

April 30, 2019

The Honorable James M. Inhofe
Chairman
Senate Armed Services Committee
228 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Chairman
Senate Defense Appropriations Subcommittee
122 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jack Reed
Ranking Member
Senate Armed Services Committee
228 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard J. Durbin
Ranking Member
Senate Defense Appropriations Subcommittee
122 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

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
Brigadier General, USMC (Ret)

David Architzel
Vice Admiral, USN (Ret)

Dana Atkins
Lieutenant General, USAF (Ret)

Michael Basla
Lieutenant General, USAF (Ret)

William Begert
General, USAF (Ret)

Brian Bishop
Major General, USAF (Ret)

Stanley Bozin
Rear Admiral, USN (Ret)

Philip Breedlove
General, USAF (Ret)

John Bullard
Brigadier General, USMC (Ret)

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
General, USAF (Ret)

John Dailey
General, USMC (Ret)

Terry Dake
General, USMC (Ret)

Walter Davis
Vice Admiral, USN (Ret)

Dan Dick
Major General, USAF (Ret)

David Dunaway
Vice Admiral, USN (Ret)

Neil Eddins
Major General, USAF (Ret)

Barbara Faulkenberry
Major General, USAF (Ret)

Mark Fitzgerald
Admiral, USN (Ret)

James Flock
Major General, USMC (Ret)

Ray Fox
Major General, USMC (Ret)

Emerson Gardner
Lieutenant General, USMC (ret)

Mike Gould
Lieutenant General, USAF (Ret)

Chip Gregson
Lieutenant General, USMC (Ret)

Blair Hansen
Major General, USAF (Ret)

David Heinz
Major General, USMC (Ret)

Charles Horner
General, USAF (Ret)

Jon Davis
Lieutenant General, USMC (Ret)

David Deptula
Lieutenant General, USAF (Ret)

Walter Druen
Lieutenant General, USAF (Ret)

Michael Dunn
Lieutenant General, USAF (Ret)

Marvin Esmond
Lieutenant General, USAF (Ret)

Gregory Feest
Major General, USAF (Ret)

Robert Flanagan
Brigadier General, USMC (Ret)

H.H. Forsythe
Major General, USAF (ret)

John Gallinetti
Major General, USMC (Ret)

John Goodman
Lieutenant General, USMC (Ret)

Ken Glueck
Lieutenant General, USMC (Ret)

Earl Hailston
Lieutenant General, USMC (Ret)

Richard Hawley
General, USAF (Ret)

Sam Helland
Lieutenant General, USMC (Ret)

Jefferson Howell
Lieutenant General, USMC (Ret)

James Hunt
Major General, USAF (Ret)

Gregory Ihde
Brigadier General, USAF (Ret)

L.D. Johnston
Major General, USAF (Ret)

Jan-Marc Jouas
Lieutenant General, USAF (Ret)

Joseph Kilkenny
Rear Admiral, USN (Ret)

William Lake
Brigadier General, USAF (Ret)

Daniel Leaf
Lieutenant General, USAF (Ret)

John Michael Loh
General, USAF (Ret)

Steven Lorenz
General, USAF (Ret)

James McArthur
Vice Admiral, Jr., USN (Ret)

Rich Mills
Lieutenant General, USMC (Ret)

Carol Mutter
Lieutenant General, USMC (Ret)

Robert Natter
Admiral, USN (Ret)

Andrew O'Donnell, Jr.
Major General, USMC, (Ret)

Robert Otto
Lieutenant General, USAF (Ret)

James Hyatt
Major General, USAF (Ret)

Kenneth Israel
Major General, USAF (Ret)

Silas Johnson Jr.
Major General, USAF (Ret)

Thomas Kilcline
Vice Admiral, USN (Ret)

James Lair
Rear Admiral, USN (Ret)

James Latham
Brigadier General, USAF (Ret)

Frederick Lewis
Rear Admiral, USN (Ret)

William Looney III
General, USAF (Ret)

Robert Magnus
General, USMC (Ret)

Fred McCorkle
Lieutenant General, USMC (Ret)

Robert Milstead
Lieutenant General, USMC (Ret)

Richard Natonski
Lieutenant General, USMC (Ret)

Lloyd Newton
General, USAF (Ret)

Pete Osman
Lieutenant General, USMC (Ret)

Chris Owens
Major General, USMC (Ret)

Frank Panter
Lieutenant General, USMC (Ret)

H.D. Pumbo
Major General, USAF (Ret)

Martin Post
Major General, USMC (Ret)

Dave Richwine
Major General, USMC (Ret)

David Robinson
Major General, USAF (Ret)

Michael Ryan
Major General, USMC (Ret)

Don Shepperd
Major General, USAF (Ret)

Keith Stalder
Lieutenant General, USMC (Ret)

Gregg Sturdevant
Major General, USMC (Ret)

Peter Talleri
Major General, USMC (Ret)

Duane Thiessen
Lieutenant General, USMC (Ret)

John Toolan
Lieutenant General, USMC (Ret)

Lance Undhjem
Major General, USAF (Ret)

Loyd Utterback
Lieutenant General, USAF (Ret)

Randall West
Major General, USMC (Ret)

Chip Parker
Brigadier General, USMC (Ret)

Robert Pumbo
Major General, USAF (Ret)

Douglas Raaberg
Major General, USAF (Ret)

Gene Renuart
General, USAF (Ret)

Terry Robling
Lieutenant General, USMC (Ret)

Robert Schmidle
Lieutenant General, USMC (Ret)

John Simmons
Brigadier General, USMC (Ret)

Denby Starling, II
Vice Admiral, USN (Ret)

Larry Stutzriem
Major General, USAF (Ret)

Larry Taylor
Major General, USMC (Ret)

Steven Tomaszeski
Rear Admiral, USN (Ret)

George Trautman III
Lieutenant General, USMC (Ret)

Jerry Unruh
Vice Admiral, USN (Ret)

Tome Walters
Lieutenant General, USAF (Ret)

John Wissler
Lieutenant General, USMC (Ret)

Harry Wyatt
Lieutenant General, USAF (Ret)

Ron Yates
General, USAF (Ret)