

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 20, 2019

The Honorable Heather A. Wilson
Secretary, United States Air Force
1670 Air Force Pentagon
Washington, DC 20330-1670

Dear Secretary Wilson:

We write to express our strong support for the U.S. Air Force light-attack program, which has achieved several major experimental milestones over the past two years, allowing the Air Force to validate your requirement for a cost-effective capability that can counter violent extremist threats. In conjunction with funding provided by Congress, the Air Force has benefited from industry partner investments during this testing and development campaign. As such, we strongly encourage your continued commitment to the light-attack program with minimal delay in expanding experimentation and procurement that benefits our training community at home and warfighters abroad.

The light-attack aircraft has not only exhibited value in meeting Air Force requirements but would be an invaluable asset to our partner nations. The 2018 National Defense Strategy (NDS) highlights partnership and alliances as the backbone of global security. Irregular warfare will undoubtedly be a part of any future conflict, and it is imperative our Air Force and partner nations have the tools they need to fight and win. Because our foreign partnerships and alliances are so critical to national security objectives, we were pleased to see the Air Force's approach to light-attack: experimentation, requirements refinement, followed by a focus on rapid procurement and fielding of an affordable, interoperable capability that meets objectives of the NDS. The current light-attack program reflects all the attributes that made it a target for Air Force designation as a Section 804 rapid acquisition program: low technical risk, low schedule risk, and low cost.

As you know, the Office of the Secretary of Defense has been fully supportive of the light-attack experiment and partnership with industry approach, particularly because the light-attack concept protects readiness. In addition, Congress has repeatedly demonstrated its concurrence with you and the Secretary of Defense in citing the great value of light-attack aircraft as a way to deliver readiness and combat capability on an affordable basis. The light-attack aircraft offers a low-cost solution to counter less-capable threats currently being conducted by 4th and 5th generation platforms. We believe you should aggressively pursue a light-attack capability that can execute Combatant Commander requirements and task orders while maintaining and preserving the F-35 for a near peer fight; doing so provides a long-term cost savings with sustainment in addition to the cost mitigation of using a tenth of the amount of fuel to achieve the same operational outcome.

Over the past several years Congress has acted upon its commitment to the light-attack program by authorizing \$300 million and appropriating \$200 million expressly to deliver on the capabilities and concepts of operation promised by you and Air Force senior leaders.

Due to uncertainty surrounding the of light-attack program in recent weeks, we look forward to a timely response that shares your perspective on the future of light-attack, particularly as it relates to your Fiscal Year 2020 budget request and as an important component to the NDS.


Sincerely,



John Boozman
United States Senator



Jerry Moran
United States Senator



Cory Gardner
United States Senator



Marco Rubio
United States Senator



Tom Cotton
United States Senator



Michael F. Bennet
United States Senator



Martin Heinrich
United States Senator