

April 30, 2019

The Honorable Adam Smith  
Chairman  
House Armed Services Committee  
2216 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Peter J. Visclosky  
Chairman  
House Defense Appropriations Subcommittee  
H-405, The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mac Thornberry  
Ranking Member  
House Armed Services Committee  
2216 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Ken Calvert  
Ranking Member  
House Defense Appropriations Subcommittee  
H-405, The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chair and Ranking Member:

As former U.S. Flag Officers who have served in times of sequestration and military conflicts, we know the impact cutting costs from vital programs has on defense readiness. With China and Russia aggressively ramping up efforts to improve and modernize weapons, maintaining air superiority is essential to countering emerging threats both at home and abroad. Maintaining a competitive edge in the skies means our military must advance both capacity and capability of our fighter force with continued procurement of the world's most advanced fighter, the F-35 Lightning II.

As the only 5th generation aircraft in production, the F-35 ensures air advantage over emerging peer adversaries through cutting-edge technologies. It is with the nation's security interest in mind that we join the nearly 130 U.S. House and Senate Congressional members to request that the Congress increase the procurement rate of the F-35 within the Fiscal Year 2020 defense authorization and appropriations. It is essential that our Congress does not sacrifice funds from the F-35 program in favor of new 4th generation, legacy fighter programs with little operational relevance in a near peer conflict.

Winning in the modern battlespace requires stealth, advanced sensing capability, coalition interoperability, cyber security and ability to connect in a multi-domain conflict. The F-35 delivers on all these capabilities above and beyond any other fighter in the U.S. inventory or around the globe. It is the most advanced multi-role fighter—delivering unmatched lethality, survivability and connectivity.

Despite a National Defense Strategy (NDS) that calls for competing with near-peer threats, the DoD proposed funding in FY2020 for only 78 F-35's, even though Congress appropriated 93 airplanes last year in FY2019. Additionally, the DoD has proposed funding a legacy, 4th generation aircraft that has limited survivability in a high-end fight today and is equipped with decades old technology. The 4th generation airframe is simply unable to win against near-peer threats, which are the biggest concern to our NDS.

The DoD Fiscal Year 2020 budget request of only 78 airplanes jeopardizes the ramp of the F-35's program production rate and presents a capability gap in our U.S. services that legacy aircraft simply cannot meet. We ask Congress to provide authorization and funding for 60 F-35As (+12), 22 F-35Bs (+12), and 20 F-35Cs in Fiscal Year 2020. This is a total of 102 F-35 aircraft in FY 2020 defense authorization and appropriations bills, which is an increase of 24 aircraft over the President's budget request.

This increase will reestablish the original F-35 production rates that in the past years have been tamped by sequestration era budget caps resulting from the Budget Control Act. The U.S. must start buying the F-35's in larger quantities to reach the minimum 50% of 5th generation fighters in the timeframe required to meet the emerging global threat.

The aircraft is exceeding in performance with the U.S. Marine Corps executing a successful combat mission in Afghanistan with F-35B's, to the Air Force reporting the F-35A reportedly logged a 28:1 kill ratio at the recent Red Flag exercise in Nevada. With the Navy recently declaring Initial Operational Capability, our three U.S. services and numerous ally partner countries are now flying more than 380 aircraft at 17 locations around the world.

To maintain air dominance and further decrease F-35 costs, it is vitally important that we continue to increase our nation's only 5th generation stealth aircraft in production. Our congressional leaders must increase F-35 production and provide the necessary program investments in the upcoming defense authorization and appropriations bills for Fiscal Year 2020 to keep the F-35 ahead of our adversaries.

Maintaining the most up-to-date, sophisticated technologies possible is fundamental for our country and allies to address growing threats from Russia and China.

Thank you for your consideration as you begin defense authorization and appropriations process for FY2020.

Sincerely,

T. Michael Moseley  
General, USAF (Ret)  
18th Chief of Staff

John Jumper  
General, USAF (Ret)  
17th Chief of Staff

Merrill McPeak  
General, USAF (Ret)  
14th Chief of Staff

Thomas Hayward  
Admiral, USN (Ret)  
21st Chief of Naval Operations

Michael Ryan  
General, USAF (Ret)  
16th Chief of Staff

James Amos  
General, USMC (Ret)  
35th Commandant of the Marine Corps

Michael Aguilar  
Brigadier General, USMC (Ret)

Joseph Anderson  
Major General, USMC (Ret)

Joseph Ashy  
General, USAF (Ret)

John Baker  
Lieutenant General, USAF (Ret)

Mark Beesley  
Brigadier General, USAF (Ret)

Brent Bennitt  
Vice Admiral, USN (Ret)

Harold Blot  
Lieutenant General, USMC (Ret)

Tom Braaten  
Major General, USMC (Ret)

John Brooks  
Major General, USAF (Ret)

Darryl Burke  
Major General, USAF (Ret)

Hugh Cameron  
Brigadier General, USAF (Ret)

John Castellaw  
Lieutenant General, USMC (Ret)

Mark Clark  
Major General, USMC (Ret)

Casey Coane  
Rear Admiral, USN (Ret)

John D.W. Corley  
General, USAF (Ret)

Granny Amos  
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David Architzel  
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Dana Atkins  
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Michael Basla  
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William Begert  
General, USAF (Ret)

Brian Bishop  
Major General, USAF (Ret)

Stanley Bozin  
Rear Admiral, USN (Ret)

Philip Breedlove  
General, USAF (Ret)

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Bobby Butcher  
Major General, USMC (Ret)

Henry Canterbury  
Major General, USAF (Ret)

Carrol Chandler  
General, USAF (Ret)

Scott Van Cleef  
Brigadier General, USAF (Ret)

Donald Cook  
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John Dailey  
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Terry Dake  
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Vice Admiral, USN (Ret)

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Major General, USAF (Ret)

David Dunaway  
Vice Admiral, USN (Ret)

Neil Eddins  
Major General, USAF (Ret)

Barbara Faulkenberry  
Major General, USAF (Ret)

Mark Fitzgerald  
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Major General, USMC (Ret)

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Major General, USMC (Ret)

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Lieutenant General, USMC (ret)

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Lieutenant General, USAF (Ret)

Chip Gregson  
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Major General, USAF (Ret)

David Heinz  
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Lieutenant General, USAF (Ret)

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Kenneth Israel  
Major General, USAF (Ret)

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