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CT DELEGATION URGES BUSH ADMINISTRATION TO RECONSIDER FURTHER STUDIES OF COMANCHE AND F/A-22

Members warn additional reviews may adversely affect programs' cost efficiency and schedule

WASHINGTON - Connecticut's Congressional Delegation today urged the Bush Administration to quickly reaffirm its support for the crucial Comanche and F/A-22 programs and reject further studies of the programs that are both unnecessary and may adversely effect the programs' cost efficiencies and schedules.

In a letter to Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, Senators Chris Dodd and Joe Lieberman, and Representatives Nancy Johnson, Christopher Shays, Rosa DeLauro, John Larson, and Rob Simmons said they were concerned by reports that the Office of Management and Budget is requesting another study of the programs that have already undergone comprehensive study and remain critical centerpieces of the nation's national security capability.

"We are astounded as this review comes just months after each program has been successfully re-reviewed and/or restructured, barely two weeks after the release of the FY2005 budget request, and just over a year before the Department is scheduled to once again start preparing its comprehensive Quadrennial Defense Review," the letter said. "Unlike other programs, current operations in the global war on terror and the emerging national strategy both validate the capabilities [the Comanche and F/A-22] are poised to provide."

The full text of the letter is below.

February 19, 2004

The Honorable Donald Rumsfeld
Secretary of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-1000

Dear Mr. Secretary:

We are writing to you to express our continued support for the F/A-22 Raptor and RAH-66 Comanche programs and register our concern with another proposed review of these programs.

Two weeks ago, we were pleased to see the Administration's commitment to the F/A-22 and Comanche by fully funding both programs in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2005 budget request to Congress. The request for these funds sends a strong message that both programs are of vital importance to the Department of Defense (DoD) and the future of our nation's military. It also supports our belief, shared by many officials in your Department, that the F/A-22 and Comanche will be state-of-the-art, stealthy, tactical aircraft capable of completely transforming the nature of modern combat.

Currently, we are concerned about reports stating that OMB is requesting yet another study of these programs. We are astounded as this review comes just months after each program has been successfully re-reviewed and/or restructured, barely two weeks after the release of the FY2005 budget request, and just over a year before the Department is scheduled to once again start preparing its comprehensive Quadrennial Defense Review. It is our understanding that the study is to focus on the extent to which these programs fit into the current DoD transformation efforts, how well they can fulfill current or future mission requirements, a cost-benefit analysis of potential alternatives to these programs, and whether or not these programs are meeting their stated objectives.

We find the commissioning of yet another such study at this stage troubling. Both programs were closely scrutinized during the extensive and comprehensive two-year review of DOD programs and policies you undertook shortly after being confirmed Secretary. Fourteen months ago, the Comanche program was again the target of two similar reviews that led to the complete restructuring of the program. In his findings the DoD's Inspector General stated that recent

changes to the Comanche program will "increase the stability of the program." The F/A-22 has also been through extensive reviews, program changes/adjustments, and strict Congressional oversight.

The F/A-22 and Comanche remain critical centerpieces of our future national security capability. They are also key enablers of the military transformation required to ensure air superiority over the future battle-space and to guarantee that all other assets the military can bring to bear may be employed and engaged to win the fight. Current operational assets cannot be further modified to encompass new stealth technologies, revolutionary new propulsion systems, or other technologies needed to protect pilots from advanced surface to air missiles and air defenses. Unlike other programs, current operations in the global war on terror and the emerging national strategy both validate the capabilities these platforms are poised to provide.

The 2001 QDR was specific on the need to recapitalize tactical aircraft due to the rising age of the current force structure and the nature and distribution of advanced air defense systems. It noted that on average, the age of Air Force air superiority aircraft now stands at almost 20 years. It further stated that future adversaries could have the means to render ineffective much of our current ability to project military power overseas, and that advanced air defense systems could deny access to hostile airspace to all but low-observable aircraft, aircraft such as the F/A-22 and Comanche. We could not agree more.

We remain confident that the study of these programs will once again showcase their important role in service-wide transformation and their success at meeting or exceeding established milestones. However, we must question, as you often have, the consequences to programs and their resources that a continuing barrage of such studies represents.

It is critical that this Administration quickly affirm its support for these programs to prevent unwanted actions during the FY05 budget process that could adversely impact the cost efficiencies and delay the schedule of these programs.

We appreciate your immediate attention on this important matter and look forward to working with you to move the Comanche and F/A-22 programs forward in support of the DoD's future force. If we can provide additional information, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,

CHRISTOPHER J. DODD
United States Senator

JOSEPH I. LIEBERMAN
United States Senator

NANCY L. JOHNSON
Member of Congress

CHRISTOPHER SHAYS
Member of Congress

ROSA L. DeLAURO
Member of Congress

JOHN B. LARSON
Member of Congress

ROB SIMMONS
Member of Congress

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