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F-22 PASSES ALL FINAL TESTING REQUIREMENTS

WASHINGTON, D.C.- U.S. Congressman John B. Larson (CT-01) said today that he was pleased with Monday's announcement that the F-22 Raptor jet fighter met all remaining testing requirements needed for the Department of Defense to move ahead with the next phase in the program. As part of a 1999 budget deal that Larson helped to broker in order to save the program from being cut, Congress mandated that the aircraft pass several milestones before the Air Force could begin procurement. Now that all these conditions have been met, the decision whether or not to begin procuring the first 10 planes, at a cost of roughly \$2.1 billion dollars, must now be made by the Pentagon's Defense Acquisition Board (DAB).

Larson stated: "The aircraft has passed each and every mandated test with flying colors. I believe the program is ready to move ahead to the next phase." Larson also wrote to then-Secretary of Defense William Cohen in January urging that the DAB not defer its decision on the F-22, which could disrupt current contracts and adversely impact the cost and schedule of the program.

"The F-22 is the next generation of military aircraft that will allow the United States to strengthen and maintain our incredible air superiority. The aircraft has a first look, first shot, first kill ability, meaning that it can see, fire upon and eliminate any enemy target before the enemy even knows we are there. This advanced system all but guarantees military supremacy in the sky and will help reduce the risk to American servicemen," said Larson. "The Pratt & Whitney F119 engines have met all technical requirements and demonstrated excellent reliability throughout the test program. They are ready to move into low rate production."

The mandated milestones included tests of the on-board integrated computer systems, known as avionics, testing of weapons delivery systems such as missile separation and weapons bay doors, tests on the engine and structural integrity of the aircraft, radar cross sectioning, as well as review of several other parts of the fighter.

The final successful 72-minute flight test took place at the Lockheed Martin Aeronautics facilities in Georgia.

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