

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

March 21, 2016

The Honorable Mac Thornberry  
Chairman  
House Armed Services Committee  
2216 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Rodney Frelinghuysen  
Chairman  
House Defense Appropriations Subcommittee  
H-405, The Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Adam Smith  
Ranking Member  
House Armed Services Committee  
2216 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Peter Visclosky  
Ranking Member  
House Defense Appropriations Subcommittee  
H-405, The Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Gentlemen:

The Fiscal Year 2017 President's budget request includes funding for 63 F-35 Joint Strike Fighters. This is a critical year for production increases necessary to reach full rate production in Fiscal Year 2018. As you consider your respective Fiscal Year 2017 Defense bills, should additional funding become available for tactical aviation, we respectfully request that you add funding for five Air Force F-35As, two Navy F-35Cs, two Marine Corps F-35Cs and two Marine Corps F-35Bs as requested in the services' unfunded requirements lists. These 11 additional aircraft will restore the Air Force's planned quantity, mitigate the Navy's strike fighter shortfall and address unfunded requirements for all three services.

As you are aware, the F-35 is the nation's only current 5<sup>th</sup> Generation stealth aircraft in production. The F-35 is the key to future air superiority for the U.S. Air Force, Navy, and Marine Corps, and our most important allies across the globe. The F-35's unmatched stealth, electronic warfare suite, situational awareness and targeting identification capabilities are crucial to achieving air superiority in future surface-to-air and air-to-air threat environments without incurring significant losses. Russia and China are rapidly developing and proliferating their own advanced stealth fighter jets and weapons systems. These countries are also building and proliferating advanced surface-to-air missile systems that threaten to make our 4<sup>th</sup> Generation fighter fleet obsolete. The rapidly advancing threats around the globe make a strong case for significantly increasing F-35 production to ensure the services have the 5<sup>th</sup> Generation inventory required to ensure air dominance in the mid-2020s.

Analysis using government models and scenarios shows that more F-35s significantly increase mission effectiveness and reduce combat losses compared to any other tactical aviation platform in the U.S. inventory today. Additionally, analysis demonstrates that the F-35 requires far fewer support aircraft than current 4<sup>th</sup> Generation aircraft. The Department of Defense has a current

validated requirement of 2,443 F-35s between the Air Force, Navy, and Marine Corps. We need to accelerate production to fulfill this requirement sooner in order to meet the future threat facing the joint and coalition force.

The fact is that the F-35 program is maturing and the design is stable. The Marine Corps declared its first squadron operational in July of 2015, and the Air Force is on track to declare its first squadron operational later this year. Unit costs have decreased by over 57% over the last seven years, and almost all future cost reduction is predicated on aircraft quantities.

Current low-rate production supports over 1,300 suppliers in 44 states and one territory, directly and indirectly employing more than 133,000 people and providing more than \$21.4 billion in annual economic impact. The economic impact from the program will only grow as production increases and eventually reaches full rate production in or about Fiscal Year 2018.

Again, we urge you to fully support the budget request and as funds are available to increase F-35 production to restore aircraft lost in the Fiscal Year 2017 budget build, address the strike fighter shortfall and support the unfunded requirements for the Air Force, Navy and Marine Corps. Thank you for your consideration of this request and your continued leadership for our nation.

Sincerely,

  
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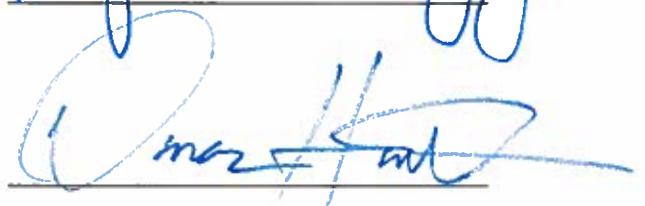
  
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Langford D. Blythe Jr.  
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Ed. Lee

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Mike Coffey

Frank A. DeBrid

Austin Scott

Rosa L. DeLuca

Lamar Smith

Eddie Bernice Johnson

Young Lamborn

Bill Paswell Jr

Alcee L. Hastings

Walter B. Jones

Joe Courtney

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Luella Royal Allard

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Joe Wilson

Pat A. Bradley  
Ed Shepard

Bob G

Pat M. Kelly

Alma Adams

Ray Anderson

R. H. Jones

Ch. Stewart

Mark D.K.

Richard G. Neal

Joyce Bradley  
Ann McFarlane Foster

Y. K. Spall

Jean D. Smith

David Scott

Gregg Harper

Oran Bohm

Frank Muntz

Pete King

Lynn Brady

Lynn A Westmacott

John Ryan

Corine Drum

Pat Woodall

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Pete Lynch

John Ryan

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Joe Burton

Bill Johnson

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Paul Lok

Chris Collins

Jim Biederstein

Elizabeth H. Esty

Richard Hudson

John Clark

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Tom Mair

Jeff Miller

John Taylor

Ken W. Allen

Sam J. Hoff

Ted W. Lee

Jackie Walowski

Fred Vele

Al Wright

S.H. 15

Earl L. "Buddy" Carter

Cheri Burtos

Paul Johnson

Steve and

Pin Flow

Black Feather

Hybrid

Quin formen

Lay Luckton

Joby Slice

Kay Granger  
John Larson  
Alma Adams  
Pete Aguilar  
Rick Allen  
Brad Ashford  
Brian Babin  
Joe Barton  
Joyce Beatty  
Sanford Bishop  
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