

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 17, 2020

The Honorable Adam Smith
Chairman
House Armed Service 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 Chairmen and Ranking Members:

As you consider the Fiscal Year 2021 defense authorization and appropriations bills, we strongly urge your continued support for the F-35 Lightning II program. As you well know, our adversaries continue to advance surface-to-air missile systems and develop their own stealth fighters. It is essential that we continue to increase production of our nation's only 5th generation stealth fighter in order to ensure the United States maintains air dominance and to further reduce overall program costs.

The F-35 is the most advanced fighter in the world and is exceeding operational expectations. The three U.S. Services and our allies are now flying more than 500 aircraft at 23 locations around the world. The program is beginning to show maturity and warrants continued support.

In fact, as global threats continue to rise, the Department of Defense's (DoD) Fiscal Year 2021 budget request, which includes funding for 79 F-35s (48 F-35As, 10 F-35Bs and 21 F-35Cs) - 19 less than Congress appropriated in Fiscal Year 2020 - leaves the Air Force, Navy and Marine Corps with a capability gap that 4th Generation, or legacy, aircraft cannot fulfill. To reach the minimum 50% ratio of 5th Generation and 4th Generation fighters in the timeframe required to meet the threat, the U.S. must acquire F-35s in much larger quantities. Not only does the F-35 program deliver air superiority for the United States and its key allies, it also bolsters our domestic economy by supporting more than 1,800 suppliers and more than 254,000 direct and indirect jobs across the country.

Therefore, we are requesting your support for a total of 98 F-35 aircraft in the Fiscal Year 2021 defense authorization and appropriations bills, which is an increase of 19 aircraft over the President's budget request. This request supports the Air Force and Navy Unfunded Requirements. It is vitally important for Congress to provide authorization and funding for 60 F-35As (+12), 12 F-35Bs (+2), and 26 F-35Cs (+5) in Fiscal Year 2021. This increase in procurement will restore previously planned F-35 production rates negatively impacted by the sequestration era budget caps resulting from the Budget Control Act.

Additional funding is needed to address readiness, enhance aircraft availability, and most importantly accelerate compliance with the DoD 80% Mission Capable Mandate. Specifically, additional funding is needed for spare parts and depot level repair capability to meet the required availability rates and accelerate the stand-up of mandated, organic government repair capabilities. In addition, adequate investments in the Reliability and Maintainability Improvement Program will not only increase readiness

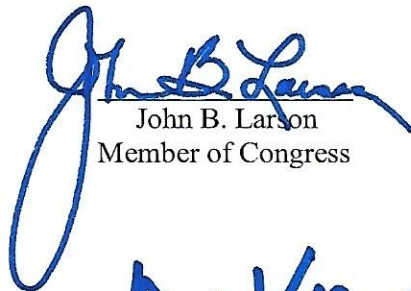
but also bring costs down for years to come over the life of the aircraft. Lastly, we believe a long-term, outcome-based sustainment contract will guarantee performance metrics at a fixed-price — a win-win for our men and women in uniform and the American taxpayers.

We also urge you to fully fund the President's budget request for modernization efforts, known as Continuous Capability Development and Delivery (C2D2), and as funds are available, accelerate integration of the Joint Air to Surface Standoff Missile (JASSM) on to the F-35. C2D2 is critical to meeting the evolving threat in the mid-2020s and into the 2030s. Full funding is needed for the delivery of new weapons and critical capabilities necessary to keep the F-35 ahead of our adversaries. F-35 modernization is crucial for 4th generation aircraft systems, which are increasingly vulnerable and reliant on 5th generation production.


The F-35 aircraft costs have come down more than 70 percent since the procurement of the first production aircraft more than 13 years ago; in fact, in Fiscal Year 2020, an F-35A costs \$77.9 million. To maintain these costs savings and to ensure future air dominance, it is critical that we increase F-35 production and provide the necessary program investments in the upcoming defense authorization and appropriations bills for Fiscal Year 2021.

Thank you for your continued support of the F-35 program and for your leadership.

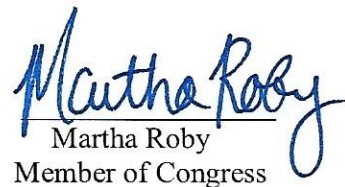
Sincerely,



John B. Larson
Member of Congress



Marc A. Veasey
Member of Congress



Martha Roby
Member of Congress



Michael R. Turner
Member of Congress

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