)," Defense News, Oct. 5, 2009<sup>(4)</sup> Bennett, John T., "[USAF Tanker RfP Raises More Questions Than Answers](#)," Defense News, Oct. 5, 2009

Months later, Northrop did just that, sending the politically- charged competition into chaos -- and leaving its European collaborator, EADS, without an American dance partner. Reed, John; Bennett, John T.; Muradian, Vago, "Sources: EADS Seeking New Tanker Bid Partner," Defense News, March 15, 2010<sup>(5)</sup> Reed, John; Bennett, John T.; Muradian, Vago, "Sources: EADS Seeking New Tanker Bid Partner," Defense News, March 15, 2010 EADS is now vowing to bid on its own, as the prime contractor. The company says it has won assurances from Pentagon and Air Force leaders that it meets needed security guidelines not given to all foreign firms. But analysts say a solo-EADS bid only further muddies the waters of what already was a complicated acquisition. DoD officials and Air Force brass -- including Conaton -- will be front and center in the department's KC-X decisionmaking process.

### Bombers and UAVs

The Air Force is also grappling with a myriad of other issues, such as what kinds of aircraft should replace its aging B-1, B-2 and B-52 bombers, how often will it use unmanned planes and how to reverse a recent trend of failed acquisition competitions.

"I believe that the Air Force must ensure that it can continue to provide long-range persistent strike capabilities to the President in his role as Commander-in-Chief," Conaton has said. [Advance Policy Questions for Erin C. Conaton](#), Nominee for Under Secretary of the Air Force, 2010<sup>(2)</sup> [Advance Policy Questions for Erin C. Conaton](#), Nominee for Under Secretary of the Air Force, 2010 "Given the anticipated life expectancy of the current force, now is an appropriate time for the [Department of Defense](#) and the Air Force to consider what options are available to continue to provide such capability."

On unmanned planes or drones, which the [Obama administration](#) has used more and more to take out terrorist operatives and leaders, Conaton is a fan. As for a remotely- piloted bomber, she told the committee she is reviewing "the considerations and challenges for the Air Force, including the benefits and military utility of "the man or woman in the cockpit" for the future bomber force. [Advance Policy Questions for Erin C. Conaton](#), Nominee for Under Secretary of the Air Force, 2010<sup>(2)</sup> [Advance Policy Questions for Erin C. Conaton](#), Nominee for Under Secretary of the Air Force, 2010

But, Conaton immediately added: "More generally, we have enjoyed great success in the current fights with unmanned aerial systems (UASs) in the mission sets of intelligence/surveillance/reconnaissance and light attack in permissive environments where we are unchallenged in the air, space, and cyber domains."

## **The Network**

As a longtime senior House Armed Services Committee aide, Conaton is plugged in with such lawmakers -- and top aides -- as the panel's chairman, Rep. [Ike Skelton](#) (D-Mo.) and Ranking Member [Howard "Buck" McKeon](#) (R-Calif.). As a Georgetown University alum, she has plenty of fellow Hoyas in the administration and in other power posts around Washington. Just within the Obama national security community, she will find fellow Georgetowners [James Jones](#), the national security adviser; Gen. [George Casey](#), the Army chief of staff; and [Frank Kendall](#), deputy Pentagon acquisition chief.

Conaton also worked for the Council on Foreign Relations. That means she is part of an exclusive club of Washington foreign and national-security power players that routinely shuttle between senior government, academia and think-tank posts.

## **Campaign Contributions**

During the 2004 election cycle, Conaton donated \$750 to [Sen. John Kerry](#) (D-Mass.), and \$500 to DNC Services Corp. Also in 2004, she donated \$250 to [Rep. Stephanie Herseth Sandlin](#) (D-S.D.). During the 2008 cycle, she donated \$2300 to then-candidate [Barack Obama](#).

## **Footnotes**

1.  
Almanac of the Unelected, 2008 edition
2.  
[Advance Policy Questions for Erin C. Conaton](#), Nominee for Under Secretary of the Air Force, 2010
3.  
Official Air Force [biography](#)
4.  
Bennett, John T., "[USAF Tanker RfP Raises More Questions Than Answers](#)," Defense News, Oct. 5, 2009
5.  
Reed, John; Bennett, John T.; Muradian, Vago, "Sources: EADS Seeking New Tanker Bid Partner," Defense News, March 15, 2010

## **Erin C. Conaton's World**

Profiles



[Ike Skelton \(D-Mo.\)](#) U.S. Representative (1977 to January 2011)



[Howard P. McKeon \(R-Calif.\)](#) U.S. Representative (since 1993)



[Michael B. Donley](#) Secretary, U.S. Air Force (since October 2008)



[Robert Gates](#) Former Secretary of Defense (December 2006 to June 2011)

Last edited by [John T. Bennett](#) , Mar. 08, 2011, 3:44AM

Moderated by: [Rachel Van Dongen](#)

See also: [former Hill staffer](#), [Department of Defense](#), [Obama Administration official](#), [Defense](#)

Source : [http://www.whorungov.com/Profiles/Erin\\_C\\_Conaton?loadTab=0](http://www.whorungov.com/Profiles/Erin_C_Conaton?loadTab=0), consulté le 12/09/2011.

## Defense News

### **Erin Conaton**

Undersecretary, U.S. Air Force

Published: 8 November 2010

Erin Conaton had run the House Armed Services Committee under Rep. Ike Skelton, D-Mo, for two years - and had been a staffer there since 2001 - when the Obama administration tapped her to become the No. 2 civilian leader of the U.S. Air Force.

In March, Conaton was confirmed as Air Force undersecretary, filling a post vacant since 2007. Along with Secretary Michael Donley, she is responsible for the service's budget and for equipping, training and providing for its airmen. Part of the team that is trying to right the long-struggling tanker aircraft program, Conaton has also been given the task of reshaping the service's space policy.

*W. Genieys, Operationalizing Programmatic Elites Research in America, OPERA : ANR-08-BLAN-0032.*

Q. What are your priorities for space?

A. We've been doing a lot of work on space governance and making sure that we've got the right way to look at our space work. Air Force Secretary Michael Donley has asked me to be the focal point for space to pull together what's happening on the operational side, the acquisition side and the policy side of space; we've got a lot going on in all of those areas. At the same time, we're in conversations with the Department of Defense about his role as the DoD executive agent for space, so we're trying to revitalize that work, particularly, in light of the National Space Policy.

So we're going to keep our focus on successful launch and operations, we're going to enhance our interagency and international work in pursuit of the National Space Policy, and we're going to keep our eye on the ball in space acquisition.

Q. What are your concerns about the space industrial base, particularly with regard to solid rocket motors?

A. It's been a long-standing concern for both DoD and our partners in NASA and elsewhere. We've done a lot of work on the industrial base and there's an additional study that will come out from the DoD in the coming months. I can't preview yet exactly what it's going to say, but I think there's a growing consensus that we need to rationalize or right-size this industry, recognizing the importance of this industry to our space work but also the fact that we've got some excess capacity there that's systemic and will need to be dealt with.

Q. How did this year's cuts to several NASA programs affect the Air Force?

A. We've had a long-standing partnership with NASA, and as they go through changes, we're certainly trying to look at the implications of that work and at ways that we can partner with them. There's no specific implication I would point to at the moment, but the cuts are something that's very much the subject of dialogue between the two agencies as they get a better handle on their new authorization bill and the future of their programs.

Q. What are you doing on the interagency and interservice space front?

A. One of the areas where we're trying to do a lot of collaboration with NASA and the NRO [National Reconnaissance Office] is the launch side. It's something that Secretary Donley has been pretty passionate about. We're working to help him and NASA Administrator Charles Bolden and NRO Director Bruce Carlson bring these three agencies together. We all have a vested interest in ensuring that launch continues to be as successful as possible, and we want to set up those launch operations in such a way that we can procure them in the most efficient and cost-effective way to the taxpayer.

There's also a lot of work going on on the industrial base - specifically, the solid rocket motor and the liquid propulsion side.

We're also working on our ranges, because we all use the same facilities to get things into orbit. Director Carlson and I co-chair the space industrial base council. We met twice in the last three months and plan to continue on that path. What we're trying to do is not only identify the critical technologies in the community we need to keep an eye on to ensure we can support our space industry; we also want to get a more comprehensive view on what's going on in the space industrial base. We're looking to partner perhaps with our Department of Commerce friends to see if they can help us survey the industry in a way that will yield some useful information on where the industry stands, what pockets of that industry are in most distress, and the pieces of it that are most critical to our national security space enterprise.

Inside DoD, we're talking about not only governance but also how to partner more effectively, and that conversation is really happening between the Air Force, the other services and various parts of the DoD to figure out, "are there additional things you want the executive agent for space to do? What are those things, and how can the Air Force be more helpful in bringing the entire DoD space community together?"

Q. What international partnerships are you looking at? Is there a possibility that the U.S. will share bandwidth with certain European allies?

A. The National Space Policy puts a great emphasis on international partnerships and on figuring out where we can do more together. We're starting to look in the communications places and others, at what international partners may be interested in investing in. I do expect more international partnerships as we get a bit more mature in our implementation of the policy.

The general point is we've got to think more creatively on how we partner in space, whether that's on the international side or dealing with commercial partners. The policy has challenged us to think about international partnerships proactively. I don't think that anyone was averse to them prior to this, but I think we now have more proactive emphasis on this.

The one thing we want to ensure is that our national security space missions have the highest level of mission assurance, and that we are sure when we put something up - whether it's with partners or on our own - that we can do so as successfully as possible. I don't think partnerships with our international friends or commercial partners precludes ensuring the mission.

Q. There's been talk of using long-endurance UAVs to back up satellite capabilities. What are you doing to ensure the GPS system is backed up?

A. GPS is vital to our war fighter and a variety of civilian and commercial users. We think this constellation has been very successful; we've got 31 active satellites on orbit with a couple more up there in reserve. That's a really robust architecture. As we transition to GPS IIF, we get much better accuracy and coverage from every satellite that we put up.

So our first priority is to maintain the robustness and precision of the system that we have on orbit so that we give the best service to the customer. We are looking at other things that would help enhance that or provide some level of redundancy. As our Air Force chief of staff, Gen. Norton Schwartz, has also pointed out, we need to ensure that we can fight even in a degraded environment. So while we work to ensure it's as robust as possible, we also need to ensure that we know how to operate when it's not at 100 percent.

Q. What are your concerns about the weaponization of space?

A. We're focusing on the National Space Policy, and that really focuses on the rights of all nations to have access to space for peaceful use. We're also focusing on - and there's a lot of wording in the NSP to this effect - that anyone who wants to be involved in space has to think about the implications of their actions on the others who are up there.

Q. What about the vulnerability of U.S. satellites to attack?

A. We have to think about levels of our space capability that might be present in any given conflict. It's increasingly important - whether it's due to debris or just the increasingly congested nature of the space environment - that we get a better handle on what's up there. We've taken a lot of strides in the Air Force on [space situational awareness] in the last several years, moving from a focus on military satellites to a broader range of commercial and other space objects that could pose a hazard to anybody trying to launch something.

The National Space Policy, in addition to having a clear emphasis on peaceful access to space, is very clear that, if an adversary sought to deny capabilities, we would seek first to deter and if need be to defend and prevent such an attack. I think we are committed as a military - we have to be, on behalf of the president, war fighter and national customers - to ensure that any adversary couldn't take away vital space assets.

Q. What's the future of the Operationally Responsive Space (ORS) effort?

A. Being able to rapidly augment or replace on orbit a capability that a combatant commander needs on short order is something we're really committed to. It's a different way of thinking about building, procuring and getting satellites up. It's got a robust interagency governance board, chaired by Secretary Donley and U.S. Strategic Command commander Gen. Kevin Chilton, so it's something we're really excited about, and we're working through the practicalities of how you get to the ultimate vision for ORS. Right now, we're doing different demonstrations in a variety of mission areas to demonstrate we can do this with the idea of moving down the line to something that really provides that combatant commander with the capability they're looking for.

Q. Will the Air Force take advantage of commercial launch services?

A. We're open and looking at where the commercial industry is headed. We're committed to maintaining our [evolved expendable launch vehicle] program but also looking at other things that industry might bring to the table that would be appropriate to various payloads.

I'll go back to one thing I said earlier: The mission assurance piece is, for us, absolutely essential. That we've gone 10 years-plus without a launch failure - knock on wood - is not only a source of pride for us, it's an absolute necessity. Any commercial options we explore, we have to think through how we ensure that we're safely putting that satellite into orbit. As we think about individual payloads, we do consider, "Hey, is there an appropriate commercial option for this?" As commercial launch matures, we'll consider it more and more.

-- By John Reed.

U.S. Air Force

2010 budget: \$166 billion, including supplemental funding.

Airmen (planned for 2011): 332,200 active-duty, 71,200 reservists, 106,700 Air National Guard.

Aircraft: About 5,400 fixed-wing, rotary-wing, tiltrotor and UAVs.

Source: Defense News research, <http://www.defensenews.com/print/article/20101108/DEFBEAT03/11080312/Erin-Conaton>, consulté le 29 nov. 13

**Sources additionnelles :**  
Legistorm, First Street